

A lit candle, a magnifying glass over an open book, and a quill pen. The candle is lit, casting a warm glow. The magnifying glass is positioned over the left page of an open book, which is filled with text. The quill pen lies on the right page of the book. The background is dark, making the illuminated scene stand out.

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STUDIES IN THE
SCRIPTURES

ARTHUR W. PINK (1886-1952)

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by Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

Contents

January

The Holy Spirit.....	7
<i>12. The Work of the Spirit (Part 1)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	9
<i>73. The Faith of Moses (Continued) (11:27)</i>	
The Life of David.....	15
<i>25. His Sorrow at Ziklag</i>	
Dispensationalism	19
<i>7. The Law of God</i>	
Divine Providence.....	23
<i>Carson on Esther</i>	
The Law and a Christian	28
God's Jewels	29
Good News.....	34
An Announcement	35

February

The Holy Spirit.....	36
<i>12. The Work of the Spirit (Part 2)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	38
<i>74. The Faith of Moses (Continued) (11:28)</i>	

The Life of David.....	44
<i>26. His Recourse in Sorrow</i>	
Dispensationalism	48
<i>7. The Law of God</i>	
The Providence of God	52
<i>Carson on Esther</i>	
The Perpetuity of the Law.....	56
<i>By Charles H. Spurgeon</i>	
Self-Knowledge.....	61
Grace Reigning in Election	63
March	
The Holy Spirit.....	65
<i>15. The Spirit Regenerating (Part 1)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	67
<i>75. The Faith of Israel (11:29)</i>	
The Life of David.....	73
<i>27. His Pursuit of the Amalekites</i>	
Dispensationalism	78
<i>7. The Law of God (Part Three)</i>	
The Providence of God	82
<i>Carson on Esther</i>	
The Doctrine of Justification.....	86
<i>1. Introduction</i>	
Preaching the Law	90
April	
The Holy Spirit.....	95
<i>15. The Holy Spirit Regenerating (Part 2)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	97
<i>76. The Faith of Israel (11:30)</i>	
The Life of David.....	103
<i>28. His Recovery of His Wives</i>	
Dispensationalism	107
<i>8. The Law of God (Concluded)</i>	
The Providence of God	111
<i>Carson on Esther (Part Four)</i>	
The Doctrine of Justification.....	116
<i>2. Its Meaning</i>	

Preaching the Law	120
<i>(Completed)</i>	
Submission to our Sovereign	121
Righteousness.....	123
May	
The Holy Spirit.....	124
<i>16. The Spirit Quickening (Part 1)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	127
<i>77. The Faith of Rahab (11:31)</i>	
The Life of David.....	133
<i>29. His Lamentation for Saul</i>	
Dispensationalism	137
<i>9. The Word of God</i>	
The Providence of God	142
<i>Carson on Esther (Part Five)</i>	
The Doctrine of Justification.....	146
<i>3. Its Problem</i>	
A Prayer and Confession.....	150
A Prayer	152
June	
The Holy Spirit.....	153
<i>16. The Spirit Quickening (Part 2)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	155
<i>78. The Faith of the Judges (11:32)</i>	
The Life of David.....	161
<i>30. His Sojourn at Hebron</i>	
Dispensationalism	165
<i>9. The Word of God (Concluded)</i>	
The Providence of God	170
<i>Carson on Esther (Part Six)</i>	
The Doctrine of Justification.....	174
<i>4. Its Basis</i>	

Goats	178
Assurance	181
July	
The Holy Spirit.....	182
<i>17. The Spirit Enlightening</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	184
<i>79. The Achievements of Faith (11:33-34)</i>	
The Life of David.....	190
<i>31. His Testing</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	194
<i>1. Introduction</i>	
The Providence of God	198
<i>Carson on Esther (Part Seven)</i>	
The Doctrine of Justification.....	202
<i>5. Its Nature</i>	
Welcome Tidings	206
A Prayer	210
August	
The Holy Spirit.....	211
<i>20. The Spirit Enlightening (Part 2)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	213
<i>80. The Pinnacle of Faith (11:35-36)</i>	
The Life of David.....	219
<i>32. His Failure</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	223
<i>2. The Everlasting Covenant</i>	
The Providence of God	227
<i>Carson on Esther (Part Eight)</i>	
The Doctrine of Justification.....	231
<i>6. Its Source</i>	
A Word of Warning	235
Poor Yet Rich.....	238
September	
The Holy Spirit.....	240
<i>21. The Spirit Convicting (Part 1)</i>	

The Epistle to the Hebrews	242
<i>81. The Pinnacle of Faith (11:37-38)</i>	
The Life of David.....	248
<i>33. His Coronation</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	252
<i>2. The Everlasting Covenant (Part 2)</i>	
The Providence of God	256
<i>Carson on Esther (Part Nine)</i>	
The Doctrine of Justification.....	260
<i>7. Its Objects</i>	
Divine Guidance.....	264
A Personal Word	268
October	
The Holy Spirit.....	269
<i>22. The Spirit Convicting (Part 2)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	271
<i>82. The Family of Faith (11:39-40)</i>	
The Life of David.....	277
<i>34. His Coronation</i>	
The Covenants of God	281
<i>3a. The Adamic</i>	
The Providence of God	285
<i>Carson on Esther (Part Ten)</i>	
The Doctrine of Justification.....	289
<i>8. Its Instrument</i>	
To a Stricken Soul.....	294
Over-Righteous	296
November	
The Holy Spirit.....	299
<i>23. The Spirit Comforting (Part 1)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	301
<i>83. The Demands of Faith (12:1)</i>	
The Life of David.....	307
<i>35. His Capturing Zion</i>	
The Covenants of God	311
<i>3b. The Adamic (Continued)</i>	

The Providence of God	315
<i>Carson on Esther (Part Eleven)</i>	
The Doctrine of Justification.....	319
<i>9. Its Evidence</i>	
Divine Guidance.....	323
<i>Part One</i>	
December	
The Holy Spirit.....	328
<i>24. The Spirit Comforting (Part 2)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	330
<i>84. The Object of Faith (12:2)</i>	
The Life of David.....	336
<i>36. His Victory over the Philistines</i>	
The Covenants of God	341
<i>3c. The Adamic (Continued)</i>	
The Doctrine of Justification.....	345
<i>10. Its Results</i>	
Divine Guidance.....	349
<i>Part Two</i>	
Goats	353
Our Annual Letter	354
Appendices	
About Studies in the Scriptures.....	357
Biography of A.W. Pink	359
<i>by Erroll Hulse</i>	
Chapel Library Resources	364

January

THE HOLY SPIRIT

12. The Work of the Spirit (Part 1)

It is a great mistake to suppose that the works of the Spirit are all of one kind or that His operations preserve an equality as to degree. To insist that they are and do would be ascribing less freedom to the third person of the Godhead than is enjoyed and exercised by men. There is variety in the activities of all voluntary agents. Even human beings are not confined to one sort of works, nor to the production of the same kind of effects and where they design so to do, they moderate them as to degrees according to their power and pleasure. Much more so is it with the Holy Spirit. The nature and kind of His works are regulated by His own will and purpose. Some He executes by the touch of His finger (so to speak), in others He puts forth His hand, while in yet others (as on the day of Pentecost), He lays bare His arm. He works by no necessity of His nature, but solely according to the pleasure of His will (1Co 12:11).

Many of the works of the Spirit, though perfect in kind and fully accomplishing their design, are wrought by Him upon and within men who, nevertheless, are not saved. “The Holy Spirit is present with many as to powerful operations, with whom He is not present as to gracious inhabitation. Or, many are made partakers of Him in His spiritual gifts, who are not made partakers of Him in His saving grace (Mat 7:22-23)” (John Owen on Hebrews 6:4, 1616-1683). The light which God furnishes different souls varies considerably, both in kind and degree. Nor should we be surprised at this in view of the adumbration in the natural world. How wide is the difference between the glimmering of the stars from the radiance of the full moon and that again from the shining of the midday sun. Equally wide is the gulf which separates the savage with his faint illumination of conscience from one who has been educated under a Christian ministry, and greater still is the difference between the spiritual understanding of the wisest unregenerate professor and the feeblest babe in Christ—yet each has been a subject of the Spirit’s operation.

“The Holy Spirit works in two ways. In some men’s hearts He works with restraining grace only and the restraining grace, though it will not save them, is enough to keep them from breaking out into the open and corrupt vices in which some men indulge who are totally left by the restraints of the Spirit. God the Holy Spirit may work in men some good desires and feelings, and yet have no design of saving them. But mark, none of these feelings are things that accompany salvation, for if so, they would be continued. But He does not work omnipotently to save, except

in the persons of His own elect, whom He assuredly bringeth unto Himself. I believe, then, that the trembling of Felix is to be accounted for by the restraining grace of the Spirit, quickening his conscience and making him tremble” (C.H. Spurgeon on Acts 24:25, 1834-1892).

The Holy Spirit has been robbed of much of His distinctive glory through Christians failing to perceive His varied workings. In concluding that the operations of the blessed Spirit are confined unto God’s elect, they have been hindered from offering to Him that praise which is His due, for keeping this wicked world a fit place for them to live in. Few today realize how much the children of God owe to the Third Person of the Trinity for holding in leash the children of the devil, and preventing them from utterly consuming Christ’s church on earth. It is true there are comparatively few texts which specifically refer to the distinctive Person of the Spirit as reigning over the wicked, but once it is seen that in the divine economy all is from God the Father, all is through God the Son, and all is *by* God the Spirit, each is given His proper and separate place in our hearts and thoughts. Let us, then, now point out a few of the Spirit’s *general and inferior* operations in the non-elect, as distinguished from His *special and superior* works in the redeemed.

1. *In restraining evil.* If God should leave men absolutely to their own natural corruptions and to the power of Satan (as they fully deserve to be, as He will in hell, and as He would now but for the sake of His elect), all show of goodness and morality would be entirely banished from the earth. Men would grow past feeling in sin, and wickedness would swiftly and entirely swallow up the whole world. This is abundantly clear from Genesis 6:3-5, 12. But He who restrained the fiery furnace of Babylon *without* quenching it, He who prevented the waters of the Red Sea from flowing *without* changing their nature, now hinders the working of natural corruption *without* mortifying it. Vile as the world is, we have abundant cause to adore and praise the Holy Spirit that it is not a thousand times worse.

The world *hates* the people of God (Joh 15:19). Why, then, does it not devour them? What is it that holds back the enmity of the wicked against the righteous? Nothing but the restraining power of the Holy Spirit. In Psalm 14:1-3, we find a fearful picture of the utter depravity of the human race. Then in verse 4, the Psalmist asks, “Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.” To which answer is made, “There were they in great fear: *for* God is in the generation of the righteous” (Psa 14:5). It is the Holy Spirit who places that “great fear” within them, to keep them back from many outrages against God’s people. He curbs their malice. So completely are the reprobate shackled by His almighty hand, that Christ could say to Pilate, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, *except* it were given thee from above” (Joh 19:11)!

2. *In inciting to good actions.* All the obedience of children to parents, all the true love between husbands and wives, is to be attributed unto the Holy Spirit. Whatever morality and honesty, unselfishness and kindness, submission to the powers that be, and respect for law and order, which is still to be found in the world, must be traced back to the gracious operations of the Spirit. A striking illustration of His benign influence is found in 1 Samuel 10:26, “And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts *God* (the Spirit) had touched.” Men’s hearts are naturally inclined to rebellion, are impatient against being ruled over, especially by one raised out of a mean condition among them. The Lord the Spirit inclined the hearts of those men to be subject to Saul, gave them a disposition to obey him. So too, later, the Spirit touched the heart of Saul to spare the life of David, melting him to such an extent he wept (1Sa 24:16). In like manner, it was the Holy Spirit who gave the Hebrews favour in the eyes of

the Egyptians—who hitherto had bitterly hated them—so as to give earrings to them (Exo 12:35-36).

3. *In convicting of sin.* Few seem to understand that conscience in the natural man is inoperative unless stirred up by the Spirit. As a fallen creature, thoroughly in love with sin (Joh 3:19), man resists and disputes against any conviction of sin. “My Spirit shall not always strive with man, *for* that he also *is flesh*” (Gen 6:3). Man, being “flesh,” would never have the least distaste of any iniquity unless the Spirit excited those remnants of natural light which still remain in the soul. Being “flesh,” fallen man is perverse against the convictions of the Spirit (Act 7:51) and remains so forever unless quickened and made “spirit” (Joh 3:6).

4. *In illuminating.* Concerning divine things, fallen man is not only devoid of light, but *is* “darkness” itself (Eph 5:8). He has no more apprehension of spiritual things than the beasts of the field. This is very evident from the state of the heathen. How, then, shall we explain the intelligence which *is* found in thousands in Christendom, who yet give no evidence that they are new creatures in Christ Jesus? They have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, Hebrews 6:4. Many are constrained to inquire into those Scriptural subjects which make no demand on the conscience and life, yea, many take great delight in them. Just as the multitudes took pleasure in beholding the miracles of Christ, who could not endure His searching demands, so the *light* of the Spirit is pleasant to many to whom His *convictions* are grievous.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

73. The Faith of Moses (Continued) (11:27)

In our last two articles (upon 11:24-26), we had before us the striking example of the power of faith to rise above the honours, riches, and pleasures of the world. Now we are to behold it triumphing over *its terrors*. Faith not only elevates the heart above the delights of sense, but it also delivers it from the fear of man. Faith and fear are opposites, and yet, strange to say, they are often found dwelling within the same breast, but where one is dominant the other is dormant. The constant attitude of the Christian should be, “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, *and not be afraid*” (Isa 12:2). But alas, what ought to be and what is, are two vastly different things. Nevertheless, when the grace of faith *is* in exercise, its language is, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee” (Psa 56:3). So it was with Moses. He is here commended for his courage.

The leading feature of that particular working of Moses’ faith, which we are now to consider, was its *durability*. That which engaged our attention on the last two occasions occurred when our hero had “come to years.” Forty years had elapsed since then, during which he passed through varied experiences and sore trials. But now that he is eighty years of age, faith is still active within him. That spiritual grace moved him to withstand the attractions of Egypt’s court, had led him to relinquish a position of high honour and wealth, had caused him to throw in his lot with the despised people of God, and now we behold faith enabling him to endure the wrath of the king. A God-given faith not only resists temptations, but it also endures trials and refuses to be

daunted by the gravest dangers. Faith not only flourishes under the dews of the Spirit, but it survives the fires of Satanic assault.

True faith neither courts the smiles of men nor shuns their frowns. Herein it differs radically from that natural faith, which is all that is possessed by thousands who think they are children of God. Only yesterday we received a letter in which a friend wrote, “I know some professing Christians who boasted that the prospect of being out of work did not trouble them at all, for they knew every need would be supplied. Now that they have no work, they are not nearly as confident, but are wondering how in the world they are going to get along.” So too we read of the stony ground hearer. “The same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: *for when tribulation or persecution* ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended” (Mat 13:20-21). Far otherwise was it with Moses.

“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). Moses left Egypt on two different occasions and there is some diversity of opinion among the commentators as to which of them is here in view. Personally, we think there is little or no room for doubt that the Holy Spirit *did not* have reference unto the first, for we are told, “And Moses *feared*, and said, Surely this thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian” (Exo 2:14-15). There he fled as the criminal, here he went forth as the commander of God’s people! Then he left Egypt in terror, but now “by faith.”

There are some, however, who find difficulty in the fact that Moses’ leaving of Egypt is here mentioned *before* his keeping of the Passover and sprinkling of the blood in Heb 11:28. But this difficulty is self-created, by confining our present text unto a single event, instead of understanding it to refer to *the whole conduct* of Moses—his forsaking of Egypt is a general expression, which includes all his renouncing a continuance therein and his steady determination to depart therefrom. So too his “not fearing the wrath of the king” must not be restricted unto the state of his heart immediately following the Exodus, but also takes in his resolution and courage during the whole of his dealings with Pharaoh. And herein we may perceive again the *stability* of his faith, which withstood the most fiery ordeals and which remained steadfast to the end. Thus did he supply a blessed illustration of “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1Pe 1:5).

The experiences through which Moses passed and the testings to which his faith was subjected were no ordinary ones. First, he was bidden to enter the presence of Pharaoh and say, “Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness” (Exo 5:1). Let it be duly considered that for forty years Moses had lived the life of a shepherd in Midian and now, with no army behind him, with none in Egypt’s court ready to second his request, he has to make this demand of the haughty monarch who reigned over the greatest empire then on earth. Such a task called for no ordinary faith. Nor did he meet with a favourable reception, instead, we are told, “And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go” (Exo 5:2).

Not only did the idolatrous king refuse point-blank to grant Moses’ request, but he said, “Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get you unto your burdens...Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves” (Exo 5:4, 7). Well might the heart of the stoutest quake under such circumstances as these. To add to his troubles, the heads of the Israelites came unto Moses and said, “The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us” (Exo

5:21). Ah, faith must be tested, nor must it expect to receive any encouragement or assistance from men, no, not even from our own brethren—it must stand alone in the power of God.

Later, Moses was required to interview Pharaoh again, *after* Jehovah had informed them He had “hardened” his heart, and say, “The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness: and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear. Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink of the water of the river” (Exo 7:16-18). It is easy for us now, knowing all about the happy sequel, to entirely *under-estimate* the severity of this trial. Seek to visualize the whole scene. Here was an insignificant Hebrew, belonging to a company of *slaves*, with no powerful “union” to press their claims. There was the powerful monarch of Egypt, who, humanly speaking, had only to give the word to his officers and Moses had been seized, beaten, tortured, murdered. Yet, notwithstanding, he “feared not the wrath of the king.”

We cannot now follow Moses through all the stages of his great contest with Pharaoh, but would pass on to the closing scene. After the tenth plague, Pharaoh called for Moses and proposed a compromise, which, upon Moses refusing, he said, “Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die” (Exo 10:28). But Moses “feared not the wrath of the king,” and boldly announced the final plague. Not only so, he declared that his servants should yet pay him homage (Exo 11:4-8). “He had before him a bloody tyrant, armed with all the power of Egypt, threatening him with present death if he persisted in the work and duty which God had committed to him; but he was so far from being terrified, or declining his duty in the least, that he professeth his resolution to proceed, and denounceth destruction to the tyrant himself” (John Owen).

After the tenth plague had been executed, Moses led the children of Israel out of the land in which they had long-groaned in bondage. “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king” (Heb 11:27). Even now he was not terrified by thoughts of what the enraged monarch might do, nor at the powerful forces which he most probably would send in pursuit, but staying his mind upon God, he was assured of the divine protection. He allowed not gloomy forebodings to discourage him. Yet once more we would say, it is easy for us (in the light of our knowledge of the sequel) to under-estimate this marvel. Visualize the scene again. On the one hand was a powerful nation, who had long held the Hebrews in serfdom and would therefore be extremely loath to let them altogether escape. On the other hand, here was a vast concourse of people, including many thousands of women and children, unorganized, unarmed, unaccustomed to travel, with a howling wilderness before them.

Ah, my reader, does not such a situation as we have hastily sketched above, seem utterly hopeless? There did not seem one chance in a thousand of succeeding. Yet the spirit of Moses was undaunted, and he is here commended to us for his courage and resolution. But more—Pharaoh, accompanied by six hundred chariots and a great armed force, pursued them, and “when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?” (Exo 14:10-11). Here was the crucial moment, the supreme test. Did Moses’ heart fail him, was he now terrified by “the wrath of the king”? No indeed, so far from it, he calmly and confidently said unto the people, “*Fear ye not*, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will show to

you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace” (Exo 14:13-14).

O how the undaunted courage of Moses shames *our* petty fears! What cause have we to blush and hang our heads in shame. Many are there who fear very much less than the wrath of a “king”—such things as darkness and solitude, or even the rustling of a leaf, will frighten them. No doubt such fear is constitutional with some, but with the great majority it is a guilty conscience which makes them alarmed at a shadow. The best way for weak ones to overcome their timidity is to cultivate the sense of God’s presence and for the guilty, to confess and forsake their sins. “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Pro 28:1). Fear is the result of distrust, of taking the eye off God, of being unduly occupied with difficulties and troubles.

And what was it that enabled Moses to conduct himself with such firmness and boldness? What was it that delivered his heart from fearing the wrath of the king? FAITH, a spiritual, supernatural, God-given, God-energized faith. Reader, do you know anything, experimentally, of *such* a faith? Again we would be reminded that, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). Moses had heard, he had heard something from God, and his faith laid hold of and rested upon the same. What was it that he had heard? This, “Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye *shall* serve God upon this mountain” (Exo 3:12). So too, if we are Christians, God has said to us, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Therefore, “We may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb 13:5-6).

Perhaps someone may ask, But was there *no wavering* in Moses’ faith? Yes, dear reader, for he was a man of like passions with us. They who have a faith which never varies, which remains the same whether it be cloudy and stormy, or fair and sunny, have nothing but a natural and letter faith. A spiritual and supernatural faith is one which *we* did not originate and is one which we cannot call into exercise whenever we please: God imparted it, and He alone can renew and call it into action. When the leaders of Israel murmured against Moses and charged him with endangering their lives (Exo 5:21), we are told that “And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, LORD, wherefore hast thou so *evil* entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; *neither hast thou delivered thy people at all*” (Exo 5:22-23). Blessed is it to behold the patience of God with His failing servant, and to see how He comforted and strengthened him, Exodus 6:1-8.

“By faith he forsook Egypt” (Heb 11:27). Faith assures the heart of a *better portion* in return for anything God calls us to relinquish. No matter how attractive to the senses, no matter how popular with our fellows, no matter how necessary it may seem for the interests of our family, faith is convinced that God will not suffer us to be the losers, Genesis 12:1. So Abraham left Chaldea, so Ruth forsook Moab (Ruth 1:16). Here is one way in which a true faith may be discerned and known. If we were born and brought up in an idolatrous place, where honors, pleasures, and treasures might be enjoyed and we, for conscience sake, have forsaken that place, then surely we have a *spiritual* faith. Few are now required to do as Abraham did, but all *are* commanded to obey 2 Corinthians 6:14, 17.

Ah, there are many who forsake Egypt’s (the world’s) vices and pleasures, who do not separate from *its religion*, and *that* was the central thing in the final test which Moses’ faith had to overcome. Again and again Pharaoh sought a compromise, but with inflexible firmness Moses stood his ground. The demand of God was, “Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me *in the wilderness*” (Exo 5:1). There must be a complete separation from the religion of the world.

But that is something which the world cannot brook, for the withdrawal of God's people condemns them. Hence we find Pharaoh saying, "Go ye, sacrifice to your God *in the land*" (Exo 8:25). But Moses was not to be moved, "We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, *as he shall command us*" (Exo 8:27).

Next we are told Pharaoh said, "I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only *ye shall not go very far away*" (Exo 8:28). This was tantamount to saying, "If you are determined to adopt this holier than thou attitude, there is no reason why there should be a complete break between us." After the Lord had further plagued Egypt, the king again sent for Moses and Aaron and asked, "*Who* are they that shall go?" Moses answered, "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds" (Exo 10:9). But that was too much for Pharaoh, who replied, "Not so: go now *ye that are men*, and serve the LORD" (Exo 10:11). See here in Pharaoh, my reader, our great adversary, striving to get us to temporize, "If you are determined to forsake the church, at least leave your children in the Sunday School!" How subtle the devil is! What a *living* book is the Word! How thoroughly suited to our present lot and needs!

One more effort was made by Pharaoh to induce Moses to render only a partial obedience unto God's demands, "Go ye, serve the LORD; *only let your flocks and your herds be stayed*" (Exo 10:24)—If you must be so unsociable, if you will be so mulish and not allow your children to remain in Sunday School, at least retain your *membership* with us and *pay* into the "church treasury" as hitherto! Ah, had Moses feared the wrath of the king, he had yielded this point. Instead, he remained firm and said, "Thou must give us *also* sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God. Our cattle also *shall* go with us; there shall *not an hoof* be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God" (Exo 10:25-26). Well might the apostle write, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: *for we are not ignorant of his devices*" (2Co 2:11)—no, for they have been fully exposed to us in Holy Writ.

All of what has been before us above is included in these words "By faith he *forsook Egypt*," and all of it is "written for *our* learning" (Rom 15:4). The offers made by Pharaoh to Moses to prevent Israel from completely forsaking Egypt in their worship of the Lord, are, in essence, the very temptations which His people now have to overcome, if they are to fully heed and obey 2 Corinthians 6:14, 17, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?...Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, *and touch not the unclean thing*." O my Christian reader, seek grace to obtain the uncompromising spirit of Moses. When urged to worship God in "Egypt" (i.e. the white-washed "churches" *of the world*), say it is impossible, for "what communion hath light with darkness!" When pressed to leave your children in a worldly Sunday School, to be instructed by those who have not the fear of God upon them, refuse. When invited to at least retain your membership in the Holy Spirit-deserted "churches" and contribute of your means to their upkeep, decline to do so.

"Not fearing the wrath of the king" (Heb 11:27). The courage of Moses is here set forth in three degrees—he feared not *man*—he feared not the greatest of men, a *king*. He feared not that which most affrights people, the *wrath of a king*. *Religious* Egypt must expect to encounter the "wrath" of man—none hates so bitterly, none acts so cruelly, none come out more in their true colors than the worldly religionist when the veneer of hypocritical piety has been seen through by a child of God. Yet *their* "wrath" is less to be feared than was Pharaoh's, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31).

“For he endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). Ah, here is the key to all that has been before us. Moses “endured,” which tells us of the state of his heart. He “endured” the attractive honors and alluring pleasures of Egypt’s court. He “endured” the repeated compromises of Pharaoh. He “endured” the terrors which his conduct might inspire. His courage was no mere flash in the pan or momentary bravado, but was steady and real. O how little of *this* faith and its blessed fruit of holy boldness is now to be seen in poor, degenerate Christendom. Yet how could it be otherwise, when worldliness has “quenched” the Spirit on every hand? May we who have, by sovereign grace, been drawn to Christ outside the camp, be very jealous and watchful against grieving the Spirit.

The precise word which is here rendered “endured” is not employed elsewhere in the New Testament. Scholars tell us that it is derived from a root meaning strength or fortitude, to bear evils, undergo dangers with resolution and courage, so as not to faint beneath them, but hold on our way to the end. It was a word most appropriate to express the firmness of Moses’ mind in this work of faith in “forsaking Egypt.” He met with a long course of difficulties and was repeatedly threatened by the king, and in addition, he had to endure a great conflict with his own unbelieving brethren. But he strengthened himself with spiritual courage and resolution to abide in his duty to the finish. *How?* Whereby was his strength renewed?

“For he endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). Ah, it was no mulish stupidity nor obstinate imprudence that wrought such a resolution in Moses, but the constant occupation of his heart with the divine perfections. We say “the *constant* occupation,” for note carefully our text does not say, “he endured because he *saw* him who is invisible,” but “as *seeing* him who is invisible”—it was a continuous act! O to be able to say in our measure, “I have *set the Lord always before me*” (Psa 16:8). This is absolutely essential if faith and courage are to be kept healthy. Nothing else will enable *us* to “endure” the frictions and trials of life, the attractions and distractions of the world, the assaults of Satan.

“He endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). “God is said to be invisible (as He *is* absolutely) in respect of His essence, and is often so called in Scripture—Romans 1:20, Colossians 1:15, 1 Timothy 1:17. But there is a peculiar reason for this description of Him here. Moses was in that state and condition, and had those things to do, wherein he stood in need continually of divine power and assistance. Whence this should proceed, he could not discern by his senses, his bodily eyes could behold no present assistant, for God is ‘invisible’. And it requires an especial act of the mind in expecting help from Him who cannot be seen. Wherefore this is here ascribed to him. He saw Him who was in Himself invisible; that is, he saw Him by faith, whom He could not see with his eyes” (John Owen). This word “invisible” shows the uselessness (as well as sin) of making images to represent God and warns against our forming any apprehensions in our mind patterned after the likeness of any visible object. Though God be invisible, yet He sees us!

“He endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). “A double act of the faith of Moses is intended herein. 1. A clear, distinct view and apprehension of God in His omnipresence, power, and faithfulness. 2. A fixed trust in Him on their account, at all times and on all occasions. This he rested on, this he trusted to, that God was everywhere present with him, able to protect him, and faithful in the discharge of His promise” (John Owen). God is the proper object of faith—on which it rests, from which it expects every good, and to which it returns the glory for all.

O the surpassing excellency of faith. It takes in eternal, invisible, infinite objects. By His providences, God often appears to be against His people, but faith knows He is for them. In this world we are subject to many trials and miseries, but faith knows that “all things work together

for good to them that love God” (Rom 8:28). The bodies of God’s children die, are buried, and return to dust, but faith beholds a glorious resurrection for them. O the wondrous power of faith to rise above the things of sight and sense. It is true that neither the impartation of faith, nor its growth and exercise, lie within *our* power. Nevertheless, we *are* responsible to avoid those things which becloud and weaken faith, and we are responsible to nourish faith. How very few make serious efforts *to see* “him who is invisible!”

THE LIFE OF DAVID

25. His Sorrow at Ziklag

“*Preserve me*, O God: for in thee do I put my trust” (Psa 16:1). This is a prayer which, in substance at least, every child of God frequently puts up to his heavenly Father. He feels his own insufficiency and calls upon One who is all-sufficient. He realizes how incompetent he is to defend and protect himself, and seeks the aid of Him whose arms are all-mighty. If he is in his right mind, before starting out on a journey, when any particular danger threatens him, and ere settling down for the night’s repose, he commits himself into the custody and care of Him who never slumbers or sleeps. Blessed privilege! Wise precaution! Happy duty! The Lord graciously keep us in a spirit of complete dependence upon Himself.

“The LORD *preserveth* all them that love him” (Psa 145:20). Most Christians are more ready to perceive the fulfillment of this precious promise when they have been delivered from some physical danger, than when they were preserved from some moral evil, which shows how much more we are governed by the natural than the spiritual. We are quick to own the preserving hand of God when a disease epidemic voids our home, when a heavy falling object just clears our path, or when a swiftly-moving auto just misses the car we are in, but we ought to be just as alert in discerning the miraculous hand of God when a powerful temptation is suddenly removed from us or we are delivered from it.

“But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil” (2Th 3:3). The Lord’s people are surrounded with a variety of evils within and without. They have sin in them, and it is the cause and fountain of all the evil and misery which they at any time feel and experience. There is the evil one without, who endeavours at times to bring great evil upon them. But the Lord “keepeth his people from evil,” not that they are exempted wholly and altogether from evil. Yet they are kept from being overcome by and engulfed in it. Though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth them with His right hand.

Wondrous are the ways in which God *preserves* His saints. Many a one has been withheld from that success in business on which he had fondly set his heart. It was God delivering him from those material riches which would have ruined his soul! Many a one was disappointed in a love affair. It was God delivering from an ungodly partner for life, who would have been a constant hindrance to your spiritual progress! Many a one was cruelly treated by trusted and

cherished friends. It was God breaking what would have proved an unequal yoke! Many a parent was plunged into grief by the death of a dearly loved child. It was God, in His mercy, taking away what would have proved an idol. Now we see these things through a glass darkly, but the day will come, dear reader, when we shall perceive clearly that it was the *preserving* hand of our gracious God thus dealing with us at those very times when all seemed to be working against us.

The above meditations have been suggested by what is recorded in 1 Samuel 29. At the close of our last article, we saw how mercifully God interposed to deliver His servant from the snare of the fowler. Through his unbelief and self-will, David had gotten into a sore dilemma. Seeking help from the ungodly, he had placed himself under obligations to the king of Gath. Pretending to be the friend of the Philistines and the enemy of his own people, Achish was now determined to employ David and his men upon the attack which was planned against Israel. Then it was that the Lord interposed and *preserved* the object of His love from falling into much graver evil. He now graciously made “a way to escape” (1Co 10:13), lest His poor erring child should be tempted above that which he was able.

And *how* was that “way to escape” opened for him? Ah, *this* is the point which we wish to particularly direct our attention unto. It was not by means of any visible or outward work, but through the inward and secret operations of His power. The Lord turned against David the hearts of the other “princes of the Philistines” (1Sa 29:3-5) and in consequence, Achish was obliged to part with his services. Ah, my reader, how often was the Lord secretly working *for* you, when He turned the heart of some worldling *against* you! If we were more spiritual, this would be perceived more clearly and frequently by us, and we should then render unto our gracious Deliverer the praise which is His due. David’s discharge from the service of Achish was just as much a miracle as was his deliverance from the enmity of Saul. It was as the truly the working of God’s *preserving* power to rouse the jealousy and enmity of the Philistine lords against David, as it was to shield him from the javelin which the demon-possessed king hurled at him (1Sa 18:11).

“So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel” (1Sa 29:11). Commanded by the king of Gath so to do (1Sa 29:10), there was no other prudent alternative. Thus the snare was broken and David was now free to return unto his own city, not knowing (as yet) how urgently his presence was needed there. Stealing away amid the shadows of the dawn, the flight of David and his men was scarcely any less ignominious than was the banishment of back-slidden Abraham from Egypt (Gen 12:20). Though God often extricates His people from the dangerous situations which their unbelief brings them into, nevertheless, He makes them at least taste the bitterness of their folly. But as we shall see, the shame which the Philistine lords put upon David, turned to his advantage in various ways. Thus does God, sometimes, graciously overrule unto good even our failures and falls.

“So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel” (1Sa 29:11). Delivered from a sore dilemma, a heavy burden removed from his shoulders, we may well suppose it was with a light heart that David now led his men out of the camp of Achish. Blithely unconscious of the grievous disappointment awaiting them, David and his men retraced their steps to Ziklag, for it was there he had deposited all that was chiefly dear to him on earth—his wives and his children were there. It was there he had formed a rest for himself—but apart from God! Ah, how little do any of us know what a day may bring forth. How often is a happy morning followed by a night of sadness. Much cause have we while in this world to “rejoice with trembling” (Psa 2:11).

Though David had now been delivered from his false position as an ally of Achish against Israel, not yet had he been brought back to God. Deep exercises of heart were required for this, and He who preserveth His people from fatal back-sliding saw to it that His erring servant should not escape. Though He is the God of all grace, yet His grace ever reigns “through righteousness,” and never at the expense of it. Though His mercy delivers His saints from the sad pitfalls into which their folly leads them, usually, He so orders His providences, that they are made to smart for their wrong-doing and the Holy Spirit uses this to convict them of their sins, and they, in turn, *condemn themselves* for the same. The means employed by God on this occasion were drastic, yet surely not more so than the case called for.

“And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire” (1Sa 30:1). After a three days’ march from the camp of Achish, hoping to find rest in their homes and joy in the bosom of their families, here was the scene upon which the eyes of David and his men now fell! What a bitter moment must this have been for our hero! His little, all had vanished. He returns to the place where his family and possessions were, only to find the city a mass of smoking ruins, and those whom he loved no longer there to welcome him. When we leave our families (though it be for only a few hours), we cannot foresee what may befall them or ourselves ere we return. We ought therefore to commit each other to the protection of God and to render unto Him unfeigned thanks when we meet again in peace and safety.

“And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way” (1Sa 30:2). Let us learn from this that it is the part of wisdom, on *all* occasions, to moderate our expectation of earthly comforts, lest we should by being over-sanguine, meet with the more distressing disappointment. Behold here the restraining power of the Lord, in preventing the Amalekites slaying the women and children. “Whether they spared them to lead them in triumph, or to sell them, or to use them for slaves, God’s hand must be acknowledged, who designed to make use of the Amalekites for the correction, but not for the destruction, of the house of David” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Blessed is it to know that even in wrath God remembers “mercy” (Hab 3:2).

“And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way” (1Sa 30:2). From this we may also see how sorely David was now being chastened for being so forward to go with the Philistines against the people of God. Hereby the Lord showed him he had far better have stayed at home and minded his own business. “When we go abroad, in the way of our duty, we may comfortably hope that God will take care of our families, in our absence, *but not otherwise*” (Matthew Henry). No, to count upon the Lord’s protection, either for ourselves or for our loved ones, when we enter forbidden territory, is wicked presumption and not faith. It was thus the devil sought to tempt Christ—Cast Thyself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and the angels shall safeguard Thee.

“So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep” (1Sa 30:3-4). Ah, now he was tasting the bitterness of being without the full protection of God. As a homeless wanderer, hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, despised by the Nabals who dwelt at ease in the land, yet never before had he known the like of this. But now, under the protection of the king of Gath, and with a city of his own, he learns that without *God’s shelter* he is exposed indeed. Learn from this, dear reader, how much we lose when we enter the path of self-will. In the

first shock of disappointment, David could only weep and wail. All appeared to be irrevocably lost.

“It was indeed no wonder that David’s heart was stricken. He had never before known what it was to be smitten like this by the chastening hand of God. Of late, he had seemed even more than ordinarily to be the subject of His care. But now the relation of God seemed suddenly changed into one of severity and wrath. During the year that David had watched his father’s flock, during his residence in the courts of Saul, during the time of his sorrowful sojourn in the wilderness, during his late eventful history in Ziklag, he had never experienced anything but kindness and preservation from the hand of God. He had become so long accustomed to receive sure protection from God’s faithful care, that he seems to have calculated on its uninterrupted continuance. He had lately said, ‘The Lord render unto every man his righteousness...and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation.’ But now the Lord Himself seemed turned into an enemy, and to fight against him. Nor could the conscience of David have failed to discern the reason. It must have owned the justice of the blow. Thus, however, the bitterness of his agony would be aggravated, not lessened” (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899).

“And David’s two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite” (1Sa 30:5). Why did the historian, after specifically stating in verse 2 that the Amalekites had “taken the women captives,” enter into this detail? Ah, is the answer far to seek? Is it not the Holy Spirit making known to us the prime cause of the Lord’s displeasure against David? His “*two* wives” was the occasion of the severing of his communion with the Lord, which, as we have seen, was at once followed by Saul’s renewed attack (see 1Sa 25:43-44 and 26:1-2), his unbelieving fear (1Sa 27:1), and his seeking help from the ungodly (1Sa 27:2-3). We mention this because it supplies *the key* to all that follows from 1 Samuel 25:44 and because so far as we know no other writer has pointed it out.

“And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters” (1Sa 30:6). Poor David! one trouble was added to another. Heartbroken over the loss of his family and the burning of his city, additional distress was occasioned by the murmuring and mutiny of his men. They considered the entire blame rested upon their leader, for having journeyed to Achish and left the city of Ziklag defenseless, and because he had provoked the Amalekites and their allies (1Sa 27:8-9) by his inroad upon them, who had now availed themselves of the opportunity to avenge the wrong. “Thus apt are we, when in trouble, to fly into a rage against those who are in any way the occasion of our troubles, when we overlook the divine providence and have no due regard to *God’s hand* in it” (Matthew Henry).

“On all past occasions he had ever found some to sympathize with and to console him in his afflictions. In the house of Saul, he had had the affection of Jonathan and the favour of many beside. Even in the wilderness, six hundred out of Israel had joined him and had faithfully struggled with him through many a day of difficulty and danger. But now, they too abandon him. Enraged at the sudden calamity (for they also were bereaved of everything)—stung to the quick by a sense of its bitter consequences—imputing all to David (for it was he who had guided them to Ziklag)—even they who shrunk not from the sorrows of the cave of Adullam and who had braved all the dangers of the wilderness, forsook him now. They all turned fiercely upon him as the author of their woe, and spake of stoning him. Thus stricken of God, despised by his friends, bereaved of all that he loved, David drank of a cup which he never tasted before. He had earned it for himself. It was the fruit of his self-chosen Ziklag” (Benjamin W. Newton).

And what was the Lord's purpose in these sore trials which now came upon David? It was not to crush him and sink him into despair. No, rather was it with the design of moving him to humble himself beneath his mighty hand (1Pe 5:6), confess his wrongdoing, and be restored to happy fellowship. God's heaviest chastenings of "His own" are sent in love and for the benefit of their subjects. But to enter into the good of them, to afterward enjoy "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" therefrom, the recipient of those chastenings *must be* "exercised thereby" (Heb 12:11). He must bow beneath the rod, yea, "hear" and "kiss" it, before he will be the spiritual gainer. Thus it was with the subject of these articles, as will appear in the immediate sequel.

DISPENSATIONALISM

7. The Law of God

When the Son of God took upon Him the form of a servant, He announced, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, *thy law* is within my heart" (Psa 40:8). The sweet Psalmist of Israel declared, "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver...O *how love I thy law!* it is my meditation all the day...Great peace have they which *love thy law*: and nothing shall offend them" (Psa 119:72, 97, 165). The apostle to the Gentiles wrote, "Wherefore the law is *holy*, and the commandment holy, and just, and good...The law is *spiritual*...*I delight in the law of God after the inward man*" (Rom 7:12, 14, 22). In view of these passages, how solemn and how sad is the opposition against the holy law of God that we now behold on every side.

It is grievous beyond expression to find so many who refused the fables of "Higher Criticism" and who have boldly stood for the full inspiration and divine authority of the Sacred Scriptures, using their influence *against* the holy law of God and telling their hearers that the few now left who insist upon the law being the believer's Rule of Life are only desirous of "bringing them into bondage." Satan indeed secured a great triumph when he succeeded in getting the "champions of orthodoxy" to declare that Christians are dead to the law in *every* sense and that its requirements are no longer binding upon them. The vagaries of "Dispensationalism" have had much to do with this modern outcry against the law of God and unspeakably solemn is it to think of what their proponents will have to answer for in the day to come, when they must render an account unto the Law-Giver Himself. O that it may please the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of some of them before it is too late.

There have been four chief mistakes made by our moderns on the subject of the law. First, that it was never given by God until He promulgated it upon Mount Sinai. Second, that it was given only to and for the nation of Israel, the fleshly descendants of Jacob. Third, that Christians are not under it in *any* sense and that every effort to press it upon them is an attempt to deprive them of their spiritual liberty. Fourth, that law and grace are mutually antagonistic, and can no more be combined than can oil and water—that they are opposing principles, the one being the enemy of

the other. These are the principal errors which have been vigorously propagated the past two or three generations by many who were, and are, regarded as the leading contenders for the faith once delivered to the saints. Is it too much to ask the reader to follow us now as we seek to challenge these positions, *to test them by Holy Writ*?

Before proceeding further, let us give a definition of what we intend by the law of God. “It is the eternal rule of righteousness, which is essential to the being and glory of God’s moral government and kingdom, and is in a sense the foundation of it, pointing out and declaring the duty of rational creatures, or moral agents, as what is fit and proper to be required of them, and containing the rule of God’s conduct toward them, as their Moral Governor” (Samuel Hopkins, 1800). That “eternal rule of righteousness” was formally summarized in the Ten Commandments which were written by the finger of Jehovah on the two tables of stone. Those we speak of as “the moral law” in distinction from the ceremonial.

“What is the moral law? The moral law is the declaration of the will of God to mankind, directing and binding everyone to personal, perfect, and perpetual conformity and obedience thereunto, in the frame and disposition of the whole man, soul and body, and in performance of all those duties of holiness and righteousness which he oweth to God and man—promising life upon the fulfilling and threatening death upon the breach of it. Question: Is there any use of the moral law to man since the Fall? Answer: Although no man since the Fall can attain righteousness and life by the moral law, yet there is great use thereof, as well common to all men, as peculiar either to the unregenerate or the regenerate. Question: Of what use is the moral law to all men? Answer: The moral law is of use to all men to inform them of the holy nature and will of God, and of their duty binding them to walk accordingly; to convince them of their disability to keep it and of the sinful pollution of their nature, hearts, and lives; to humble them in the sense of their sin and misery, and thereby help them to a cleaner sight of the need they have of Christ, and of the perfection of His obedience” (Westminster Catechism). The “Westminster Catechism” was drawn up by many of the ablest of the Puritans, assembling first in 1643. It is still the standard of the Scottish Presbyterians and was adopted by the synod of New York and Philadelphia in 1788. We have transcribed the above, not because we regard them as of any final authority, but because the definitions given are superior to any that we can frame.

“What is the moral law? I define it to be the holy, just, and good will of God made known and promulgated to His creatures in all those particulars, wherein He requires their perfect obedience, in order to their happiness. The law is the discovery of His will, for the Almighty Creator and sovereign Lord of heaven and earth governs all His works and creatures according to the good pleasure of His own will.

“1. The Lord God, the Almighty Creator of all things visible and invisible, has an unalienable right to make laws for the government of His creatures. This right is founded in His absolute dominion on and sovereignty over them. They are His property, the work of His hands. He hath created and made them, and not they themselves. Their life and all things belonging to it are His, coming from His gift, and continued by His bounty; and therefore He has a most indisputable claim to their obedience. What He requires, they must perform, because they are His creatures. The relation between the Creator and His creatures puts them under a necessity of obeying His law and will, or else of suffering whatever He shall threaten to inflict upon their disobedience.

“2. The law of the Lord God, the Almighty Creator, is unalterable. It changeth not; for it is the copy of God’s most holy mind and will, in which there can be no variableness, neither shadow of turning. If the mind and will of God were to change, then God would be a changeable being, and whatever is changeable is imperfect; but God is perfect, therefore His mind and will change not.

His Word will He not break, nor alter the law that has gone out of His mouth. His infinite wisdom and His almighty power stand engaged to maintain its dignity, that it may be always an holy, just, and good law, which He will not break or alter.

“3. The moral law, which the Lord God revealed to Adam in Paradise, required of him perfect uninterrupted obedience. The whole moral law is summed up in one word, love; love to God for the blessings of creation and providence, and love to man for God’s sake. This love was the indispensable homage due to the Creator. It could not be alienated from Him, and given to any other object without idolatry; for which reason the moral law is unalterable. If a man withdraw his love in the least from God, he breaks that law which positively enjoins him to love the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength.

“4. The law given to Adam being unalterable, all his descendants are bound to keep it; for they are all under the law, as God’s creatures. His will is the indispensable rule of their obedience. He requires their love, and if they refuse to give it to Him, then their will is opposite to His, which is rebellion against their sovereign Lord, and which must bring upon them swift destruction” (William Romaine, 1760).

The law was given to Adam in a twofold manner—subjectively and objectively. Subjectively, God endowed our first parents with a nature suited to and responding unto all the requirements of His holy will. The Creator placed in Adam’s heart holy instincts and inclinations unto whatsoever He commanded, and an aversion for all which He prohibited. As it is the “nature” of beasts to care for their young, for birds to build nests before they lay their eggs, for ants to lay by a store of food for the winter, so it was the “nature” of unfallen man to love and fear God, and seek His glory in a spiritual manner. This was wrought into the very constitution of his soul and spirit, enlightening his understanding, inclining his affections, and moving his will Godwards. He was endowed with inward abilities suited to every duty required from him. It is one of the many errors of Plymouth Brethrenism (echoed from Socinianism) that Adam had merely a negative “innocence,” and lacked a positive righteousness and holiness.

In proof of what has been affirmed in the preceding paragraph, we appeal to Genesis 1:26, “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” This cannot mean less than that, in his original state, man reflected in his nature the moral perfections of God—love, wisdom, holiness. That Adam was endowed with *spiritual* life is clear from the fact that in the day he disobeyed his Maker, he *died spiritually*, and he could not have done so unless he had first been in possession of spiritual life. That Adam and all his posterity, as federally represented by him, *were* originally in possession of spiritual life is clear from Ephesians 4:18, where his fallen children are declared to be “*alienated from the LIFE OF GOD.*” How could they be “alienated from” that life, had it never been theirs? That the law of God was written upon Adam’s heart in the day of his creation, that this formed his very “nature,” or the characteristic constitution of his soul (distinguishing him from the beasts), and that his being created in the image and likeness of God signified that his nature reflected His moral perfections, is clear from the fact that in regeneration the elect are “*renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him*” (Col 3:10), which is amplified in Ephesians 4:24 as, “which after God is created *in righteousness and true holiness.*”

Though all his descendants fell in and with Adam, their federal head, and have inherited from him a depraved nature and constitution, being born into this world “dead in trespasses and sins,” nevertheless, they still bear clear traces of that law of God which was, originally, written on their first parent’s heart. Positive proof of this is furnished in Romans 2:14-15, “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do *by nature* the things contained in the law, these, having not the law,

[the scriptural revelation of the same], are a law unto themselves: Which show *the work of the law written in their hearts*.” The “work of the law” is that which the law *does*, namely, *instructs* concerning the goodness and badness of actions, teaching men what is right and wrong. In honouring their parents, paying their debts, being kind to the poor, men do (some of) “the things contained in the law,” for those are actions which the law prescribes, and thereby they give evidence that the law was once written on their hearts. The *effects* thereof are sufficient to render men inexcusable, but not enough to direct them in the way of holiness and happiness.

But Adam also had the law of God set before him *objectively*. Being “made upright” (Ecc 7:29), or perfectly holy, necessarily supposes a *rule* of conduct, or that there was a *standard* to determine right and wrong in moral character and action. In other words, man was placed under moral government, which supposes a law requiring perfect obedience of him—defining his whole duty—and forbidding all disobedience on pain of suffering the just dessert of it. He was required to love God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself, and to express this in all proper ways and to obey every precept which God should give him. To suppose otherwise would be to deny that man was treated as a moral agent at his creation. Nor does this conclusion rest merely on logical supposition. While it be true that no particular account is found in Genesis of man’s being placed under this moral government, yet it may be clearly demonstrated from what has been since revealed.

The apostle Paul, speaking of the law under which all mankind are, asserts the tenor of it in these words, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal 3:10). Now that “law” must have existed *before* man sinned, and while he had opportunity and was in a capacity *to* “continue” to do everything required by it. For if man, when in those circumstances, was not under law, with this sanction, and bound by it, there could be no reason or propriety in making this requirement of such a penalty, when man had *already* violated it and rendered it impossible *to do* what it required. It necessarily follows, therefore, that man was originally made under the law, when in a state of innocency, which denounced a curse upon him, if he failed to render perfect obedience!

This is further confirmed by what the apostle says of the law given to man, in his primitive state, namely, that it was “(ordained) *to life*” (Rom 7:10), and that the man which doeth those things required by it “*shall live by them*” (Rom 10:5). This *must* refer to the *original* law given to man when innocent, or before he sinned, for no such law could be ordained or given “unto life,” that is, proposing and promising life, on *this* condition, since sin took place. For it is *impossible* that men, since the first apostasy, should obtain “life” in this way! This the apostle plainly observes in his own case, “the commandment, which was ordained [or “given”] to life, I found to be *unto death*” (Rom 7:10). Thus, the law given to man in the day of his creation, and which threatened death for transgression, also promised *life* to him upon obedience!

A careful study of the book of Genesis reveals the fact that, from the beginning, all the posterity of Adam were under the law of God, and that they possessed a knowledge of the same. It is passing strange that anyone should imagine the opposite. Romans 4:15 plainly enough declares, “Where no law is, there is no transgression.” If the early descendants of Adam had not been under the law of God, then they had been left *without any divine standard for the regulation of their conduct*, they had been without any moral government and consequently, none of their actions had been either good or evil. To what gross absurdities does a departure from Holy Writ reduce us!

“Sin is not imputed when there is no law” (Rom 5:13). What could be plainer than that? If from Adam to Moses, men had not been under the law of God, then none of their actions would

have deserved punishment, for it is a breach of His law only which subjects men to God's displeasure and penalty. How could God charge Cain with the murder of Abel, had there been no law forbidding murder? By what authority did Noah curse his son (which curse was approved by God Himself) if there was then no commandment *to* "honour" parents? Why was Abimelech held guilty for taking unto himself the wife of Abraham, had there been no law forbidding the same? God Himself told him, "I also withheld thee from *sinning* against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her" (Gen 20:6). "Sinning" *against what?* why, the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery"! Why should Judah say, "Bring her forth, and let her be *burnt*" (Gen 38:24) when he learned his daughter-in-law had "played the harlot," unless the *same* law as Leviticus 21:9 had *then* been in force, "And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore, she profaneth her father: she shall be *burnt* with fire"!

Noah was a "preacher of *righteousness*" (2Pe 2:5) and the standard or rule of "righteousness" is *the law*. Noah pressed upon the Antediluvians the holy claims of God, denounced their rebellions against Him, and threatened them with the certain doom awaiting them if they repented not and turned from their evil ways. The sending of the Flood upon the world of the ungodly is clear proof that God *was* then "imputing sins" and executing the penalty of His law. Once more, "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job 31:1). Read through the whole of that chapter and then ask, If the holy law of God was unknown to men in those early times, *where* had Job learned such a high standard of morality and piety? An echo will still answer, "Where!" O the blindness of men who affirm that there was no divine law given before Sinai.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Carson on Esther

The great design of this portion of the Holy Scriptures is to display the wisdom, providence, and power of God in the preservation of His people and in the destruction of their enemies. We learn from it that the most casual events which take place in the affairs of the world are connected with His plans respecting His people and that the most trifling things are appointed and directed by Him to effect His purposes. It decides a question that philosophy has conversed for ages and will never fathom—recording a number of events, the result of man's free will, yet evidently appointed of God and directed by His providence. From this book, the believer may learn to place unbounded confidence in the care of his God in the utmost danger and to look to the Lord of omnipotence for deliverance when there is no apparent means of escape. It demonstrates a particular providence, in the minutest things, and affords the most solid answer to all the objections of philosophy to this consoling truth.

The wisdom of this world, with all its acuteness, is not able to perceive how God can interfere on any particular occasion, without deranging the order of His general plans. Philosophers

account for the prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions of the righteous from the operation of general laws. A villain grows rich by industry and oppresses the virtuous poor. A rich man loses his all by a storm at sea or is himself overwhelmed in the ruins of an earthquake. In all this, the philosopher's god cannot interfere, for he is tied down by the order of a general providence. He is fettered by his own previously established laws, as effectually as the gods of the heathen were when they swore by the river Styx. He must quietly look on amidst all the occasional mischief resulting from his plans, which, though upon the whole the best possible, yet have many unavoidable defects. Storms and earthquakes result from the operations of general laws established at first by the Author of nature and the Almighty, it is supposed, without unsuitably counteracting the order appointed by Himself, can neither prevent them nor deliver from their dreadful consequences. Famine and war, with all the evils that destroy or afflict men, are accounted for on principles that exclude a particular providence. The arrogance of the oppressor cannot be restrained, nor the sufferings of the virtuous prevented, without an unbecoming deviation from the order of nature. Philosophy cannot see how her god could dispose every particular event without a miracle on every occasion of interference. On this supposition, she thinks that he must be continually suspending and counteracting the general laws which he at first established for the government of the world.

How different from this philosophic god is the Lord God of the Bible! JEHOVAH has indeed established general laws in the government of the world, yet in such a manner that *He is the immediate Author* of every particular event. His power has been sometimes displayed in suspending these laws, but is usually employed in directing them to fulfill His particular purposes. The sun and the rain minister to the nourishment and comfort equally of the righteous and the wicked, not from the necessity of general laws, but from the immediate providence of Him who, in the government of the world, wills this result. Accordingly, the shining of the sun and the falling of the rain on the fields of the wicked, are represented in Scripture, not as the unavoidable effects of general laws, but as the design of supreme goodness. A fowling-piece well aimed will strike a particular object, but divine truth has assured us that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without the permission of the Ruler of the world. This book (Esther) teaches us that God exerts His particular providence in an inconceivably wise and skillful manner, even by the operation of His general laws, and by the exercise of the free determinations of men. The very laws that in the opinion of the philosopher stand in the way of a particular providence are here exhibited as the agents that He deposes to effect His purposes. The most astonishing interferences that ever were recorded are here effected solely through the operation of general laws and the actions of voluntary agents. The people of God are delivered out of the most imminent danger and their enemies most marvelously overturned, without a single miracle. The glory of the divine wisdom, and power, and providence shines here the more illustriously, because God effects His work *without* suspending the laws of nature or constraining the determination of the agents employed in the execution of His work. Had the earth opened and swallowed the enemies of the Jews, the power of JEHOVAH would have been displayed, but when He saved them by a train of events according to the general laws of nature, each of which separately viewed seems fortuitous, yet when seen in combination must necessarily have been designed to bring about the one great end—the existence of a particular providence is proved and the nature of it is delightfully illustrated. It is not merely taught in doctrine, but it is exhibited in example.

In the history of the deliverance of the Jews through the exaltation of Esther, we have *the whole history of the world in miniature*. The book of Esther is the History of Providence. In the inspired account which we have here of an interesting portion of Jewish history, we have an

alphabet, through the judicious use of which we may read all the events of every day, of every age and nation. This is a divine key which will open all the mysteries of providence. It is God's commentary on all that He has done and all that man has done since the finishing of the works of creation. All is natural and seemingly fortuitous, yet if the whole had been a work of mere fiction for amusement, the events could not have been better adapted to the end. There is all the simplicity of nature, yet all the surprise and interest of romance. The grand object is evolved like the plot of a regular drama. Every event recorded contributes its influence in producing the effect. There is nothing wanting. There is nothing superfluous. Had the most trifling incident refused its aid, the whole plan would have been deranged—the most fatal results would have succeeded. From the first to the last, all parts are connected and influenced like the machinery of a watch. By a thousand wheels, the mainspring guides the index. We have first a train of events to raise up deliverance to the Jews, even before they were brought into danger. Next, we have a train of events to bring them to the brink of ruin. Then following, the surprising means of their preservation and the destruction of their enemies. To one or other of the objects, every circumstance recorded in the history contributes and the whole forms one of the grandest displays of the wisdom, power, and providence of God that is to be met with in the Scriptures, and is well-calculated to represent that noble plan by which the kingdom of Satan is overturned, and God's people are delivered from the power of their great enemy, through the very means intended for their utter extirpation.

In reviewing the train of events that provided the means of deliverance for the Jewish nation, before they were brought into danger, the first thing that presents itself is the great feast of Ahasuerus. At first sight, nothing could have been more unconnected with the intended object. It is quite a fortuitous and ordinary matter. A royal revel would appear calculated to defeat the designs of JEHOVAH rather than to fulfill them. But the wisdom and omnipotence of JEHOVAH can use ordinary events by a worldly assembly, or even a synagogue of Satan, as well as by a Church of Christ. *He reigns as absolutely over His enemies as among His friends.* He works through Satan and his emissaries, as well as through the ministry of the angels of His presence, and employs the councils of sinners, as well as the loyal and loving exertions of saints. The occasion of originating this deliverance to the people of God was a feast to exhibit the glory of a worldly kingdom and not a religious assembly. God employs His agents in works suitable to their character! Had the wisdom of men formed the plan of deliverance, the monarch would have been made a proselyte to the religion of the Jews, and the work would have been effected by him as a servant of the God of Israel. But God does everything by him while he continues, as far as we are informed, altogether uninfluenced by the law of the Lord of heaven. Had David sat on the throne of Persia, his zeal for the preservation of Israel and destruction of their enemies could not have flamed with greater ardor than that of Ahasuerus.

What was the particular occasion of this feast we are not informed and therefore it can be no way useful for our edification. Commentators are usually very obliging with their conjectures on such an emergency and edify us with many a shrewd guess. But it is the duty of a Christian to learn everything that the Scriptures record and it is equally his duty to remain in the most obstinate ignorance of everything they do not reveal. Whether this was a birthday or a feast for commemorating the accession to the throne, whether it was an annual festival or an occasional revel, I know not—I care not. What I know is, that God had evidently determined it as a link of the wonderful concatenation of ordinary events employed by Him to effect His glorious purpose of delivering His people. Though the free appointment of man, it was also the appointment of God. It was necessary to give birth to the events that followed.

The whimsical, tyrannical, and indecent thought that struck the mind of the monarch in his wine, though originating with himself, was according to the appointment of a wise Providence. Why did such a thought come into his mind? It was evidently contrary to the custom of Persia for Vashti to make such an appearance, as the females on this occasion feasted apart. It was extremely indecorous for the female majesty of the empire to be exposed to the formal survey of such an assembly, heated with wine. The queen's disobedience of the orders of an absolute monarch, accustomed to universal obedience, shows how much the thing required was contrary to the general sentiments of decorum. Had such a thing been usual, it would not have been so offensive to the queen. It may be said it was a drunken frolic. But was the king never drunk before? Is this the only time that he acted under the influence of wine? Why did the thought strike him now rather than at any other time of his drinking? Why is it that this is the only instance of the kind on record? God's intention undoubtedly was that a thing might be enjoined on the queen with which she would not comply, that her disgrace might make way for the exaltation of the deliverer of His people. Yet though in one point of view it was the appointment of God, in another, it was the result of the actions of free and voluntary agents.

God's purpose is brought about by those whose only view is to fulfill *their own* purposes.

How inscrutable are the mysteries of Providence! How unsearchable are His counsels in the government of the world! Men are His enemies—they hate Him and disobey Him, yet in all their plans and actions *they fulfill His will*. The regularity of the heavenly bodies in their courses is wonderful, but they are not voluntary agents. They are constantly urged on by the hand of their Creator. But men think, and resolve, and act for themselves, yet *they* fulfill the plans of JEHOVAH as much as the sun, moon, and stars. His very enemies in opposing Him are made the instruments of serving Him. How consoling to the believer is this view of Providence! When he looks around him he sees everywhere men trampling on the laws of God and openly putting dishonor on Him. Is God disappointed in the end that He proposed by His works? Is He really overcome and thwarted by the prince of darkness? No! JEHOVAH is executing His purposes even through the wickedness of men and devils, and all things that have taken place from the creation must minister to His glory.

Though Satan has usurped the throne of God in the world for so many thousand years, yet in all this God has been executing His own plans and He *now* rules on earth as absolutely and as unreservedly as He does in heaven. This is a depth which we cannot fathom, but it is a truth necessary for the honor of the character of God and one of which the Scriptures leave no room for doubt. The sin and misery that are on the earth, the endless perdition of wicked men and devils, are subjects of melancholy consideration to the man of God, but let him be consoled with the thought that JEHOVAH worketh *all* things according to the counsel of His own will, and that the darkest spots on the book of God may appear in the brightness of meridian light in the world of glory. "The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Pro 16:4). The apostle Paul declares that he was a "sweet savour unto God," as well "in those that perish," as "in those that are saved." (See 2Co 2:15) A fool may ask, How can these things be so? and the wisest man on earth cannot answer him. But is it not enough that *God* has said it? Shall little children receive the word of their parents with the utmost confidence of conviction, when they testify the most incredible things, and shall we hesitate to receive the Word of the God of Truth?

The queen's refusal is another providential circumstance which we are here called to observe and to admire. Notwithstanding the singularity, the indelicacy, and the unreasonableness of the command, it is remarkable that the queen should venture to disobey a despot heated with wine.

She could scarcely expect to escape with impunity. Even Esther herself, with all her surpassing beauty, was exceedingly reluctant to venture uncalled into his presence. She was not willing to risk her life on his caprice, whether he would hold out his golden scepter or suffer her to perish in her rashness. What, then, must have been the danger of Vashti? What must have been the intrepidity of the daring woman that refused to obey him? Her conduct was singularly bold and imprudent, her resolution was no doubt suggested by her pride or by her sense of decorum, but a regard to self-interest is usually stronger than these principles, especially in courts. Why, then, did her delicacy at this time prevail over her prudence? Not one woman in a thousand would have acted in this manner in the same circumstances. Why then did a woman of such spirit fill the situation of queen at this critical moment? Why was not her duty accompanied with an abject spirit of servility, as is usually the case among slaves of Eastern despots? The reason evidently is, *God* had provided this high-spirited woman for the occasion which He meant to serve by her. He had determined her character and conduct as the means of executing His purposes, and by the ordinary course of events, His providence had given a consort to the monarch who was fitted for the part which He designed that she should act. As a voluntary agent she ignorantly fulfilled the will of Him whom she knew not, when she was influenced solely by a regard to her own feelings.

The advice of the king's counselors on this occasion is also remarkable. The sycophants around despots are generally distinguished for caution. Even in their revels they are seldom off their guard. Now it was at the utmost hazard that they gave this advice. They must succeed or fall. Though pure love could not influence the breast of a licentious Eastern monarch, yet it is evident that Ahasuerus admired the beauty of his queen. The favorite mistress of despots is known to prevail against the most subtle and most powerful ministers. We see how readily this very monarch gave up to Esther the man whom he most singularly honored and raised above all the princes of the empire. If the counselors of the king should fail in displacing Vashti from the affections of their master, they were evidently planning their own ruin. Had the king refused to listen to their counsel, and the queen been restored to power, their overthrow was certain. Why, then, did not the subtle statesmen take the wisest course and make their court to the queen by interceding for her pardon? After all, the provocation of the king by the queen's disobedience, it was still possible that a man who admired her beauty, and had provoked her transgression, might not instantly put it out of his power to forgive her. She might have been disgraced in such a way as not to prevent her restoration, on repentance. Such a bold step in the ministers of a despot is certainly remarkable. But whatever might influence them, *God had determined* their counsel as the means of fulfilling His own.

That the king should subject her to a temporary degradation or disgrace, even though his own improper command was the occasion in her transgression, is very natural, but that, for the cold-hearted purposes of setting an example to the wives of the empire, he could consent to give up forever one whom he so much admired, discovers more stoicism than is generally to be found in absolute monarchs. Their treatment of their wives is usually more influenced by passion than by a view to public good. In the heat of his fury, it would have been less strange that he should have given orders for her death, than he should divorce her for an example to the wives of his subjects. Yet, to the frigid morality of his wise men does this Eastern sensualist sacrifice his beautiful queen. By a harsh decree, she is divorced forever. But this great feast, this capricious command, this imprudent disobedience, this rash advice, this unfeeling consent, this sacrifice of affection to policy, this harsh decree, are all necessary in the plans of Providence. Vashti must be removed, that Esther may be exalted to her place.—Alex Carson, 1853.

THE LAW AND A CHRISTIAN

The law was given *twice* upon Mount Sinai, but the appearance of the Lord, when He gave it the second time, was wonderfully different from that of His, when at first He delivered it to Israel.

1. When He gave it the first time, He caused His terror and severity to appear before Moses, to the shaking of his soul and the dismaying of Israel. But when He gave it the second time, He caused all His goodness to pass before Moses, to the comfort of his conscience and the bowing of his heart.

2. When He gave it the first time, it was with thunderings and lightnings, with blackness and darkness, with flame and smoke, and a tearing sound of the trumpet. But when He gave it the second time, it was a proclamation of His name to be merciful, gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgressions, and sins.

3. When He gave it the first time, Moses was called to go up to receive it through the fire, which made him exceedingly to fear and quake. But when he went to receive it the second time, he was laid in a cleft of the rock.

4. From all which I gather, that, though as to the *matter* of the law, both as to its being given the first time and the second, it binds the unbeliever, under the pains of eternal damnation (if he close not with Christ by faith). Yet as to the *manner* of its giving at these two times, I think the first doth more principally intend its force as a covenant of works, not at all respecting the Lord Jesus, but this second time (at least in the manner of its being given) not respecting such a covenant, but rather as *a rule or directory*, to those who already are found in the cleft of the rock, Christ. For the saint himself, though he be without law to God, as it is considered the first or old covenant, yet even he is not without law to Him as considered under grace, nor without law to God, but under the law to Christ.

5. Though therefore it be sad with the unbeliever, because he only and wholly standeth under the law as it is given in fire, in smoke, in blackness, and darkness, and thunder, all which threatening him with eternal ruin if he fulfill not the utmost tittle thereof, yet the believer stands to the law under no such consideration, neither is he so at all to hear or regard it. For he is now removed from thence to the blessed mountain of Zion, to grace and forgiveness of sins. He is now, I say, by faith in the Lord Jesus, shrouded under so perfect and blessed a righteousness, that this thundering law of Mount Sinai cannot find the least fault or diminution therein, but rather approveth and alloweth thereof, either when or wherever it find it. This is called the righteousness of God without the law and is also said to be witnessed by both the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference.

6. Wherefore, whenever thou who believest in Jesus doth hear the law in its thundering and lightening fits, as if it would burn up heaven and earth, then say thou, I am free from this law, these thunderings have nothing to do with my soul. Nay, even this law, while it thus thundereth and roareth, it doth both allow and approve of my righteousness. I know that Hagar would sometimes be domineering and high even in Sarah's house and against her, but this she is not to be suffered to do, nay, though Sarah herself be barren. Wherefore serve it also as Sarah served her

and expel her out of thy house. My meaning is, when this law with its thunderings and threatenings doth attempt to lay hold on thy conscience, shut it out with a promise of grace. Cry, The inn is taken up already, the Lord Jesus is here entertained, and here is no room for the law. Indeed if it will be content with being my informer and so lovingly leave off to judge me, I will be content, it shall be my sight. I will also delight therein, but otherwise, I being now made upright without, and that too with that righteousness which this law speaks well of and approveth, I may not, will not, cannot, dare not, make it my saviour and judge, nor suffer it to set up its government in my conscience, for by so doing I fall from grace and Jesus Christ doth profit me nothing.

7. Thus, therefore, the soul that is married to Him that is raised up from the dead, both may and ought to deal with this law of God. Yea, it doth greatly dishonour its Lord, and refuse its Gospel privileges, if at any time it otherwise doth whatever it seeth or feels. The law hath power over the wife so long as her husband liveth, but if her husband be dead she is freed from that law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she be married to another man. Indeed, so long as thou art alive to sin, and to thy righteousness, which is of the law, so long thou hast them for thy husband, and they must reign over thee. But when once they are become dead unto thee, as they then most certainly will, when thou closest with the Lord Jesus Christ, then, I say, thy former husbands have no more to meddle with thee, thou are freed from their law. Set the case of a woman being cast into prison for a debt of one hundred pounds. If after this, she marry, yea, though while she is in the jailer's hand, in the same day that she is joined to her husband, her debt is all become his. Yea, and the law also, that arrested and imprisoned this woman, as freely tells her, Go and she is freed, saith Paul, from that. The sum, then, of what hath been said is this, The Christian hath now nothing to do with the law *as it thundereth* and burneth on Sinai, or as it bindeth the conscience *to wrath* and the displeasure of God for sin, for, from its *thus* appearing, it is freed by faith in Christ. Yet *it is to have regard thereto* and to count it holy, just, and good, which, that it may do, it is always, when it seeth or regards it, to remember that He who giveth it to us is “merciful, gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.”—John Bunyan, 1660.

We earnestly commend this brief article to the thoughtful attention of each reader. It not only illustrates what was the uniform teaching of the Puritans on this important subject—from which our moderns have so deplorably departed, but it also calls attention to a vitally important distinction. The twofold giving of the law by God *to His people*, adumbrated His giving it to them first *in Adam*, when its fearful threat, “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shall surely die” was suspended over them—symbolized by the thunders and lightnings at Sinai. And second, it being given to them *in Christ*, who now administers it faithfully and righteously, as the gracious and merciful Mediator.

GOD'S JEWELS

“And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels” (Mal 3:17). To whom is God here referring? who are the favoured ones whom He terms His

“jewels”? The previous verse tells us, “Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name” (Mal 3:16). A twofold description is there given by which the people of God may be identified—they have a reverential awe and profound respect of God’s majesty and authority, they have a deep love and adoration for Him—evidenced by their thinking upon His name.

It almost surprises one to learn that the great and self-sufficient God has “jewels,” but our surprise increases to astonishment when we learn that these “jewels” are living creatures, and astonishment gives place to overwhelming amazement when we discover that these living creatures are fallen and depraved sinners redeemed from among the children of men. Truly, naught but divine grace would ever liken such wretched worms of the dust unto precious stones. Yet that is the very thing which we find God doing in our text. It is not the unfallen angels, nor the holy seraphim and exalted cherubims who are spoken of as Jehovah’s valued treasure, but lost and ruined sinners saved by amazing grace. Saints are likened unto wheat, fishes, trees, stars, but here to “jewels.” The figure is a deeply interesting and instructive one.

In Isaiah 55:8-9, we read, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” This is seen in the difference between human and divine estimates of relative values. The world’s standard of worth is very different from that of God’s. Who are the immortals of human history? Caesar, Charlemagne, Napoleon—soldiers and warriors. Among statesmen and politicians we may mention Gladstone and Lincoln, among dramatists, Goethe and Shakespeare. Those were great in the eyes of earth, but who were great in the eyes of heaven? For the most part they were unknown down here. They were humble and lowly, insignificant in the affairs of the world. Their names were never chronicled among men, *but they were written in the Lamb’s Book of Life!*

It is noteworthy that our text is found in the book of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, which corresponds in many respects with the character of our days, as we seem to be nearing the end of the New Testament era. As the late C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) pointed out, “These words were spoken in a very graceless age, when religion was peculiarly distasteful to men; when they scoffed at God’s altar, and said of His service, ‘What a weariness it is’! and scornfully asked, ‘What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance’? Yet even those dark nights were not uncheered by bright stars. Though the house of national worship was often deserted, there were secret conventicles of those who ‘feared the Lord,’ and who ‘spake often one to another,’ and our God, who regards quality more than quantity, had respect to these elect twos and threes. He ‘hearkened and heard,’ and so approved of that which He heard that He takes notes of it, and declared that He will publish it. ‘A book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name’! Yea, and He valued so much these hidden ones that He called them His ‘jewels,’ and declared in the great day when He should gather together His retinue, His regalia, the peculiar treasure of kings, He would look upon these hidden ones as being more priceless than emeralds, rubies, or pearls.”

So it is now when all corporate testimony has broken down, when Christendom is in spiritual ruins. Many of God’s dear children no longer have the privilege of church fellowship, for they dare not attend the modern “synagogues of Satan.” But some of them still have the joy of meeting with little groups of fellow pilgrims, seeking to strengthen one another’s hands as they journey through this wilderness scene. But there are others of God’s “scattered” (Joh 11:52) saints, who are cut off from practically all (*real* Christian fellowship), isolated ones, who have to mourn with

David, “I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top” (Psa 102:7). Yet, though they can no longer “speak often one to another,” they still have the holy and blessed privilege of *thinking upon* that Name which is above every name. These, too, shall be numbered among His precious treasure in the day when He shall “make up” His “jewels.”

Let us now endeavour to ponder this beautiful figure and reverently inquire why the Lord has likened His people to “jewels.” 1. *Because of their inestimable value in His sight.* This is an exceedingly hard thing for the Christian to really grasp, for he feels such a wretched and worthless creature in himself. That the Lord of glory should deem *him* of any consequence is difficult to conceive, that He regards him as of great worth “passeth knowledge.” Yet so it is. The Scriptures are very plain on this point. They declare, “For the LORD’S portion is his people” (Deu 32:9). They speak of, “The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (Eph 1:18). The Lord Jesus likens His Church unto “one pearl of great price,” so that He “went and sold all that he had, and bought it” (Mat 13:46).

From the remotest antiquity men have thought much of precious stones and almost fabulous prices have been paid for them. With great ardour and toil do men hunt after gold, but with even greater eagerness and labour will they seek the diamond. Hundreds of men will labour for a whole year in one of the diamond mines of Africa and the entire result of their efforts may be held in the palm of your hand. Princes have been known to barter their estates in order to obtain some gem of peculiar brilliance and rare excellence. More desirable still are His saints in the esteem of the Lord Jesus. The value of a thing in the eyes of its possessor may be gauged by the price he was willing to pay for it. So valuable was the Church unto Christ that He gave *Himself* for it and shed His “precious blood” to purchase it for Himself. Thus, the saints are likened unto “jewels” because of the great value which the Lord places upon them.

2. *Because of their divine creation.* “A jewel is the production of God. Diamonds have been burned and other jewels have been resolved into their elements, but after the most laborious attempts, no chemist has yet been able to make a diamond. Men can cut the Gordian knot, but they cannot tie it again. Lives have been wasted in attempts to produce precious stones, but the discovery is still unmade. They are the secret productions of God’s own skill and chemists fail to tell how they are produced, though they know their elements. So the world thinks it knows what a Christian is, but it cannot make one. All the wit in the world put together could not find out the secret of the heaven-born life and all the sacraments, vestments, priests, prayers, and paraphernalia of Popery cannot create a Christian. The Lord alone can create a child of grace and a Christian is as much a miracle as was Lazarus when he rose from the tomb. It is as great a work of deity to create a believer as it is to create a world” (C.H. Spurgeon).

This is the basic reason why the saints are precious unto the heart of the Lord Jesus. He regards and receives them as the Father’s workmanship, the Father’s gift unto Him. This comes out again and again in that wondrous seventeenth chapter of John, “I have manifested thy name unto the men which *thou gavest me* out of the world: Thine they were, and thou gavest them me” (Joh 17:6). “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which *thou hast given me*; for they are thine” (Joh 17:9). From all eternity Christ viewed them in the glass of God’s decrees and before the foundations of the earth were laid, His “delights were with the sons of men” (Pro 8:31). Because the Father had, by His predestinating purpose, fashioned His elect as vessels “unto honour” (Rom 9:21), the Son prizes them as of infinite value.

3. *Because of their rarity.* It is this, chiefly, which constitutes the value of precious stones. Were they numerous and common, found in the soil of every man’s garden, they would not be so costly, nor so highly esteemed. The number of large diamonds, called paragons, is very small and

so we read, “*Not many* wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1Co 1:26). Possibly the disparity between diamonds and the pebbles of the brook is no greater than that which exists, numerically, between the regenerate and the unregenerate. The Lord Jesus plainly declared that God’s flock is only a “little” one (Luk 12:32) and that *few* find that narrow way that leadeth unto life (Mat 7:14). God had never likened His people unto “jewels” had they been nearly so numerous as is now popularly supposed.

4. *Because of their beauty.* The jewel is prized for its luster. It is the brilliance of the gem which, in a great measure, is the evidence and test of its value. It is said that the colors of jewels are the brightest known and are the nearest approaches to the rays of the solar spectrum that have yet been discovered. See how the diamond flashes and sparkles! And yet its beauty and brilliance are not so much inherent. Examine it in a dark room and it emits no radiance. It is simply a reflector. Its glory is borrowed from the light. So it is with the saint. His comeliness is a comeliness which has been placed upon him, imputed to him. “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for *he hath clothed me* with the garments of salvation, *he hath covered me* with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (Isa 61:10).

It is very blessed to develop this aspect of our subject. To His disciples the Lord Jesus said, “Ye are the light of the world” (Mat 5:14), and why are they so? Because He could say, “I am the light of the world” (Joh 8:12). The light of a Christian is a *reflected* one. That supplies the key to that little understood exhortation, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat 5:16). “*So shine*” that *Christ* gets all the glory—“so shine” that we make it clear and plain to all that whatever goodness or righteousness there is in us, and whatever fruits are produced by us, all is *from Christ* as the Root. “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord” (Eph 5:8)—yes, “in the Lord”!

5. *Because of their variety.* Precious stones vary considerably both in colour and in size, kind and value, brilliance and worth. If order is heaven’s first law, variety is certainly its second, for there is no uniformity in the ways and works of God, though there is a blessed underlying unity. So it is among gems, all are valuable, but all are not the same. There is the white diamond, the red ruby, the green emerald, the blue sapphire, the violet amethyst. Probably there is not a single ray of the spectrum which is not reflected by some of them. So it is among the saints. All are God’s children, all bear the marks of the divine “workmanship” (Eph 2:10), all are equally precious to Christ, but all are not alike. Beautifully was this typified of old in the breastplate of Israel’s high priest—twelve different precious stones adorned it, representing the tribes of Israel. No two of these gems were alike, but all were equally near to Aaron’s heart!

This brings before us an important aspect of the truth which we do well to ponder. What difference we perceive between Thomas and John, between Peter and Paul, yet all were the apostles of Christ. So it is now among the saints. There is almost endless variety in their capacities, their talents, their growth, the varying graces which they manifest. No one gem reflects *all* the colours of the spectrum and no one believer exhibits all the excellencies of Christ. As the varied rays of the spectrum are *distributed* among jewels, so the varied excellencies of Christ are distributed among His people. One is conspicuous for meekness, another for courage; one for gentleness, another for firmness; one for patience, another for love. God’s people are not all alike, and never will be and all attempts at uniformity must fail. But it matters little whether we shine with the sapphire’s blue, or the emerald’s green, or the ruby’s red, so long as we are the Lord’s on the day when He makes up His jewels.

6. *Because of their durability.* Precious stones are one of the very few things in this world which, notwithstanding the flight of time, neither decay nor die and thus do they strikingly adumbrate in the natural realm that eternal life which pertains to the spiritual world. Diamonds are exceedingly hard. Many of them will cut glass, while they cannot be scratched with the sharpest file. Many of them will be uninjured by the most potent acid. They will endure the test of fire. They are practically imperishable. In this also they resemble the Christian, who has within him a principle which is incorruptible, undefiled, and destined to endure forever. The world has often tried to destroy God's people, but all their efforts to do so have been futile. The empty professor, the sham gem, is like a "paste" diamond. It quickly succumbs to trial, but the genuine child of God endures to the end, and shall reign with Christ forever and ever.

7. *Because of their history.* This is very striking indeed and a separate sermon might well be devoted to enlarging thereon. First, think of *their lowly origin*. Trees grow in parks and flowers in the garden, but jewels are discovered in the mud and mire of earth. Even the lovely pearl is housed in the rough and unsightly shell of the oyster, while diamonds are found in the deep mines, in the bowels of the earth. What a parable and picture of the joint-heirs with Christ in their *natural* state! each of which has to own, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa 51:5). Well did God say to Israel of old, "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the *hole of the pit* whence ye are digged" (Isa 51:1). O the lowly origin of the Christian, "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock" (Psa 40:2).

Second, consider the *cutting of them*. As the precious gem has been located and removed from its original position, the skillful fingers of the lapidary must work upon it. It has to be cut into a proper shape and many facets given to it, for in its original state it is rough and unsymmetrical. So it is with the elect of God. In their natural state, they are "darkness" and quite incapable of reflecting the Light. But the divine Lapidary, the Holy Spirit, after having sought them out, regenerates them. And what is the instrument He employs in this work? Why, the Word of God, which is "quick, and powerful, and *sharper* than any two-edged sword, *piercing* even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" (Heb 4:12). There is the spiritual *cutting* of God's "jewels." The "sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6:17) enters the conscience, searches the heart, cuts down pride, self-will, and self-righteousness.

Third, consider the *polishing of them*. This also forms an important part of the lapidary's work. He must smooth down the rough edges and polish each facet so that it may sparkle the more gloriously, and often that is a long and tedious process. Thus it is in the history of the Christian. God does not take him to glory the moment he is regenerated. No, though a spiritual life has been communicated to him, he needs to pass through many and varied experiences ere he is ripe and ready for heaven. Ah, does not the spiritual reader perceive what we now have in mind? The reason you are still left in this world is because the Spirit has not yet finished the work of *polishing* your soul. You are not yet ready to be placed among the crown-jewels of the King. Here, then, is a comforting and heartening thought. Let us seek to remind ourselves when passing through fiery trials, when smarting under chastisement, that it is part of the polishing process!

8. *Because of their glorious destiny.* "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God" (Isa 62:3). What marvelous words are these—for faith and hope to lay hold of, for our feeble intellects cannot grasp them! Wondrous is it to think of rough stones, which first look like small pebbles, being found in the mud and mire of earth. Then cut and polished till they scintillate with a brilliancy surpassing any earthly object and being given an honoured place in the diadem of a monarch. But infinitely more wonderful is it

that poor lost sinners, saved by sovereign grace, should be among the crown-jewels of the Son of God. But He will yet “present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 1:24). Then shall He say to the Father, “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them” (Joh 17:22). Then shall be fulfilled that word, “When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and *to be admired* in all them that believe” (2Th 1:10).

“And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels” (Mal 3:17). That day has not yet arrived, but it is not far distant, “For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb 10:37). What is meant by, “When I *make up* my jewels”? Is it not when the *complete* number of His redeemed are regenerated and polished? Is it not when He shall descend from heaven with a shout, resurrect the sleeping saints and transform the living ones and rapture them *together*, so that we shall “ever be with the Lord” (1Th 4:16-17)—“make up” (Mal 3:17), “caught up” (1Th 4:17)!

Our dear father, now in heaven, once wrote us: “Earthly jewels sometimes get separated from their owner, Christ’s jewels never, ‘For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life...nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord’ (Rom 8:38-39). Earthly jewels are sometimes lost—Christ’s jewels never, ‘And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand’ (Joh 10:28). Earthly jewels are sometimes stolen—Christ’s never, “...in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Mat 6:20). Are you *sure* that *you* are one of Christ’s jewels? Then seek to shine for Him now.

(The above is a sermon, slightly revised, which was preached by the editor in Garden Grove, California, over twenty year ago.)

GOOD NEWS

Our prayer-helpers and Christian friends will rejoice to hear that, by the abounding goodness and faithfulness of God, we were permitted to close our Magazine accounts for 1933 (on November 30) with \$95 (19 pounds sterling) to the good—the largest credit balance we have ever had in any one year. This will be carried forward to 1934. Hallelujah! Truly “the cattle upon a thousand hills” *are* the Lord’s. Every day last year we supplicated the Throne of Grace that we might have a substantial amount left after all the bills were paid, that God might be glorified and His dear people encouraged and rejoiced. We are also very happy to say that quite a number of letters are coming to hand from our readers, telling of how, in a wonderful way, the Lord has graciously shown Himself strong on *their* behalf. He never fails those who are enabled to *trust Him* fully, though sometimes He severely tries faith up to the very moment of deliverance.

We believe that the rich mercy of God unto us during 1933 was also a “token for good,” an earnest that He is about to do even greater things for us. We have long desired to reach a larger number of Christ’s starving sheep, for in the majority of places the “churches” are providing little or nothing for their souls. We are therefore praying that the Lord will now “*enlarge* our coast”

(1Ch 4:10) by increasing the circulation of this little monthly messenger, and shall appreciate it if others are led to cooperate with us by earnest and expectant supplication in bringing this to pass.

AN ANNOUNCEMENT

For some time past, we have hoped that it would please the Lord to raise up someone to print our tracts as a service unto Him, and not for personal profit. It has appeared to us that the majority of the book and tract depots are merely commercial enterprises, many of them being ready to handle almost anything which is “a good seller,” others providing the “manager” with an easy job at the expense of the gifts of hard-working people. Where such be the case, we cannot expect the blessing of God will attend in a spiritual way.

Mr. O.T. Waite, of 27 North Parker Ave., Glenolden, Pa., has already issued our 4-page tract “Repent or Perish” (for distribution among the unsaved); “Miraculously Delivered”—a message for Christians; “The Snare of Service,” which is a much needed word for Martha-like souls who are attempting too much in a zeal that is not according to knowledge; and “Neglecting the Gospel,” by T.S. Reade (5 cents each). He also has some nice gummed texts for sealing letters. Brother Waite is a business man and is doing this work in his spare time. He desires no financial gain and will use money received (D.V.) to print further tracts. Send him 50c and he will forward you an assortment of the above.

(Remember, the above was written by Brother Pink in 1934!)



February

THE HOLY SPIRIT

12. The Work of the Spirit (Part 2)

In our last article, we dwelt upon some of the general and inferior operations which the Holy Spirit performs upon the non-elect, who are never brought unto a saving knowledge of the truth. On this occasion, we shall consider His special and saving work in the people of God, dwelling mainly upon the absolute necessity for the same. It should make it easier for the Christian reader to perceive the absoluteness of this necessity when we say that the whole work of the Spirit within the elect is to plant in the heart a hatred for and loathing of *sin* as sin, and a love for and longing after *holiness* as holiness. This is something which no human power can bring about. It is something which the most faithful preaching as such cannot produce. It is something which the mere circulating and reading of the Scripture does not impart. It is a miracle of grace, a divine wonder, which none but God can or does perform.

Of course if men are only partly depraved (which is *really* the belief today of the vast majority of preachers and their hearers, never having been experimentally taught by God *their own* depravity), if deep down in their hearts all men really loved God, if they are so good-natured as to be easily persuaded to become Christians, then there is no need for the Holy Spirit to put forth His Almighty power and do for them what they are altogether incapable of doing for themselves. And again, if “being saved” consists merely in believing I am a lost sinner and on my way to hell, and by simply believing that God loves me, that Christ died for me, and that He will save me now on the one condition that I “accept Him as my personal Saviour” and “rest upon His finished work,” then no supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit are required to induce and enable me to fulfill *that* condition—self-interest moves me to and a decision of my will is all that is required.

But if, on the other hand, all men *hate* God, (Joh 15:23, 25) and have minds which are “enmity against GOD” (Rom 8:7), so that “There is *none* that seeketh after God” (Rom 3:11), preferring and determining to follow their own inclinations and pleasures; if instead of being disposed unto that which is good, “The heart of the sons of men is *fully* set in them to do evil” (Ecc 8:11) and if when the overtures of God’s mercy are made known to them and they are freely invited to avail themselves of the same, they “*all* with one consent began to make excuse” (Luk 14:18)—then it is very evident that the invincible power and transforming operations of the Spirit are indispensably

required if the heart of a sinner is thoroughly changed, so that rebellion gives place to submission and hatred to love. This is why Christ said, “No man can come to me, *except* the Father [by the Spirit] which hath sent me *draw* him” (Joh 6:44).

Again, if the Lord Jesus Christ came here to uphold and enforce the high claims of God, rather than to lower or set them aside; if He declared that “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Mat 7:14), rather than pointing to a smooth and broad road which any one would find it easy to tread; if the salvation which He has provided is a deliverance from sin and self-pleasing, from worldliness and indulging the lusts of the flesh, and the bestowing of a nature which desires and determines to live for *God’s* glory and please Him in *all* the details of our present lives—then it is clear beyond dispute that none but the Spirit of God can impart a *genuine* desire for *such* a salvation. And if instead of “accepting Christ” and “resting upon His finished work” be the sole conditions of salvation, He demands that the sinner throw down the weapons of his defiance, abandon every idol, unreservedly surrender himself and his life, and receive Him as his only Lord and Master, then naught but a miracle of grace can enable any captive of Satan’s to meet *such* requirements.

Against what has been said above it may be objected that no such hatred of God as we have affirmed exists in the hearts of the great majority of our fellow creatures—that while there may be a few degenerates who have sold themselves to the devil and are thoroughly hardened in sin, yet the remainder of mankind *are* friendly disposed to God, as is evident by the countless millions who have some form or other of religion. To such an objector we reply, The fact is, dear friend, that those to whom you refer are almost entirely ignorant of *the God of Scripture*. They have heard that He loves everybody, is benevolently inclined toward all His creatures, and is so easy-going that in return for their religious performances will wink at their sins. Of course they have no hatred for such a “god” as this! But tell them something of the character of the true God—that *He hates* “all workers of iniquity” (Psa 5:5), that He is inexorably just and ineffably holy, that He is an uncontrollable Sovereign, who “hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth” (Rom 9:18), and their enmity against *Him* will soon be manifested—an enmity which none but the Holy Spirit can overcome.

It may be objected again that so far from the gloomy picture which we have sketched above being accurate, the great majority of people *do* desire to be saved and may more or less endeavour after their salvation. This is readily granted. There is in every human heart a desire for deliverance from misery and a longing after happiness and security, and those who come under the sound of God’s Word are *naturally* disposed to be delivered from the wrath to come and wish to be assured that heaven will be their eternal dwelling-place—who *wants* to endure the everlasting burnings? But that desire and disposition is quite compatible and consistent with the greatest love to sin and most entire opposition of heart to that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb 12:14). But what the objector here refers to is a vastly different thing from desiring heaven upon *God’s* terms and being willing to tread the *only* path which leads there!

The instinct of self-preservation is sufficiently strong to move multitudes to undertake many performances and penances in the hope that thereby they shall escape hell. The stronger men’s belief of the truth of divine revelation, the more firmly they become convinced that there is a day of judgment when they must appear before their Maker and render an account of all their desires, thoughts, words, and deeds, the more serious and sober will be their minds. Let conscience convict them of their misspent lives and they are ready to turn over a new leaf. Let them be persuaded that Christ stands ready as a Fire-escape and is willing to rescue them, though the world still claims their *hearts*, and thousands are ready to “believe in Him.” Yea, this *is* done by

multitudes who still hate the true character of the Saviour and reject with all their hearts the salvation which *He* has. Far, far different is this from an unregenerate person longing for deliverance from *self and sin*, and the impartation of that *holiness* which Christ purchased for His people.

All around us are those willing to receive Christ as their Saviour, who are altogether unwilling to surrender to Him as their Lord. They would like His peace, but they refuse His “yoke,” without which *His* peace cannot be found (Mat 11:29). They admire His promises, but have no heart for His precepts. They will rest upon His priestly work, but will not be subject to His kingly scepter. They will believe in a “Christ” who is suited to their own corrupt tastes or sentimental dreams, but they despise and reject the Christ of God. Like the multitudes of old, they want His loaves and fishes, but for His heart-searching, flesh-withering, sin-condemning teaching, they have no appetite. They approve of Him as the healer of their bodies, but as the healer of their depraved souls, they desire Him not. And nothing but the miracle-working power of the Holy Spirit can change this bias and bent in any soul.

It is just because modern Christendom has such an inadequate estimate of the fearful and universal effects which the Fall has wrought, that the imperative need for the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit is now so little realized. It is because such false conceptions of human depravity so widely prevail that, in most places, it is supposed all which is needed to save half of the community is to hire some popular evangelist and attractive singer. And the reason why so few *are* aware of the awful depths of human depravity, the terrible enmity of the carnal mind against God, and the heart’s inbred and inveterate hatred of Him, is because *His* character is now so rarely declared from the pulpit. If the preachers would deliver the same type of messages as did Jeremiah in his degenerate age, or even as John the Baptist did, they would soon discover how their hearers were *really* affected toward God, and then they would perceive that unless the power of the Spirit attended their preaching they might as well be silent.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

74. The Faith of Moses (Continued) (11:28)

More is said about Moses than of any other individual in this eleventh chapter of Hebrews. No less than five definite actings of his faith are there recorded. The reason for this is not far to seek. He was the law-giver and the boast of the Jews of Christ’s day was, “We are Moses’ disciples” (Joh 9:28). They were seeking acceptance with God on the ground of their own doings. They supposed that their outward conformity to the ordinances of Moses would secure the approbation of heaven and therefore, “They being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Rom 10:3). It was under this influence that these converted Hebrews had been brought up and

therefore did the Holy Spirit press upon them the fact that it was *by faith*, and not by a legal spirit, their renowned ancestor had lived and acted. The particular acting of Moses' faith which we are now to consider was one which would be singularly pertinent to the Spirit's design here—it manifested his trust in the Lamb and testified to the value which Moses placed upon the sprinkled blood. Instituting and observing the feast of the Passover, the leader of the Israelites set an example that could not be ignored without fatal consequences. It completely repudiated the awful error of thinking to escape from the wrath of God in consequence of any performances on the part of the creature. It effectively shuts up the sinner to Christ as his *only* hope. Let it be duly considered that the "Passover" was the *first* ordinance given to Israel.

How striking it is to see the law-giver himself preaching by those actings of his recorded in our text, "By *grace* are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph 2:8-9). How great is the ignorance, then, which supposes that salvation by grace is peculiar to this Christian dispensation—as though God has had several ways of redeeming sinners. No, my reader, from the beginning to the end of human history every fallen descendant of Adam which enters heaven will owe it to sovereign grace flowing to him through the appointed channel of faith, entirely irrespective of all his works, religious or irreligious, before he first trusts in Christ. Abel was saved thus, Hebrews 11:4. Noah "found grace in the eyes of the LORD," Genesis 6:8. Abraham "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness," Romans 4:3. And the children of Israel were delivered from the angel of death because they sheltered beneath the blood of the lamb.

That which is now before our consideration formed an appropriate and blessed climax to the actings of Moses' faith recorded here in Hebrews 11—all the others led up to this one. His *refusing* to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, his *choosing* rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, his *esteeming* the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, and his *forsaking* of Egypt would all have been in vain spiritually, that is, so far as his salvation was concerned, unless those had been followed by *faith in the lamb* and the efficacy of *its blood*. Turning away from the world is not sufficient—there must also be a turning unto God. The forsaking of sin is not enough—there must also be the laying hold of Christ. *This* is what is typically in view in our present text.

It is highly important that the closest attention be paid to *the order of truth* set forth in Hebrews 11:24-28. If this be done, the defectiveness of much modern "evangelism" will at once be apparent. The keeping of the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood *is not the first thing* recorded of Moses! No man can rightly value the blood of Christ while his heart is still wrapped up in the world, and to invite and exhort him to put his trust in the same, is being guilty of casting pearls before swine. No man can savingly believe in Christ while he is determined to "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." *Repentance precedes faith* (Mar 1:15; Act 20:21) and repentance is a sorrowing over sin, a hatred of sin, and a turning from sin, and where there is no genuine repentance, there can be no "remission of sins," Mark 1:4. Let every preacher who reads this article carefully weigh *all* that is here recorded of Moses and faithfully instruct his congregation that the different exercises of heart recorded in Hebrews 11:24-27 *must* precede that which is denoted in verse 28.

It is really deplorable that such elementary aspects of truth, as we have just pointed out above, need to be stressed at this late date. Yet such is the tragic case. Laodicean Christendom is boasting of its riches, and knows not that it is poor and wretched and naked. Part of those "riches" which she boasts so loudly of today is the "great increase of light" which it is supposed that the study of "prophetic" and "dispensational" truth has brought to us. Yet not only is that a subtle

device of Satan's coming as "an angel of *light*" (2Co 11:14), to *darken* men's understandings and make them believe that his lies are "wonderful discoveries" and openings up of the Scriptures, but the present generation *has far less* real light than Christendom enjoyed a century ago. By which we mean, there is far less faithful and fearless preaching of those things which make for practical godliness and holy living. But that is not the worst—Scriptural evangelism has well-nigh disappeared from the earth.

The "Gospel" which is being preached today is only calculated to deceive souls and bolster them up in a false hope. To make men believe that God loves them, while they are under His wrath (see Joh 3:36), is worse than a physician telling a diabetic subject that he may safely eat all he wishes. To withhold the preaching of *the law*—its divine authority, its inexorable demands, its spirituality (in requiring *inward* conformity to it, Matthew 5:22, 28), its awful curse—is to omit that which alone conveys a true knowledge of sin—see Romans 3:20, 7:7. To cry "Believe, believe," and say nothing about *repentance*, is to falsify the terms of salvation—Luke 24:47; Acts 17:30. To invite sinners to receive Christ as their "Saviour" *before* they surrender to Him as their Lord, is to present a *false* "way of salvation." To bid the lost "come to Christ" without telling them they must first "forsake the world," is to fill the "churches" with unconverted souls. To tell sinners they may find rest unto their souls *without* taking Christ's YOKE upon them, is to give the lie unto the Master's own teaching, Matthew 11:29.

We offer no apology for this seeming digression from our present subject. Once again we would point out that it is our earnest desire in this series of articles to write something more than a "commentary" on Hebrews or give a bare "exposition" of its text. Rather do we seek (as the Holy Spirit is pleased to enable) to address ourselves directly to the hearts of our readers, and press upon them *the personal and present* application of each verse to their own souls. In all probability, a large proportion of the readers of this magazine are *deceived* souls and we do not want to have to answer for their blood in the day to come. Many of them have been lulled to sleep by the chloroforming "evangelism" of the day. Therefore, we earnestly beg each one who scans these paragraphs to seriously and solemnly ask, Is there anything in my own heart's history which answers to that which is said of Moses in Hebrews 11: 24-27? If there is not, if you are not "*crucified to the world*" (See Gal 6:14), then Satan is fatally deluding you if you imagine that you are under the blood of Christ.

Suffer us then, dear reader, to continue addressing you directly, for a moment longer. We do not ask, first, are you "resting on the finished work of Christ?" There are thousands who imagine they are so doing, who have never been converted. No, rather would we inquire, have *you made your peace with God*? We are well aware *that* expression is ridiculed and denounced by a certain class who pose as being ultra-spiritual and exceptionally well-taught in the Scriptures, but they only betray their ignorance of the Word, see Isaiah 27:5, Luke 14:32. By asking whether you have "made your peace with God," we mean, have you ceased fighting against Him and have you yielded to His demands? Have you thrown down the weapons of your rebellion and expressed an honest desire and determination to be in subjection to Him? Have you realized that living to please yourself and have your own way is a species of defiance, and have you truly surrendered yourself unto His claims?

"Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them" (Heb 11:28). Let it be pointed out again that *this* was the point unto which all the previous actings of Moses' faith led. While it is true that no sinner can "keep the Passover" or find protection under "the sprinkling of blood," while his heart still loves the world and is filled with its idols, nevertheless, his separation from and relinquishing of all which is

opposed to God obtains not salvation for him. The blotting out of sins does not become ours until the atonement of Christ is received into our hearts by faith. Thus, by taking Hebrews 11:24-28 *as a whole*, we see how both the righteousness and the grace of God were honoured and magnified.

Our present verse (28) looks back to and gives an abridgment of that which is recorded in Exodus 12. It tells us of a further fruit of a supernatural faith. At first sight it may appear unto many that *this* particular work of faith is far less remarkable than some of those which have engaged our attention in previous articles. Yet when it be duly considered, when all the attendant circumstances are properly weighed, it will be seen that the conduct of Moses on this occasion was as much opposed to human reason and carnal wisdom, and issued from a divine work of grace in his heart, as did Abraham's leaving of Chaldea for an unknown country, his offering up of Isaac, or Joseph's "making mention of the departing of the children of Israel." We quote now from another who has brought out this point most forcibly and helpfully.

"The institution of the passover was an act of faith, similar to that of Noah's preparation of the ark (Heb 11:7). To realize what this faith must have been, we have to go back to 'that night' and note the special circumstances, which can alone explain the meaning of the words 'by faith.' God's judgments had been poured out on Egypt and its king, and its people. A crisis had arrived, for, after nine plagues had been sent, Pharaoh and the Egyptians still remained obdurate. Indeed, Moses had been threatened with death if he ever came into Pharaoh's presence again (Exo 10:28-29). On the other hand, the Hebrews were in more evil case than ever and Moses, who was to have delivered them, had not made good his promises.

"It was at such a moment that Moses *heard* from God what he was to do. To sight and to sense it must have seemed most inadequate and quite unlikely to accomplish the desired result. Why should this last plague be expected to accomplish what the nine had failed to do, with all their cumulative terrors? Why should the mere sprinkling of the blood have such a remarkable effect? And if they were indeed to leave Egypt, 'that same night' why should the people be burdened with all those minute ceremonial observances at the very moment when they ought to be making preparation for their departure!?

"Nothing but *faith* could be of any avail here. Everything was opposed to human understanding and human reasoning. With all the consciousness of ill-success upon him, nothing but unfeigned faith in the living God, and what he had heard from Him, could have enabled Moses to go to the people and rehearse all the intricacies of the Paschal observances, and tell them to exercise the greatest care in the selection of a lamb on the tenth day of the month, to be slain on the fourteenth day, and eaten with (to them) an unmeaning ceremonial.

"It called for no ordinary confidence in what Moses had *heard* from God to enable him to go to his brethren who, in their deep distress, must have been ill-disposed to listen; for, hitherto, his efforts had only increased the hatred of their oppressors and their own miseries as bondmen. It would, to human sight, be a difficult if not impossible task to persuade the people and convince them of the absolute necessity of complying with all the minute details of the observance of the Paschal ordinance. But this is just where *faith* came in. This was just the field on which it could obtain its greatest victory. Hence we read that 'by faith' every difficulty was overcome; the Feast was observed and the Exodus accomplished. 'All was based on the hearing of faith.' The words of JEHOVAH produced the faith, and were at once the cause and effect of all the blessings" (E. W. Bullinger, 1837-1913).

It should be evident, then, from what has been pointed out above that the actions of Moses recorded in Exodus 11 and 12 proceeded from no mere natural faith, but were the supernatural

fruit issuing from a supernatural root. His conduct must have exposed him unto the ridicule of the Egyptians, but with implicit confidence in the wisdom, distinguishing mercy, and faithfulness of JEHOVAH, he acted. See here, again, how inseparable are faith and obedience. The very “faith” of Moses, which is mentioned in our present text, *consisted in* an implicit compliance with all the regulations specified by the Lord. He observed the Passover in his own person and he ordered the people to do likewise, though it involved their procuring many thousands of lambs. He observed the Passover in fullest assurance that thereby all the firstborn of the Hebrews would be delivered. Though all Israel kept the Passover, it was by Moses that God delivered the institution of it.

The Passover was one of the most solemn institutions of the Old Testament and one of the most eminent types of Christ. “1. It was a lamb that was the matter of this ordinance (Exo 12:3). And in allusion hereunto, as also to other sacrifices that were instituted afterwards, Christ is called, ‘The Lamb of God’ (Joh 1:29). 2. This lamb was to be taken out from the flock of the sheep (Exo 12:5). So was the Lord Christ to be taken out of the flock of the church of mankind, in His participation of our nature, that He might be a meet sacrifice for us (Heb 2:14-17). 3. This lamb being taken from the flock was to be shut up separate from it (Exo 12:6). So although the Lord Christ was taken from amongst men, yet He was separate from sinners (Heb 7:26), that is, absolutely free from all that contagion of sin which others are infected withal. 4. This lamb was to be without blemish (Exo 12:5), which is applied unto the Lord Christ—‘a lamb without blemish and without spot’ (1Pe 1:19). 5. This lamb was to be slain and was slain accordingly (Exo 12:6). So was Christ slain for us—a Lamb, in the efficacy of His death, slain from the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8). 6. This lamb was so slain, as that it was a sacrifice (Exo 12:27), it was the sacrifice of the Lord’s Passover. And Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us (1Co 5:7). 7. The lamb, being slain, was to be roasted (Exo 12:8-9), which signified the fiery wrath that Christ was to undergo for our deliverance. 8. That ‘neither shall ye break a bone thereof’ (Exo 12:46), was expressly to declare the manner of the death of Christ (Joh 19:33-36). 9. The eating of him, which was also enjoined, and that wholly and entirely (Exo 12:8, 9), was to instruct the church in the spiritual food of the flesh and blood of Christ, in the communication of the fruits of His mediation unto us by faith” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

“Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them” (Heb 11:28). Two things are here noted separately, the lamb and its blood. In type, they spoke, distinctively, of the person and work of Christ, for it was *the person* of Christ which gave value to His work—His divine person being the “altar” which “sanctified” the offering of His humanity (Mat 23:19). This is ever the *order* of Scripture, “Behold (1) the Lamb of God, which (2) taketh away the sin of the world” (Joh 1:29); “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save (1) Jesus Christ, and (2) Him crucified” (1Co 2:2); “in the midst of the elders, stood (1) a lamb (2) as it had been slain” (Rev 5:6). Here is the Analogy of Faith for the preacher to follow today—It is not the blood which is first to be proclaimed to the sinner, but the wondrous and glorious God-man Mediator who shed His blood for His people.

The Hebrews, equally with the Egyptians, were exposed unto the divine vengeance, when the Angel of Death went forth on His dread work that memorable night, for “*all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). And naught but their placing the substitutionary death of an innocent victim between their guilty selves and an holy God could protect from the judgment announced against them. Trusting in their descent from Abraham would avail them not. Appeal to their good works and religious performances would have sufficed not. They might have spent the entire night in fasting and prayer, in penitently confessing their sins, and crying unto God for mercy, but none of those exercises would have stood them in any good stead. “When I

see the blood, I will pass over you,” (Exo 12:13) made known the all-essential requirement. So it is now—nothing but *the blood of Christ* can cleanse from sin and deliver from the death penalty of God’s broken law.

“Through faith” or better, “By faith,” for the Greek here is the same as in the previous verses. “He kept the Passover,” that is, both instituted and observed it, as the Redeemer did His own “supper.” “And the sprinkling of blood”—this emphasizes an important distinction. “Without *shedding* of blood is no remission” (Heb 9:22) and without *sprinkling* of blood (cf. 1Pe 1:2) the virtues of Christ’s atonement are not brought into the soul. The “sprinkling” of the blood has reference to *the application* to one’s own self. The shedding of Christ’s blood is the *ground* on which atonement was made for the sins of His people. The sprinkling of it is the *means* of reaping benefit thereby. The sprinkling of the blood on the door of the house in Exodus 12:13 was both a sign to the Destroyer that He should not enter and an assurance to the household that they were safe.

It is by the spiritual “sprinkling” or applying of Christ’s blood that all the benefit thereof redounds to us. It corresponds to the laying of a plaster on a sore, to the drinking of a wholesome potion, to the eating of food, to the putting on of a garment—the *benefit* of all these ariseth from a *fit application* of them. The blood of Christ is “sprinkled” on the soul in two ways. First, by the Spirit of God (1Co 6:11), who inwardly persuades the soul of a *right* that *it* hath to Christ and to all that He did and suffered for our redemption. Second, by faith (Act 15:9), for faith is the hand of the soul which *receives* all spiritual benefits. Faith moves the regenerated soul to rest upon Christ for a personal benefit of His obedience unto death. On this ground the apostle exhorts, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts *sprinkled from* an evil [guilty] conscience” (Heb 10:22).

“Lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them” (Heb 11:28). Primarily, the Destroyer was the Lord Himself (Exo 12:12, 23); secondarily, and instrumentally, the reference is to an angel, compare 2 Samuel 24:16, 2 Kings 19:35. Whoever is not “sprinkled” with the blood of Christ is exposed to the anger of God. But so secure are those who are under the same, that the Destroyer shall not so much as “touch” them—He shall do them *no harm*, cf. 1 John 5:18. God proportioned His judgment upon Egypt according to their sin. Pharaoh had ordered his people to cast every son born unto the Hebrews into the river (Exo 1:22) and now *their* firstborn were to be slain. Thus God manifested the equity of His proceedings against them. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap” (Gal 6:7).

Our verse as a whole teaches Christians that there must be *the exercise of faith* in order to a right use of the means and institutions which God has appointed—whether in reading the Word, in prayer, in baptism, or the Lord’s supper—“*without* faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb 11:6). It also shows us that real faith will not use that for which it has no divine warrant. An active obedience unto the authority of Christ in His commands is exactly required in all that we do in divine worship. Well suited to the case of the Hebrews was this example of Moses—to exercise faith in the Lamb and persevere in the duties which God has appointed. No matter how unreasonable it might seem to carnal wisdom, no matter what inconvenience and persecution it might entail, trust in and obedience to the Lord was their duty and blessedness.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

26. His Recourse in Sorrow

In our last article, we directed attention to the gracious manner in which the Lord put forth His interposing hand to deliver David from that snare of the fowler into which his unbelief and folly had brought him. Ere passing on to the immediate sequel, let us pause and admire the blessed way in which God *timed* His intervention. “To every thing there is a season...He hath made every thing beautiful in *his time*” (Ecc 3:1, 11), equally so in the spiritual realm as in the natural. Probably every Christian can look back to certain experiences in life when his circumstances were suddenly and unexpectedly changed. At the time, he understood not the meaning of it, but later was able to perceive the wisdom and goodness of Him who shaped his affairs. There have been occasions when our situation was swiftly altered, by factors over which we had no control, which called for us to move on, but the sequel showed it was God opening our way to go to the help of others who sorely needed us. So it was now with David.

“My times are in thy hand” (Psa 31:15). Yes, my “times” of tarrying and my “times” of journeying; my “times” of prosperity and my “times” of adversity; my “times” of fellowship with the saints and my “times” of isolation and loneliness; each and all are ordered by God. It is blessed to know this and more blessed still when the heart is permitted to rest thereon. Nothing is more quietening and stabilizing to the soul than the realization that everything was ordained by Omniscience and is now ordered by infinite love—that He who eternally decreed the hour of my birth, has fixed the day of my departure from this world; that my “times” of youth and health; and my “times” of infirmity and sickness are equally in *God’s* hands. He knows *when* it is best to bring me out of a distressing situation and His mercy opens the way when it is His time for me to make a move.

While David and his men were in the camp of Achish, the Amalekites took advantage of their absence, fell upon the unprotected Ziklag, burned it, and carried away captive all the women and children. Their husbands and fathers knew nothing of this. No, *but God did* and He had designs of mercy toward them. Their sad case seemed a hopeless one indeed, but appearances are deceptive. Though they were unaware of the fact, God had already set moving the means for their deliverance. Unlike us, God is never too early and He is never too late. Had David and his men been discharged by Achish a week sooner, they had been on hand to defend Ziklag, and a needed chastisement and a great blessing from it had been missed! Had they returned home a week later, they had probably been too late to recover their loved ones. Admire, then, the *timeliness* of God’s freeing David from the yoke of the Philistines.

“So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep” (1Sa 30:3-4). Observe, there was no turning unto God or seeking to cast their care upon Him! They were completely overwhelmed by shock and grief. Perhaps the reader knows something of such a state from painful experience. A heavy financial reverse which plunged the soul into dark gloom or a

sudden bereavement came, and in the bitterness of grief all seemed to be against you, and even the voice of prayer was silenced. Ah, David and his men are not the only ones who have been overwhelmed by trouble and anguish.

“And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters” (1Sa 30:6). The turning against him of his faithful followers was the final ingredient in the bitter cup which David was now called on to drink. But even this was of God. If one stroke of His chastening rod avails not, it must be followed by another, and if necessary, yet others, for our holy Father will not suffer His wayward children to remain impenitent indefinitely. So it was here. The sight of Ziklag in ruins and the loss of his family did not bring David to his knees—so yet other measures are employed. The anger of his men aroused him from his lethargy, the menacing of his own life by intimate friends was the way God took to bring him back unto Himself.

“But David encouraged himself in the LORD his God” (1Sa 30:6). Here is where light broke into this dark scene, yet care needs to be taken lest we make a wrong use of the same. No one sentence in God’s Word is to be interpreted as an isolated unit, but Scripture must be compared with Scripture. Much is included in the words now before us, far more than any human writer is capable of fully opening up. Attention needs to be directed unto three things. First, what is presupposed in David’s “encouraging himself in the LORD;” second, what is signified thereby; third, what followed the same. If we take into consideration the *real* character of David as “the man after God’s own heart,” (See 1Sa 13:14). if we bear in mind the whole context recounting his sad lapses, and above all, if we view our present verse in the light of the Analogy of Faith, little difficulty should be experienced in “reading between the lines.”

“But David encouraged himself in the LORD his God” (1Sa 30:6). Ah, much is implied here. David could not *truly* “encourage himself in the LORD” until there had been *previous* exercises of heart—conviction, contrition, confession, necessarily preceded comfort and consolation. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Pro 28:13), that enunciates an unchanging principle in God’s governmental dealings, with unconverted and converted alike. Had there been no repentance on David’s part, no unsparing condemnation of himself, no broken-hearted acknowledgment unto God of his failures, he would have been “encouraging himself” in *sin!* and that would be “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness” (Jude 1:4.) Not only has Christ died to save His people from the penalty of their sins, but He has also procured the Holy Spirit to work in them a hatred for the vileness of their sins! and as there is no forgiveness and cleansing for the saint without confession (1Jo 1:9), so there is no acceptable “confession” save that which issues from a contrite heart.

There is great need today for the above principles to be explained unto and pressed upon professing Christians. Neither God’s glory will be maintained nor the good of His people promoted if we conceal and are silent about the requirements of His righteousness. God’s mercy is exercised in a way of holiness. Where there is no repentance, there is no forgiveness. Where there is no turning away from sin, there is no blotting out of sins. Something more is required than simply asking God to be gracious unto us for Christ’s sake. There are many who quote, “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1Jo 1:7), but there are few indeed who faithfully point out that that precious promise is specifically qualified with, “IF *we walk in the light*, as he is in the light” (1Jo 1:7). If we avoid the searching light of God’s holiness, if we hide, excuse, repent not of and refuse to make daily confession of our sins, then the blood of Christ certainly *does not* “cleanse” us from all sin. To insist on the contrary is grossly dishonouring to the Blood and is to make Christ the Condoner of evil!

Weigh well the following, “If they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, *and turn from their sin*, when thou afflictest them: *Then* hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants...If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the LORD toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name: Then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, *and repent*, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; And so *return* unto thee *with all their heart*, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee...*Then hear thou their prayer* and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause, *And forgive* thy people that have sinned against thee” (1Ki 8:35-36, 44-50). And God is still the same. No change of “dispensation” effects any alteration in His character or in anywise modifies His holy requirements—with Him there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam 1:17).

“But David encouraged himself in the LORD his God” (1Sa 30:6). Having sought to indicate what is *pre-supposed* by these words, let us now briefly consider what is *signified* by them. The same *Holy Spirit* who convicts the backslidden saint of his sins, works in him a sincere repentance, and moves him to frankly and freely confess them to God, *also* gives him a renewed sense of the abounding mercy of God, strengthens faith in His blessed promises, and reminds him of His unchanging faithfulness (1Jo 1:9), and thus the contrite heart is enabled to rest in the infinite grace of God and being now restored to communion with Him, the soul “encourages” itself in His perfections. Thus, just as the Holy Spirit delivers the saint from heeding Satan’s counsel to hide his sins, so also does He rescue him from Satan’s attempts to sink him in despair after he is convicted of his sins.

“But David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.” This means that he reviewed afresh the everlasting covenant which God had made with him in Christ, that covenant “ordered in all things, and sure” (2Sa 23:5). It means that he recalled God’s past goodness and mercy towards him, which reassured his heart for the present and the future. It means that he contemplated the omnipotency of the Lord and realized that nothing is too hard for Him, no situation is hopeless unto His mighty power, for *He* is able to overrule evil unto good and bring a clean thing out of an unclean. It means that he remembered God’s promises to bring him safely to the throne and though he knew not how his immediate trouble would disappear, without doubting, *he hoped in God* and confidently counted upon His undertaking for him. O Christian reader, when we are at our wit’s end, we should not be at faith’s end. See to it that all is right between your soul and God, and then trust in His sufficiency.

When all things were against him, David’s faith was stirred into exercise. He turned unto the One who had never failed him and from whom he had so sadly departed. Ah, blessed is the trial, no matter how heavy. Precious is the disappointment, no matter how bitter, that issues thus. To penitently return unto God means to be back again in the place of blessing. Better, far better, to be in the midst of the black ruins of Ziklag, surrounded by a threatening mob, than to be in the ranks of the Philistines fighting against His people. Have we, in any way, known what bitter disappointment means? and have we in the midst of it turned unto Him who has smitten us and “encouraged” ourselves in Him? If so, then like David, we may say, “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word” (Psa 119:67).

O that it may please the Lord to bless this article unto some sorely-distressed soul, who is no longer enjoying the light of His countenance, but who is beneath His chastening frowns. You may be borne down by sorrow and despondency, but no trouble is too great for you to find relief in God, in the One who has, in righteousness, sent this sorrow upon you. Humble yourself beneath His mighty hand, acknowledge to Him your sins, count upon the multitude of His mercies, and seek grace to rest upon His comforting promises. When faith springs up amidst the ruins of blighted hopes, it is a blessed thing. What has just been before us marked a turning-point in David's life. May it be so in yours. "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee" (Psa 55:22).

O my reader, be you saved or unsaved, none but God can do you good, relieve your distress, remove the load from your heart, and bring blessing into your life. If you refuse to humble yourself before Him, lament the course of self-will which you followed, and turn from the same, you are your own worst enemy and are forsaking your own mercies. But if you will take your place before Him in the dust, repent of your wickedness, and seek grace to live henceforth in subjection to His will, then pardon, peace, joy, await you. No matter how sadly you have failed in the past, nor what light and favours you sinned against, if you will own it all in brokenness of heart unto the Lord, He is ready to forgive.

"And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. And David inquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them?" (1Sa 30:7-8). Here we see the first *result* which followed David's turning back unto God. It is blessed to observe that the Holy Spirit has thrown a vail of silence over what took place in secret between David and the Lord, as He has over Christ's private interview with Peter (1Co 15:5). But after telling us of David's encouraging himself in the Lord, He now reveals the reformation which took place in his conduct. Nothing was said of David's seeking counsel from God when he journeyed to Achish (1Sa 27:2), but now that he is restored to happy fellowship, he will not think of taking a step without asking for divine guidance.

Very blessed indeed is what is recorded in verses 7-8. Moses had laid it down as a law that the leader of Israel should "stand before [Eleazar] the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in" (Num 27:21), and in compliance therewith, David turned to the priest, and bade him seek the mind of the Lord as to how he should now act in this dire emergency. Learn from this that *obedience* to the revealed will of God is the best evidence of having been restored to communion with Him. Of course it is, for it is the very nature of love to seek to *please* its object. Let us test, then, *our* practical relation to God, not by our feelings nor by our words, but by the extent to which we are in actual subjection to Him and walking in a spirit of dependency upon Him.

Notice here how indwelling grace triumphed over the promptings of the flesh. Mere nature would urge that David's only possible course was to rush after the Amalekites and seek to rescue any of the women and children who might yet be alive. But David was now delivered from his impetuous self-confidence. His soul was again "like a weaned child." God was now to order all the details of his life. Alas most of us have to receive many hard knocks in the by-paths of folly before we are brought to this place. It is indeed much to be thankful for when the feverish restlessness of the flesh is subdued, and the soul truly desires God to lead *us* step by step. Progress may not *seem* so swift, but it certainly will be more sure. The Lord graciously lay His quietening hand upon each of us, and cause us to look unto and rest in Himself alone.

DISPENSATIONALISM

7. The Law of God

After what has been pointed out in the previous section of this article, there is little need for us to devote much space here unto demonstrating the error of those who affirm that the moral law was given *only* to and for the nation of Israel. One plain Scripture is quite sufficient to expose such a fallacy. In Romans 3:19, we read, “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.” Observe, “the law *saith*,” not “said.” It is still speaking with divine authority, commanding and threatening. It speaks to “them who are under the law,” and *who* these are is distinctly defined as “all the world.” Nothing could be simpler or more conclusive, and no arguments of ours can possibly strengthen its force, nor can any repudiation of others blunt its sharp edge.

We pass on, then, to *test by Scripture* the third great error which “dispensationalists” have made on this subject, namely, that Christians are not “under the law” in *any* sense, that it is not a Rule of Life to them for the regulating of their conduct. Concerning this particular, the utmost confusion now prevails in many quarters and as it is an important part of the work committed unto God’s servants to heed that divine command, “Take up the stumbling block *out of the way* of my people” (Isa 57:14). We shall endeavour to deal with this point with the more care and at some length. No doubt some of our readers will regret this and would much prefer for us to write on other subjects. We ask all such to kindly bear in mind the needs of others who urgently require to be delivered from the baneful effects of this pernicious error.

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ...But now we are delivered from the law” (Rom 7:4, 6); “For I through the law died unto the law” (Gal 2:19 R.V.). Such verses as these are eagerly pressed into their service by those who declare that the law has no jurisdiction over the Christian, yet let it be pointed out that these very verses flatly contradict their other assertion that the law was never given to any but the nation of Israel. How could the Roman saints be “delivered from the law,” *if they were never under it?* and how could the Gentile Galatians have “died unto the law,” if they had never been alive unto it? Thus, the very verses which these errorists are so fond of quoting make directly against one of their own positions. Verily, “the legs of the lame are not equal” (Pro 26:7).

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom 6:14). Yet we are expressly told that, “Being not without law to God, but *under the law to Christ*” (1Co 9:21). Obviously these two verses need “rightly dividing,” or rather, properly interpreting, or we shall have the New Testament contradicting itself. And here we may perceive the real need for an anointed *teacher*, for surely the man who toils hard for his living through the day and spends only a few minutes in the evening or on the Sabbath cursorily reading the Scriptures can scarcely expect to acquire the skill which is needed to see into the mysteries and solve the difficulties of the Word. No, a lifetime of prayerful, diligent, and patient study is called

for, if one is to be an “able ministers of the New Testament” (2Co 3:6) and such study is not possible where one is in the pulpit or on the platform almost every day of the week.

To understand the above verses, a four-fold distinction needs to be made in regard to the Christian’s relation to the law. First, as he was in and federally represented by Adam, when he was under the law as a covenant of works, life being promised to him if his legal head obeyed it. Second, as a fallen descendant of Adam, a personal transgressor of the law; being in his unconverted days under its curse. Third, as he was in and federally represented by Christ, who was made under the law, fulfilled all its requirements by a perfect obedience, and suffered its penalty on the behalf of and in the stead of His people. Fourth, as converted—the Holy Spirit having united him to Christ, so that God now pronounces him free from *the condemnation of* the law and imputes to him the perfect obedience of his Surety, and the Spirit having wrought in him a desire and determination to love and serve God, he delights in the law and takes it as his Rule of Life or standard of conduct.

The Christian is released from the law as the procuring ground of his justification and as the ground of his condemnation before God, because Christ has rendered in his room and stead that perfect obedience which the law required, and also suffered its penalty. Therefore he is freed from the law as a covenant of works, to obtain life and glory thereby, but not from that submission to God which its terms enjoin. The Christian has been delivered from the curse of the law (Gal 3:13), but not from its requirements. The Christian has been delivered from the condemning power of the law, but not from its precepts—otherwise liberty would be his to live in sin, which is the only other possible alternative. The Christian has been delivered from the terror of the law, but not from obedience thereto. The Christian died to the penalty of the law when his Surety suffered in his stead, but he is under the law to Christ as a Rule of Life or director of conduct.

One thinks this issue would be settled once for all by a calm reading of Exodus 20. Is a Christian, any more than a non-Christian, permitted to have more Gods than one? May the Christian make *for himself* a graven image and fall down and worship it? Will the Lord hold *him* guiltless if he takes His name in vain? May the Christian break the Sabbath? Is *he* at liberty to dishonour his parents, kill his neighbor, commit adultery, steal, or covet something which belongs to another? Surely the very things required by the law approve themselves to every honest man’s conscience. What a state of heart must they be in who *hate* the law! We earnestly beg every Christian parent who reads these pages to diligently teach the Ten Commandments to his or her children. If you do not, you are an enemy of God, an enemy to your offspring, an enemy to the State. What right have you to denounce the lawlessness which is so rife throughout the land, if you fail to enforce the law in your home?

It is contended by many that since the Law of God requires *perfect obedience* in heart and life, and since men are depraved and cannot obey it, or obtain life by it, that therefore Christ has introduced a new regime, upon *easier* terms—a regime which enjoins conditions that *are* in the power of fallen man to keep and secure eternal life thereby. But mark well what such a theory involves. *It sets the Son against the Father.* It places Christ in opposition to the moral Governor of heaven and earth. It represents the Redeemer as *deserting* the Father’s honor and interests—the honor of His Law and government, and supposes that He shed His precious blood with the object of persuading the Ruler of this world to slacken the reins of government and grant an impious license to iniquity. To suppose *that* would make the holy Saviour a friend to sin and the enemy of God. From such horrible blasphemy may divine grace preserve both writer and reader.

So far was Christ from setting aside the law or even abating its high requirements, that in His first sermon (published in the New Testament) He said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Mat 5:17-18). In that same sermon, He *condemned* the Pharisees for their sin of abating the law. They taught that though the law did forbid certain external and gross sins, yet not so the first stirrings of corruption in the heart. They affirmed that a man must not commit murder, but that there was no harm in his being angry without a cause, in speaking reproachfully, and harbouring a secret grudge in the heart (Mat 5:21-22).

The Pharisees taught a man must not commit adultery, but that he should be excused for secret lascivious *thoughts* (Mat 5:27, 29). They affirmed that a man must not be guilty of perjury, but that petty oaths in common conversation were quite permissible (Mat 5:33-37). They argued that a man should not hate his friends, but supposed it was quite right for him to hate an enemy (Mat 5:43-44). These, and such like *allowances*, the Pharisees imagined were made by the law and therefore that such things were not sinful. But the Lord Jesus condemned their doctrine as false and damnable, and insisted that the high and holy demands of the law were *not abated* in the slightest degree, nor ever shall be, but rather that the law required us to be “perfect” as our heavenly Father (Mat 5:48), and declared, “For I say unto you, That except your righteousness *shall exceed* the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:20). No wonder the “dispensationalists” hate so bitterly the Sermon on the Mount!

But the carping objector will reply, Is it fair and just for God to require of His creatures *more* than they can possibly render? In answering, let it be duly considered *what it is* that God requires from us. In Matthew 22:37-40, we find the Lord Jesus declaring, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” We turn, then, to the objector and ask, Is it wrong that the Governor of heaven and earth requires men to *love* Him with all their hearts? Is *that* too much to ask from them? Is it more than He deserves from us? Shame! shame! Is it not rather the truth that the objector *hates* God so much that he cannot find it in his heart *to* love Him and therefore says, “He must not insist upon it, and if He does, He is unjust and very hard with us.” What is this but the objector saying, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14)!

Yet notwithstanding all that has been pointed out above, there are many who loudly insist that Christ’s death entirely annulled the law of God, and that it has now wholly ceased to be a Rule of Life to the believer, whereas one great and declared design of Christ’s coming into the world was to recover His people unto obedience, to bring them back in heart and life to God, “That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, *in holiness and righteousness* before him, all the days of our life” (Luk 1:74-75). The Lord Jesus came here not to dissolve our obligations to God, but rather to promote them. Christ died to restore His people to conformity unto the law, Titus 2:11-12. Why, to deliver any *creature* from the law would be to make it supreme, independent! How could there be a “kingdom” (Col 1:13) without any law to regulate its subjects?

No, so far from Christ’s death having repealed God’s law, as the Psalmist declared, “The righteousness of thy testimonies *is everlasting*...Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them *for ever*...Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy

righteous judgments *endureth for ever*” (Psa 119:144, 152, 160). And again, “The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. *They stand fast for ever and ever*” (Psa 111:7-8). O how men love their own corruptions and hate God and His Holy law, though, of course, they seek to conceal the same under a religious disguise as did Cain and Judas. Nevertheless, “The LORD *sitteth king for ever*” (Psa 29:10). Yes, and He will yet *assert the rights* of His crown, maintain the honor of His majesty, glorify His great name, and vindicate His injured law, although it be in the eternal damnation of millions of His creatures, “But those mine enemies, which would not that I should *reign over them*, bring hither, and slay them before me” (Luk 19:27).

From the last-quoted Scripture, the real Christian may perceive what an aversion men have to right thoughts of God and divine things, and in view of it (and Joh 7:47, 1Co 2:14, etc.) may be convinced of the absolute necessity of a supernatural and invincible power being brought to bear upon them if their prejudices are to be removed and their hearts made to really love the truth. A holy God does not appear infinitely glorious to an unholy heart and the unregenerate, not seeing the *grounds* of loving God with all their hearts, do not see the *reason* of the law, nor do they see how “holy, just, and good” the law is. The carnal mind being enmity *against God*, it is, at the same time, enmity against His law, which is a transcript of the divine nature (Rom 8:7). Hence, sinners do not wish to believe either God or His law to be what they really are and their depraved inclinations make them blind to what Scripture so plainly says, and leads them to frame a *false* image of God and entertain *wrong* notions of His law, that they may have a God and a law to suit their own minds.

From Luke 19:27, we may also perceive what is the character of genuine regeneration and conversion—it is a marvel and miracle of divine grace, which transforms a lawless rebel into a loving and law-abiding subject. By a “lawless rebel,” we mean one who is determined to please himself, have his own way, follow out his own plans, and gratify his own desires. By a “loving and law-abiding subject,” we mean one who is brought to recognize the claims of God upon him and who yields to those claims; one who gives up himself to God, to honor, please, and serve Him, not by constraint, but gladly; not through fear of hell, but out of gratitude and love. But such a transformation of character and conduct is only brought about by the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit. The great triumph of divine grace is to win the heart to God, so that the favored recipient of it sincerely declares, “*For I delight in the law of God* after the inward man” (Rom 7:22).

From what has just been before us, we may clearly perceive the worthlessness of the religion of our degenerate age. The poor deluded creatures in most of the “churches” and “assemblies” will dearly love those ministers who cry, “Peace, peace” unto them, but bitterly hate any who expose their “refuge of lies.” The religion of vast multitudes consists in little more than a firm confidence that their sins are forgiven and that their souls are eternally secure. They consider it a serious fault to doubt their salvation, and the whole of their experience is made up of “faith” and “joy.” Faith that their sins are blotted out, joy in the sure prospect of eternal bliss. *But there is no conformity to God’s Holy law*, no mourning before Him because of self-love and self-seeking, no humility and brokenness of heart. Let one bid them “examine themselves,” test their foundations, take upon them the yoke of Christ, and they at once raise the howl of “Legalism, dangerous teaching!” O what a rude awakening awaits all such the first five minutes after death!

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Carson on Esther

Let us next contemplate, for a moment, the elevation of a poor fatherless Jewess to the rank of queen of the Persian empire and admire the wonderful providence of God in her destination. Is there any man so blind as not to perceive that it was entirely providential that one of the small number of captive Jews should be found more beautiful than all the virgins of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces? Can anyone question that God gave her that exquisite loveliness for the very occasion? Known unto God are all His ways from the beginning, and in the formation of Hadassah (Esther's Hebrew name), He had an eye to the plan which He intended to execute through her. Had not God provided a Jewess, surpassing all the virgins of the Persian dominion, the previous events would have been useless. Esther was found the most lovely of women that through her beauty she might deliver the people of God.

In this circumstance we have a key to the divine procedure in adjusting the various events in providence to the fulfilling of His plans and declaration with respect to the kingdom of His Son. All the persons who are called to take a part in the advancement or defense of the cause of God are gifted by Him with the necessary qualifications. Many of these qualifications are given in their birth or education, though they may not for a length of time be called to use them. Sometimes they may even for years employ them in opposition to God. Such was the case with Paul, and doubtless some points of the character of this eminent apostle were bestowed on him in his very constitution, with a view to the service of Christ. He had many things by immediate gift, but he had some things by mental temperament and education. Anyone who reads the history of the Reformation with an eye to this characteristic in divine Providence will see it surprisingly illustrated in innumerable instances. The character and circumstances of Luther alone will afford a multitude of such providential provisions. By a single gift was Esther fitted to be the deliverer of Israel. By a multitude of talents and acquirements, in the most wonderful complexity, was Luther fitted for the work to which he was called by God. Indeed, the history of the Reformation bears a very striking resemblance to this deliverance of the Jews. Without a single miracle, God wrought a deliverance as surprising as the preservation of Israel, and many of those employed to effect it were as ignorant of God as the king of Persia. He used the passions and the interests of worldly men in bringing about His purposes, as well as the love and zeal of His own people. The preservation of the cause and people of God at that period was as much the work of divine Providence as the deliverance of the Jews from the destruction to which they were destined by the wicked Haman.

All the learning, ability, and acquirements—the riches, birth, rank, and influence, through which at any time the cause of God has been served, have been conferred by God, in His providential government, to fulfill the purposes of His grace. Not only does He gift His own people for this end, but many who belong not to any of the tribes of Israel have been made hewers of wood and drawers of water for the service of the temple. Many able defenses of the Scriptures—many satisfactory vindications of their doctrines and illustrations of their contents

have been afforded by Providence through the instrumentality of men as ignorant of the true grace of God as they who deny their authenticity. The very ravens are made to feed the people of God, rather than that they should want.

In God's conferring on Esther this exquisite beauty, that He might raise her to royal rank and to influence over the throne itself, we may see that the very thing may, in one point of view, *be the divine appointment* and in another may *be the sinful actions of men*. This is a doctrine clearly taught us in the Scriptures. It is here exemplified in the government of Providence. It is a truth, however, that the wisdom of this world cannot fathom and therefore cannot receive. That God should in any sense *appoint*, or intend to bring about, what He has in His Word *forbidden*, is indeed one of the deep things of God. It is the abhorrence of the wise, while many even of those who have professed to have become fools that they may be wise, in effect deny it by their explanations. But this is a doctrine that the wisdom of men will never penetrate. It is a depth that human intellect will never be able to fathom! Who can by searching find out God? Can nothing be true of Him and His ways *but what is to be comprehended* by such worms as men? Is it not enough to command our belief, that *God* has said it? Is he not virtually an atheist who requires more? A Christian who rests the reception of the divine testimony on his ability to comprehend the thing testified is more inconsistent than a deist. One who recommends any truth of Scripture on such grounds insults God. The voice of Providence combines with that of Scripture in testifying to the truth of the doctrine to which I have referred. God evidently provided the beautiful Hadassah for the bed of Ahasuerus. But does the Holy One approve of this connection? Are the seraglios of sensualists according to His Word? Does the divine law sanction the divorce of Vashti for such an offense? What can be more abominable in the eyes of God than *this* manner of choosing a queen? What could be more hurtful to the interests of men or more repugnant to their feelings? How unreasonable that a brutal sensualist should possess all the beauty of his vast empire? How many of the fairest females were thus lost to society and consigned to perpetual misery in the palace of the sensual despot? Can anything be more palpably contrary to the end of marriage, not only as it is declared in the Word of God, but even as it has been understood by heathens? *Yet God performed His purpose through this great wickedness of men!* He has no share in human guilt, while the transgressors of His law are made *to fulfill His purposes*. Such wisdom is too wonderful for us. It is high, we cannot reach it. *But it is God's wisdom*. Let us receive it with submission.

We may here see also the way in which God regulates the events in His providence for fulfilling His plans by adapting them to the instruments which He intends to employ in their execution. It was beauty that He gave to Esther, because beauty only could be the means of her elevation. All other accomplishments would have utterly failed. Had God given Esther greater riches than any subject of the hundred and twenty-seven provinces, she would not have been a single step nearer the throne. Had she been the daughter of the most powerful man in Persia, or a person of the highest birth, God, in His providence, could have made her a convert, or a friend to the religion of the Jews, but this would not have forwarded her progress to the throne. Had she possessed all the wisdom of Solomon or all the accomplishments of her sex, with the exception of beauty, she might as well have been an idiot or a rustic. Personal beauty only could raise her and personal beauty the God of providence gave her, that she might be raised. This affords a key to God's plan in His providence by which He governs a world that is at enmity with Him. In this way He makes them obey His will who know Him not, who hate Him, and what is still more strange, even while *they fulfill His will*, transgress His laws. How unsearchable are the counsels

of JEHOVAH! His way is in the sea and His path in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known.

The providence of God appears conspicuous even in the ignorance of Mordecai and Hadassah. A marriage with a heathen was forbidden to the Jews. Now, had Mordecai and his kinswoman known their duty, her exaltation could never have taken place. But it seems very surprising that a man like Mordecai should be ignorant of this law of God, or that he should know it and join in the breach of it. Commentators are very willing to excuse him in this business. Mr. Scott says, "It does not seem to have been left to the choice either of Mordecai or Esther," and Dr. Gill is willing to believe that the fair Jewess went by constraint. But were this true, is it a justification of a breach of the law of God? Why did Mordecai so uselessly hazard his own life and expose his whole nation to destruction by obstinately refusing to honor Haman, and yield so readily to this vile prostitution of Esther? If danger will warrant us to violate the law of God, we will never want a pretext. But there is no evidence that there was any reluctance in this business. There is no account of a search, nor of concealment on the part of Esther. So far from hiding Hadassah when the king's commandment was heard, it appears that Mordecai was uncommonly solicitous to promote her exaltation. Mr. Scott, indeed, attempts to plead his vindication in this, by alleging, that as he could not prevent her from becoming one of the concubines of Ahasuerus, he might thus endeavor to have her made queen. But even this reasoning is not good. Had she been violated by the despot, she would not be justified in afterwards becoming his wife. Mordecai's zeal, then, to have her made queen, is, in every point of view, unjustifiable. It was contrary to the law of God, yet it was in another point of view, God's own appointment. Instead of eagerly seeking a union with the king, Hadassah should have chosen the scaffold in preference. Her crime was much heightened by submitting to become his concubine before she became his wife. How many chances were against her that she might never have been called a second time into his presence!

Mr. Scott alleges that "in her peculiar circumstances, the *ritual law of not giving their daughters to those of another nation* might not be thought obligatory." But can any circumstances justify the violation of a law of God? Very likely, indeed, Mordecai might have some way to excuse himself. The command, as contained in the law of Moses, could not be unknown to him. But like many good men now, he might have some way of excusing himself from obedience. But whatever this might be, he must have deceived himself. Neither times nor circumstances can relieve from the obligation of obeying God's law. Could there be stronger circumstances to disannul the restriction as to marriage than those which existed in the return from the Babylonian captivity? Wives had been married and therefore ruined if the marriage is broken. Children are born of these marriages and if the marriage will not stand, they must not only be bastardized, but even deprived of a father's roof, and education by him in the knowledge of the God of Israel. Yet all this was a matter of no consideration. Both wives and children must be disowned and driven away forever. Let us read the book of Ezra and learn how sinful such marriages were accounted by all that feared God.

It is this wretched shift of times and circumstances that has subverted the whole order for Christ's house and changed every ordinance of His kingdom. The laws of the kingdom are read in the Book of God, but by some peculiarity in their situation, good men plead their excuse from observance or by forced explanations, conform the canons of Scripture to their own conduct. It requires but little ingenuity to devise a plausible pretext for not doing that to which we are averse or for doing that we like.

Mordecai and Esther, then, were guilty in this affair. But this unaccountable ignorance of their duty prepared them to execute the part that God had allotted them in this wonderful display of His

providence. Who can read this story without being convinced that this marriage was *God's* plan for delivering the Jews from the approaching danger? Can anything be clearer than that it was contrary to the law of God? In some point of view, then, God *appoints* what the sin of man effects. He ordains actions which are entirely free and in which men have all the guilt. This is as clear as the authority of Scripture can make it. Ask me to explain it and I confess myself a child. I would as soon attempt to fathom space or calculate the moments of eternity. I believe it, I confess it before the world, I urge the reception of it on Christians, because God has testified it in His Word. Let God be true and all men liars.

From this we see that the very ignorance of duty in the people of God may sometimes be providential and serve His purposes. I have no doubt that there are still in Babylon many Mordecais and Esthers, whose ignorance in their unlawful situation is turned to the glory of God and the good of His people. But the good effected by them in such a situation *does not lessen their sin* in violating the law of God. It is the hand of the Almighty that brings good out of evil and makes the ignorance of His friends, as well as the wrath of His enemies, to praise Him. He will pardon them, but they will suffer loss, both in this world and in the next. Even in this world, the most gainful violation of God's law is a loss to a Christian, and obedience, at the cost of the most expensive sacrifices, is a gain. What says the Lord Jesus to this question? "Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mar 10:28-30). The hundredfold in this life cannot be the things of this world, for then obedience would be merely mercenary speculation. God does not bribe us to do our duty. It appears to me that it must be in the increase of light and enjoyment of God. The value of discovering God's mind in the Scriptures and of beholding the glory of His character and ways is incalculably great, and no one who has experienced it would exchange it for kingdoms. He is a blessed man who is the least in the kingdom of God, but that there are many Christians who would not exchange with their brethren of the lowest attainments their views of divine things, as they have been taught by the Word and Spirit of their God, for all the glory of this world. The man who knows most of God is the first man on earth.

There is no reason, then, to envy the condition of believers, who, from ignorance, can enjoy lucrative situations, even if there were no future loss. The peace of God, *which will always be enjoyed in proportion to knowledge and obedience*, is beyond all the treasures of the world. This view of things is highly useful, for sometimes Christians may not only be tempted to envy the prosperity of the wicked, but even the condition of their brethren, whose ignorance allows them to possess more of the popularity, honors, and gains of the present world. Peter himself, when informed of the manner of his death, appears to have felt more from jealousy lest the beloved disciple might not be called to like suffering, than he did for the thing itself. "Lord," said he, "and what shall this man do?" It behooves us all to attend to the answer, "Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? *follow thou me*" (Joh 21:21-22).

There is an obvious advantage in knowing and doing the will of God. Paul says, "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1Co 3:14-15). He who got the greater number of talents, and made the best use of them, was made ruler over the

greater number of cities. And what talent can be compared with the knowledge of the will of God?

Some people are willing to believe that whatever is lost by obedience to the will of God, will in some way be made up to them, even in this world, though it is their duty to obey without this consideration. But this view is false, fanatical, and hurtful. Though in every situation, we have a right to look to God, for this world as well as for the next, yet we know not to what sort of trials it may seem good to God to expose us. There is no safety in anything but in counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, and to be ready for Him to suffer the loss of all things.

THE PERPETUITY OF THE LAW

By Charles H. Spurgeon

“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Mat 5:18). It has been said that he who understands the two covenants is a theologian and this is no doubt true. I may also say that the man who knows the relative positions of the law and of the Gospel has the keys of the situation in the matter of doctrine. The relationship of the law to myself, and how it condemns me—the relationship of the Gospel to myself and how if I be a believer it justifies me—these are two points which every Christian man should clearly understand. He should not “see men as trees walking” in this department, or else he may cause himself great sorrow and fall into errors which will be grievous to his heart and injurious to his life. To form a mangle-mangle of law and Gospel is to teach that which is neither law nor Gospel, but the opposite of both. May the Spirit of God be our Teacher, and the Word of God our lesson-book, and then we shall not err.

Very great mistakes have been made about the law. Not long ago there were those about us who affirmed that the law is utterly abrogated and abolished, and they openly taught that believers were not bound to make the moral law the rule of their lives. What would have been sin in other men they count it to be no sin in themselves. *From such Antinomianism as that may God deliver us.* We are not under the law as the method of salvation, but we delight to see the law in the hand of Christ, and desire to obey the Lord in all things. Others have been met with who have taught that Jesus mitigated and softened down the law, and they have in effect said that the perfect law of God is too hard for imperfect beings, and therefore God has given us a milder and easier rule. Alas, we have met with authors who have gone much further than this, and have railed at the law. Oh, the hard words that I have sometimes read against the holy law of God! How very unlike to those which the apostle used when he said, “The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good.” How different from the reverent Spirit which made him say, “I delight in the law

of God after the inward man.” You know how David loved the law of God and sang its praises all through the longest of the Psalms. The heart of every real Christian is most reverent towards the law of the Lord. It is perfect, nay, it is perfection itself. We believe that we shall never have reached perfection till we are perfectly conformed to it. A sanctification which stops short of perfect conformity to the law cannot truthfully be called perfect sanctification, for every want of exact conformity to the perfect law is sin.

I gather from our text two things upon which I shall speak at this time. The first is that *the law of God is perpetual*, “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.” The meaning is that even in the least point it must abide till all be fulfilled. Secondly, we perceive that *the law must be fulfilled*, “One jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” He who came to bring in the Gospel dispensation here asserts that He has not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it.

I. *The law of God must be perpetual*. There is no abrogation of it nor amendment of it. It is not to be toned down or adjusted to our fallen condition, but every one of the Lord’s righteous judgments abideth forever. I would urge three reasons which will establish this teaching.

First, *Our Lord Jesus declares that He did not come to abolish it*. His words are most express, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” And Paul tells us with regard to the Gospel, “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (Rom 3:31). The Gospel is the means of the firm establishment and vindication of the law of God.

Jesus did not come to change the law, but He came *to explain it*, and that very fact *shows that it remains*, for there is no need to explain that which is abrogated. Upon one particular point in which there happened to be a little ceremonialism involved, namely, the keeping of the Sabbath, our Lord enlarged and showed that *the Jewish idea* was not the true one. The Pharisees forbade even the doing of works of necessity and mercy, such as rubbing ears of corn to satisfy hunger and healing the sick. Our Lord Jesus showed that it was not at all according to the mind of God to forbid these things. In straining over the letter, and carrying an outward observance to excess, they had missed the spirit of the Sabbath law, which suggested works of piety such as truly hallow the day. He showed that Sabbatic rest was not mere inaction and He said, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” He pointed to the priests who labored hard at offering sacrifices and said of them, “The priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless.” They were doing divine service and were within the law. To meet the popular error, He took care to do some of His grandest miracles upon the Sabbath day and though this excited great wrath against Him, as though He were a law-breaker, yet He did it on purpose that they might see the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, and that it was meant to be a day for doing that which honors God and blesses men.

In addition to explaining the law, the Master went further—He *pointed out its spiritual character*. This the Jews had not observed. They thought, for instance, that the command, “Thou shalt not kill,” simply forbade murder and manslaughter, but the Saviour showed that anger without cause violates the law, and that hard words and cursing, and all other displays of enmity and malice are forbidden by the commandment. They knew that they might not commit adultery, but it did not enter into their minds that a lascivious desire would be an offense against the precept, till the Saviour said, “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Mat 5:28). Assuredly this was no abrogation of the law. It was a wonderful exposition of its far-reaching sovereignty and of its searching character. The

Pharisees fancied that if they kept their hands and their feet, and their tongues, all was done, but Jesus showed that thought, imagination, desire, memory, everything must be brought into subjection to the will of God or else the law was not fulfilled.

What a searching and humbling doctrine is this! If the law of God reaches to the inward parts, who among us can by nature abide its judgment? “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults.” The ten commandments are full of meaning—meaning which many seem to ignore. “Thou shalt not kill” forbids *anything which may cause injury* to our neighbor’s health and so deprive him of life. Many a deadly manufactured article, many an ill-ventilated shop, many a business with hours of excessive length, is a standing breach of this command. So, too, in reference to another precept—some persons will repeat songs and stories which are suggestive of uncleanness. Do they not know that an unchaste word, a double meaning, a slight hint of lust, all come under the command, “Thou shalt not commit adultery?” (Mat 5:27).

Oh, talk not to me about our Lord’s having brought in a milder law because man could not keep the Decalogue, for He has done nothing of the kind. “Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor” (Mat 3:12). “Who may abide the day of his coming?...for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap” (Mal 3:2) Let us not dare to dream that God had given us a perfect law which we poor creatures could not keep, and that therefore He has corrected His legislation, and sent His Son to put us under a relaxed discipline. Oh, God, I am everywhere condemned, for everywhere Thy law reveals to me my serious deviations from the way of righteousness, and shows me how far short I come of Thy glory. Have Thou pity on Thy servant, for I fly to the Gospel which has done for me what the law could never do.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in addition to explaining the law, and pointing out its spiritual character, also *unveiled its living essence*, for when one asked Him, “Which is the great commandment in the law?” He said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Mat 22:35-40). In other words, He has told us, “All the law is fulfilled in this, thou shalt love.” Those two precepts comprehend the ten at their fullest extent and cannot be regarded as the erasure of a jot or tittle of them. Whatever difficulties surround, the ten commandments are equally found in the two, which are the sum and substance. If you love God with all your heart you must keep the first table and if you love your neighbor as yourself you must keep the second table.

To show that He never meant to abrogate the law, our Lord Jesus *has embodied all its commands in His own life*. In His own person there was a nature which was perfectly conformed to the law of God and as was His nature such was His life. He could say, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” (Joh 8:46). And again, “I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love” (Joh 15:10) I may not say that He was scrupulously careful to keep the law. I will not put it so, for there was no tendency in Him to do otherwise. He was so perfect and pure, so infinitely good, and so complete in His agreement and communion with the Father, that He in all things carried out the Father’s will. The Father said of Him, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Mat 17:5) Point out, if you possibly can, any way in which Christ has violated the law or left it unfulfilled. There was never an unclean thought or rebellious desire in His soul. He had nothing to regret or to retract. It could not be that He should err. He was thrice tempted in the wilderness and the enemy had the impertinence even to suggest idolatry, but He instantly overthrew the adversary. The prince of this world came to Him, but found nothing in Him.

Once more, that the Master did not come to alter the law is clear, because after having embodied it in His life, He willingly gave Himself up *to bear its penalty*, though He had never broken it, bearing the penalty for us, even as it is written, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13). If the law had demanded more of us than it ought to have done, would the Lord Jesus have rendered to it the penalty which resulted from its too severe demands? Our Lord Jesus Christ gave a greater vindication to the law by dying, because it had been broken than all the lost in hell can ever give by their miseries, for their suffering is never complete, their debt is never paid, but He has borne all that was due from His people and the law is defrauded of nothing. By His death, He has vindicated the honor of God’s moral government and made it just for Him to be merciful. If therefore it is clearly proven that Jesus was obedient to the law, even to the extent of death, He certainly did not come to abolish or abrogate it, and if *He* did not remove it, who can do so? If He declared He came to establish it, who shall overthrow it?

Secondly, the law of God must be perpetual *from its very nature*—for right must always be right, truth must always be truth, and purity must always be purity. Before the ten commandments were published at Sinai there was still that same law of right and wrong laid upon men by the necessity of being God’s creatures. Right was always right before a single command had been committed to words. When Adam was in the garden, it was always right that he should love his Maker and it would have always been wrong that he should have been at cross-purposes with his God. And it does not matter what happens in this world or what changes take place in the universe, it never can be right to lie, or to commit adultery, or murder, or steal, or to worship an idol god. It is said by some that man cannot keep a perfect law and God does not demand that he should. Certain modern theologians have taught this, I hope by inadvertence. Has God issued an imperfect law? It is the first imperfect thing I have ever heard of His making. Does it come to this, that, after all, the Gospel is a proclamation that God is going to be satisfied with obedience to a mutilated law? God forbid. I say, better that we perish, than that His perfect law perish. Terrible as it is, it lies at the foundation of the peace of the universe and must be honored at all hazards. That gone, all goes. When the power of the Holy Spirit convinced me of sin, I felt such a solemn awe of the law of God that I remember well, when I lay crushed beneath it as a condemned sinner, I yet admired and glorified the law. I could not have wished that perfect law to be altered for me. Rather did I feel that, if my soul were sent to the lowest hell, yet God was to be extolled for His justice, and His law held in honor for its perfectness. I would not have had it altered even to save my soul. Brethren, the law of the Lord must stand, for it is perfect and therefore has in it no element of decay or change.

I should like to say to any brother who thinks that God has put us under an altered rule, “Which particular part of the law is it that God has relaxed? Which precept do you feel free to break? Are you delivered from the command which forbids stealing? My dear sir, you may be a capital theologian, but I shall lock up my spoons when you call at my house. Is it the command about adultery which you think is removed? Then I could not recommend your being admitted into any decent society. Is the law as to killing softened down? Then I had rather have your room than your company. Which law is it that God has exempted you from? That law of worshipping Him only? Do you propose to have another God? Do you intend to make graven images?” The fact is that when we come to detail, we cannot afford to lose a single link of this wonderful golden chain, which is perfect in every part as well as perfect as a whole. The law is absolutely complete and you can neither add to it nor take from it. “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not

kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou are become a transgressor of the law.” If, then, no part of it can be taken down, it must stand, and stand forever.

A third reason I will give why the law must be perpetual is that *to suppose it altered is most dangerous*. To take away from the law its perpetuity is, first of all, to take away from its power to convince of sin. Is it so, that I, being an imperfect creature, am not expected to keep a perfect law? Then it follows that I do not sin when I break the law, and if all that is required of me is that I am to do according to the best of my knowledge and ability, then I have a very convenient rule indeed, and most men will take care to adjust it so as to give themselves as much latitude as possible. By removing the law you have done away with sin, for sin is the transgression of the law, and where there is no law there is no transgression. When you have done away with sin, you may as well have done away with the Saviour and with salvation, for they are by no means needful. When you have reduced sin to a minimum, what need is there of that great and glorious salvation which Jesus Christ has come to bring onto the world?

By lowering the law you weaken its power in the hands of God as a convincer of sin. “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” It is the looking-glass which shows us our spots, a most useful thing, though nothing but the Gospel can wash them away.

*My hopes of heaven were firm and bright,
But since the precept came
With a convincing power and light,
I find how vile I am.
My guilt appeared but small before,
Till terribly I saw
How perfect, holy, just, and pure,
Was Thine eternal law.
Then felt my soul the heavy load,
My sins revived again,
I had provoked a dreadful God,
And all my hopes were slain.*

It is only a pure and perfect law that the Holy Spirit can use in order to show us our depravity and sinfulness. Lower the law and you dim the light by which man perceives his guilt. This is a serious loss to the sinner rather than a gain. It lessens the likelihood of his conviction and conversion.

You have also taken away from the law its power to shut us up to the faith of Christ. What is the law of God for? For us to keep in order for us to be saved by it? Not at all. It is sent in order to show us that we cannot be saved by works and to shut us up to be saved by grace, but if you make out that the law is altered so that a man can keep it, you have left him with his old legal hope and he is sure to cling to it. You need a perfect law that shuts man right up to hopelessness apart from Jesus, puts him into an iron cage and locks him up, and offers him no escape but by faith in Jesus. Then he begins to cry, “Lord, save me by grace, for I perceive that I cannot be saved by my own works.” This is how Paul describes it to the Galatians, “The scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” I say you have deprived the Gospel of its ablest auxiliary when you have set aside the law. You have taken away from it the schoolmaster that is to bring them to Christ. No, it must stand, and stand in all its terrors, to drive men away from self-righteousness and constrain them to cry to Christ. *They will never accept grace till they tremble before a just and holy law.* Therefore the law serves a most necessary and blessed purpose, and it must not be removed from its place.

To alter the law is to leave us without any law at all. A sliding-scale of duty is an immoral invention, fatal to the principles of law. No wonder that men talk of perfect sanctification if the law has been lowered. There is nothing at all remarkable in our getting up to the rule if it is conveniently lowered for us. I believe I shall be perfectly sanctified when I keep God’s law without omission or transgression, but not till then. If any man says that he is perfectly sanctified because he has come up to a modified law of his own, I am glad to know what he means, for I have no longer any discussion with him. I see nothing wonderful in his attainment. Sin is any want of conformity to the law of God, and until we are perfectly conformed to that law, in all its spiritual length and breadth, it is idle for us to talk about perfect sanctification. No man is perfectly clean till he accepts absolute purity as the standard by which he is to be judged. So long as there is in us any coming short of the perfect law, we are not perfect. What a humbling truth this is! The law shall not pass away, but it must be fulfilled. This truth must be maintained, for if it goes, our tacklings are loosed, we cannot well strengthen the mast, the ship goes all to pieces. She becomes a total wreck. The Gospel itself would be destroyed could you destroy the law. To tamper with the law is to trifle with the Gospel. “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Mat 5:18).

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

“Commune with your own heart upon your bed” (Psa 4:4). This is a divine command, but it receives very little attention today from the great majority of professing Christians, and that to their immeasurable harm, for every command of God is designed for our good and is disregarded to our loss. Were we more genuinely convinced of the importance and value of self-knowledge, and governed by a due esteem of it, and did we but prosecute it rightly, we should make it our duty and business to become better acquainted with our hearts and their workings, and be delivered from many of the evil effects of self-ignorance. But alas, God still has to say, as He did of old, “My people doth not *consider*” (Isa 1:3).

Self-knowledge is that acquaintance with ourselves which reveals to us what we are and do, and what we ought to be and do in order to our living usefully here and happily hereafter. The means of it is self-examination in the light of Holy Scripture. The purpose of it is self-government, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23). It consists principally in the knowledge of our *souls*, which is attained by a particular attention to their various faculties, dispositions, and workings. A man’s soul is properly *himself*, Matthew 16:26 and compare Luke 9:25. The body is but the house, the soul is the tenant which indwells it.

Other knowledge is very apt to make a man conceited, but a growing knowledge of *himself* will keep the Christian humble. It is the lack of self-knowledge which is the occasion of so much pride. “If a man (through self-ignorance) think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself” (Gal 6:3). The Lord Jesus upbraided His disciples with their self-ignorance when He said, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of” (Luk 9:55). The more ignorant we are of ourselves, the readier we are to condemn others, but the better acquainted we are with ourselves, the slower shall we be in rashly censuring others for the same crimes of which *we* are guilty, Romans 2:1, 21-22.

A true knowledge of ourselves cannot be acquired without diligent and frequent self-examination. To this duty there exists in human nature a strong repugnance, so that by most it is greatly neglected. But when it is attempted, we are in much danger of being misled by self-love and prejudice. To acquire any true knowledge of ourselves a good degree of honesty and impartiality is essentially requisite. But an honest desire to arrive at the truth is not the only prerequisite to self-knowledge. The mind must be enlightened in regard to the standard of rectitude to which we ought to be conformed. The Word of God should dwell richly in us, and by its principles and precepts we must form all sentiments respecting ourselves.

Beware of the common illusion of forming your estimate of yourself from the favorable opinion of those around you. They cannot know the secret principles from which you act and flattery may have much influence in leading them to speak in your favor. We may often learn even from our enemies and calumniators what are the weak points in our characters. They are discerning in detecting faults and generally have some show of pretext for what they allege against us. We may, therefore, derive more benefit from the sarcasms of our foes than from the flattery of our friends.

We need to become acquainted with *our frailties and deficiencies*, that we may know where our weakness lies, otherwise, like Sampson, we are likely to expose ourselves to numerous temptations and troubles. Every man has his weak side and every wise man *knows* where it is, and will be sure to keep a double guard there. Yet our limitations and incapacities can only be discovered by a considerable degree of self-acquaintance. How often have we attempted things beyond our reach and assayed to do things out of our powers. We were blind to our deficiencies through self-ignorance. It has been truly said, “A wise man as well as a fool has his foibles, but the difference between them is that the foibles of the former are known to himself and concealed from the world, while the foibles of the other are known to the world and concealed from himself.”

We need to know *our talents and capacities*, and how they may be improved to the greatest advantage. What money, time, and labor have been wasted through people trying to learn and master that for which they had no talent—music, art, languages, etc. How many have aimed to be preachers who were never qualified by God for such a calling. These are illustrations, perhaps, of more extreme cases, but the same principle is active in all of us. Just as each organ in the body has its own particular office to discharge, so each Christian has his own individual place to fill, and the sooner he discovers what his *real* place is, the better. A wise man, instead of aspiring after talents he has not, will set about cultivating those he has, “Every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that” (1Co 7:7).

We need to know *our constitutional sins*. With some people this is easy, with others more self-examination is required. The reason for this is that the besetting sins of some are more open and flagrant, while with others they are more secret and unsuspected. Every person has some

particular turn or cast of mind which distinguishes him from others as much as the particular constitution of his body, and their individual traits naturally tend to certain kinds of sin. Some are more prone to sloth, pride, selfishness, envy, malice, self-indulgence. For one not to know his prevailing sin is great self-ignorance. A man who is engaged in the study of himself must be willing to know the worst of himself.

We need to know what are *our most dangerous temptations*. He who is properly acquainted with himself has discovered in what circumstances he is in greatest danger of trespassing. This is a point which needs to be examined thoroughly. Consider in what company you are apt to lose possession and government of yourself and on what occasions you become most vain and unguarded. Flee that company and avoid those occasions if you would keep your conscience clear. It is of first importance in order to self-knowledge and self-government to be acquainted with all the avenues of sin and to observe how it is we are most led into it, and to set reason and conscience to guard those passes. No man can sincerely pray that God will not lead him into temptation if he takes no care himself to avoid it.

The *benefits* of self-knowledge are too numerous for us to mention. We single out one—the man who knows himself best knows wherein he most needs to *deny* himself. The great duty of self-denial, which Christ so expressly requires from His followers, has been mistaken and abused, not only by the Papists with their penances and fasts, but by Protestants in instances of voluntary abstinence and unnecessary austerities. Such people are very apt to be too censorious against those who indulge themselves (temperately) in the use of things indifferent. Each believer must learn his own danger points, and guard against everything that would assail them. Each must learn *what* it is which *he* or *she* most needs to abstain from.

N. B.—For most of the above we are indebted to a little work by John Mason.

GRACE REIGNING IN ELECTION

“Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass’s colt” (Job 11:12). Accordingly, he finds fault with election, as a mere system of arbitrary partiality and favouritism, and tells us that if there be such a thing as total helplessness in man and sovereign election in God, then man is not to blame if he be lost. Man’s entire apostasy and death in sin, so that he cannot save himself, and God’s entire supremacy, so that He saves whom He will, are doctrines exceedingly distasteful to human pride. But they are scriptural.

Why was the one thief saved and the other lost? “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” God was not bound to save the one and He had power enough to have saved the other, and neither could save himself. What made the difference? The sovereign grace of God. Why was Paul saved and Judas lost? Was it because the former deserved to be saved and the latter to be lost? No, neither deserved to be saved. Was it because the one was a fitting object for the grace of God and the other not? No, the one was no more a fitting object than the other. Was it because Paul chose Christ and Judas rejected Him? Well, but how was it that Paul chose Christ? Was it not because Christ chose him?

Why was it that Judea was made a land of light and Egypt remained a region of darkness? Who made the difference? Man or God? Was God unjust in leaving Egypt in the shadow of death when He made light to arise on Israel? What had Israel done to deserve a privilege like this? Why is it that Britain is a land of light and Africa a land of darkness? Who made the difference? Who sent the Gospel to Britain and withheld it from Africa? Is God unjust in leaving the mighty continent in the hands of Satan and in delivering from his yoke this small Island of the Sea?

None have deserved salvation. No man is more fit for it than another. God was not bound to save any. God might have saved all. Yet He has only saved some. Is He, then, unjust in only saving some when He could have saved all? Objectors say, Oh, those who are lost, are lost because they rejected Christ. But did not *all* equally reject Him at first? What made the unbelief of some give way? Was it because *they* willed it or because God put forth His power in them? Surely the latter. Might He not, then, have put forth His power in all and prevented any from rejecting the Saviour? Yet He did not. Why? Because so it seemed good in His sight. Is it unjust in God to save only a few when all are equally doomed to die? If not, is there any injustice in His determining aforehand to save these few and leave the rest unsaved? They could not save themselves and was it unjust in Him to *resolve*, in His infinite wisdom, to save them? Or was it unjust in Him not to resolve to save all? Had *all perished* there would have been no injustice with Him. How is it possible that there can be injustice in His resolving to *save some*?

There can be no grace where there is no sovereignty. Deny God's right to *choose* whom He will and you deny His right to *save* whom He will. Deny His right to save whom He will and you deny that salvation is of grace. If salvation is made to hinge upon any desert or fitness in man, seen or foreseen, *grace* is at an end.

One of the controversies of the present day is respecting the *will* of God—as to whether His will or man's is the regulating power in the universe, and the procuring cause of salvation to souls. The supremacy of God's will over individual persons and events is questioned. Things are made to turn upon man's will, not on God's. Conversion is made to turn on man's will, not on God's. Man's will, not God's, is to decide what individuals are to enter heaven. Man's pen, and not God's, is to write the names of the saved one's in the Lamb's Book of Life! Much zeal is shown for the freedom of man's will, little jealousy seems to be left for the freedom of God's will. Men insist that it is unjust and tyrannical in God to control *their* wills, yet see nothing unjust, nothing proud, nothing Satanic in attempting to fetter and direct the will of God. Man, it seems, cannot have his own foolish will gratified, unless the all-wise God will consent to relinquish *His*!

Such are some of the steps in the march of Atheism. Such are the preparations made in these last days by the wily usurper for dethroning the eternal Jehovah. Men may call these speculations. They may condemn them as unprofitable. To the law and to the testimony! Of such *speculations* the Bible is full. *There* man is a helpless worm and salvation, from first to last, is of the Lord. God's will, and not man's, is the law of the universe. If we are to maintain the Gospel—if we are to hold fast grace—if we are to preserve Jehovah's honour—we must grasp these truths with no feeble hand. For if there be no such a Being as a Supreme predetermining Jehovah, then the universe will soon be a chaos. And if there be no such a thing as free electing love, every minister of Christ may close his lips and every sinner upon earth sit down in mute despair.—Horatius Bonar, 1844.



March

THE HOLY SPIRIT

15. The Spirit Regenerating (Part 1)

The absolute necessity for the regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit in order to a sinner's being converted to God lies in his being totally depraved. Fallen man is without the least degree of right disposition or principles from which holy exercises may proceed. Yea, he is completely under a contrary disposition. There is no right exercise of heart in him, but *every* motion of his will is corrupt and sinful. If this were not the case, there would be no need for him to be born again and made "a new creature." If the sinner were not wholly corrupt, he would submit to Christ without any supernatural operation of the Spirit, but fallen man is so completely sunk in corruption that he has not the faintest real desire for God, but is filled with enmity against Him (Rom 8:7). Therefore does Scripture affirm him to be "*dead* in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1).

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Joh 1:12-13). The latter verse expounds the former. There an explanation is given as to why any fallen descendant of Adam ever spiritually receives Christ as his Lord and Master, and savingly believes on His name.

First, it is not because grace runs in the blood—as the Jews supposed. Holiness is not transmitted from father to son. The child of the most pious parents is by nature equally as corrupt and is as far from God as is the offspring of infidels. Second, it is not because of any natural willingness—as Arminians contend—"nor of the will of the flesh" refers to man in his natural and corrupt state. He is not regenerated by any instinct, choice, or exertion of his own. He does not by any personal endeavour contribute anything towards being born again, nor does he cooperate in the least degree with the efficient cause. Instead, every inclination of his heart, every exercise of his will, is in direct opposition thereto.

Third, the new birth is not brought about by the power and influence of others. No sinner is ever born again as the result of persuasions and endeavours of preachers or Christian workers. However pious and wise they are, and however earnestly and strenuously they exert themselves to bring others to holiness, they do in no degree produce the effect. "If all the angels and saints in

heaven and all the godly on earth should join their wills and endeavours, and unitedly exert all their powers to regenerate one sinner, they could not effect it; yea, they could do nothing toward it. It is an effect *infinitely* beyond the reach of finite wisdom and power, 1 Corinthians 3:6-7” (Samuel Hopkins, 1721-1803).

*You may listen to the preacher
God’s own truth be clearly shown,
But you need a greater teacher
From the everlasting throne;
Application is the work of God alone.*

In regeneration, one of God’s elect is the subject and the Spirit of God is the sole agent. The subject of the new birth is wholly passive. He does not act, but is acted upon. The sovereign work of the Spirit in the soul precedes *all* holy exercises of heart—such as sorrow for sin, faith in Christ, love toward God. This great change is wrought in spite of all the opposition of the natural heart against God, “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy” (Rom 9:16). This great change is not a gradual and protracted process, but is *instantaneous*—in an instant of time the favoured subject of it passes from death unto life.

In regeneration, the Spirit imparts a real, new, and immortal life—a life not such as that which was inherited from the first Adam, who was “a living soul,” but such as is derived from the last Adam, who is “a quickening Spirit” (1Co 15:45). This new creation, though as real as the first, is widely different from it—that was an original or primary creation in the dust of the earth becoming man by the word of God’s power. This is the regeneration of an actual and existing man—fallen and depraved, yet rational and accountable—into an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ. The outcome is a “new man,” yet it is the same person, only “renewed.”

“Regeneration consists in a new, spiritual, supernatural, vital principle, or habit of grace infused into the soul, the mind, the will, and affections, by the power of the Holy Spirit, disposing and enabling them in whom it is, unto spiritual, supernatural, vital actings, and spiritual obedience” (John Owen, 1616-1683). No new faculties are created, but instead, the powers of the soul are spiritualized and made alive unto God, fitted to enjoy God and hold communion with Him. Regeneration consists in a radical change of heart, for there is implanted a new disposition as the foundation of all holy exercises—the mind being renovated, the affections elevated, and the will emancipated from the bondage of sin. The effect of this is that the one who is born again loves spiritual things *as spiritual* and values spiritual blessings on account of their being purely spiritual.

In view of a certain school of teaching upon “the two *natures* in the believer,” some readers may experience difficulty over our statement above that at regeneration no new faculties are created, the soul remaining, substantially, the same as it was before. No, not even in the glorified state will any addition be made to the human constitution, though its faculties will then be completely unfettered and further enlarged and elevated. Perhaps this thought will be the more easily grasped if we illustrate it by a striking case recorded in 2 Kings 6:17, “And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”

No new faculties were communicated unto Elisha’s servant, but the powers of his visive organ were so enlarged that he was now able to discern objects which before were invisible to him. So it

is with our understandings at regeneration. The mind (abstractly considered) is the same in the unregenerate as in the regenerate, but in the case of the latter, the Spirit has so quickened it that it is now able to take in spiritual objects and act toward them. This new spiritual visive power with which the understanding is endowed at the new birth is a *quality*, super-added to the original faculties. As this is a point of importance, yet one which some find it difficult to grasp, we will proceed to dwell upon it a moment longer.

The bodily eye of the saint after resurrection will be elevated to see angels (which are now invisible), and therefore may be rightly termed a *new* eye, yea, a spiritual eye—even as the whole body will be a “spiritual body” (1Co 15:44)—yet that change will be but the super induction of new spiritual qualities for the eye (and the whole body) unto spiritual objects. In like manner, the entire being of one who is born again is so spiritualized or endued with “spirit” (Joh 3:6) as to be styled a “new man,” a “spiritual” man, nevertheless, it is but the original man “renewed,” and not the creating of a new being.

After regeneration, things appear in an altogether new light and the heart exercises itself after quite a new manner. God is now seen as the sum of all excellency. The reasonableness and spirituality of His law is so perceived that the heart approves of it. The infinite evil of sin is discerned. The one born again, judges, condemns, and loathes himself and wonders that he was not long ago cast into hell. He marvels at the grace of God in giving Christ to die for such a wretch. Constrained by the love of Christ, he now renounces the ways of sin and gives himself up to serve God. Hereby we may discover *what it is* which persons are to inquire after in order to determine whether they have been born again, namely, by the exercises of their hearts, and the influences and effects these have upon their conduct.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

75. The Faith of Israel (11:29)

The apostle’s object in this 11th chapter of Hebrews is to show the power of real faith in God to produce supernatural acts, to overcome difficulties which are insuperable to mere nature, and to endure trials which are too much for flesh and blood to bear up under. Various examples have been adduced in illustration. A further notable one is now before us. In it we see how faith enabled Israel to fearlessly venture themselves to enter a strangely formed valley between two mountainous ridges of water and to reach in safety the opposite shore. In like manner, a real faith in God will enable the Christian to pass through trials and troubles which destroy multitudes of his fellow-creatures and which will in due time conduct him into the enjoyment of perfect bliss.

The force of the above example is greatly heightened by a striking and most solemn contrast. The power of faith in enabling Israel to safely cross the Red Sea is demonstrated by the helpless and hopeless destruction of the Egyptians, who sought to follow them. “And the Egyptians

pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen" (Exo 14:23). But they had no faith. They were moved by passion, by hatred of the Hebrews. It was night when the army of God undertook their strange journey, yet though dark, the hosts of Pharaoh presumptuously and blindly followed. But now had arrived the hour when the long-insulted divine forbearance was to be avenged.

"And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians" (Exo 14:24-25). But it was too late. The haughty monarch of Egypt and his powerful retinue now discovered how vain it was to fling themselves against the bosses of Jehovah's buckler—that which had been a channel of deliverance to the believing Israelites, became the grave of their enemies. Thereby are we shown that all attempts of unbelievers to obtain what faith secures is utterly futile and doomed to certain disappointment.

But here a difficulty presents itself and a formidable one it has proved unto most of those who sought to grapple with it. In our text we are told that, "By faith they passed through the Red Sea" (Heb 11:29), whereas in Hebrews 3:18-19, it is said, "And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Was, then, their faith only a temporary one, like that of the stony-ground hearers? No, for the "faith" mentioned in every other verse in Hebrews 11 was a saving one, and we dare not arbitrarily assume this in verse 29 was an altogether different one.

The solution of our present difficulty lies in attentively noting the pronoun which the Holy Spirit has here employed, "By faith *they* passed through the Red Sea" (Heb 11:29). It is not there said that, "By faith the children of Israel" did so, for it is very evident from their later history that the vast majority of them were "a very forward generation, children in whom is *no* faith" (Deu 32:20). The reference, then, in our text is unto Moses and Aaron, Caleb and Joshua, and the believing remnant among the Hebrews. But, it may be asked, Did not the unbelieving portion of the nation also pass safely through the Red Sea? Truly, and therein we have an illustration of the fact that unbelievers are frequently made partakers of temporal blessings as the result of their association with the people of God. Another example of this principle is found in Acts 27:24, where we see that an entire ship's company were spared for Paul's sake.

"By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned" (Heb 11:29). In seeking to expound this verse, we cannot do better than adopt the division of the Puritan Thomas Manton (1620-1677) thereon, considering it three ways: historically, sacramentally, and applicatively. First, then, historically.

Our text takes us back to what is recorded in Exodus 14. There we learn that when at last Pharaoh consented to let the Hebrews go, he soon repented of his grant, and being informed by his spies that the Israelites were entangled in the straits of Pihahiroth, he determined to pursue, and either recover or destroy them. At the head of a great military force, he swiftly went after them. The consequence was that, "When Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us

alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness” (Exo 14:10-12).

A truly desperate situation now faced Moses and the company he was leading. “Shut in, between the great fortress ‘Migdol,’ which was on the ‘Shur’ or wall (built to protect Egypt from Asia) and the sea, with Pharaoh’s host behind them, and shut in on the other side by the wilderness, see Exodus 14:2-3. It was indeed a crisis” (E. W. Bullinger, 1837-1913). What could the poor Israelites do? Fight they dare not, being a multitude of undisciplined people of all sexes and ages, and pursued by a regular and powerful army of enemies. Flee they could not, for they were completely hemmed in on every side. To all outward appearances their case seemed hopeless and to human reason, nothing but sore destruction might be expected.

The situation which confronted Israel *was* a hopeless one so far as *they* were concerned, and had not the Lord shown Himself strong on their behalf, they had undoubtedly perished. But, “If God be *for* us, who can be against us?” Ah, my reader, that is the great thing for each of us to make sure of, and when we have done so, to seek grace to rest with unshaken confidence upon it. Has not God promised, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee” (Isa 43:2)! What better assurance than that can the believing heart ask for? No matter how deep and wide-stretching, no matter how dark and foreboding the “waters” of adverse circumstances may be unto sight and sense, has not He who cannot lie declared, “They *shall not* overflow thee”!

“And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever” (Exo 14:13). Undeterred by the chiding of the people, and wisely making no reply thereto, Moses turned their minds away from the outward danger and directed their thoughts unto Jehovah. They had “lifted up their eyes” and beheld the Egyptians (Exo 14:10), and in consequence they were sore afraid. But there was something else for *faith* to “see,” namely, “the salvation (or deliverance) of the LORD,” which was not yet visible to natural sight. If they were steadfastly occupied with *that*, their trembling hearts would be stilled.

Admire, dear reader, the confident assurance which divine grace wrought in the heart of Moses, for by nature he was a frail man of like passions and infirmities as we. But there was no wavering or doubting on his part, “See the salvation of the LORD, which he *will* show to you today”: that was the language of faith—of a supernatural, God-given faith. Moses was not engaged with the difficulties and dangers of the trying situation which confronted them. Instead, he was occupied with One before whom all difficulties disappear like mists before the rising sun. “The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace” (Exo 14:14). Once the soul is able to rest on that fact, doubtings end and alarms are silenced.

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). Faith must have a foundation to stand upon, and the only firm and sure one is the promise of the living God. “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will show to you today...The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace” (Exo 14:13; 14:14). afforded the necessary ground for the faith of each believing Hebrew to rest upon. The eye of faith must see that divine “salvation” or deliverance, before the eye of sense beholds it. Only the sure Word of God could give strength to their hearts to advance into the ocean before them. When the promise had been “heard,” and not before, then came the order, “Go forward.”

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and

divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea” (Exo 14:15-16). Thus we learn that the heart of Moses was engaged in silent supplication at this time. The Lord’s statement here is not to be understood as a rebuke. No, Moses was waiting the word of command, and until it was given, he stayed himself from the Lord. “And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left” (Exo 14:22).

“When Moses gave the signal by his rod, the sea miraculously retreated, standing up like heaps of congealed ice on either side while they passed through. This is done and they go on safely. The sea flanked them on both sides. The rear was secured by the cloudy and fiery pillar interposing between them and Pharaoh’s army, till such a time as all were out of danger and safely arrived at the further shore, and so neither man nor child was hurt. The Egyptians followed the chase, as malice is perverse and blind, and those whom God designeth to destruction take the ready course to bring it upon their own heads. For at the signal again of Moses stretching forth his rod, the returning waters swallowed them all up in a moment” (Thomas Manton).

“A greater instance, with respect unto the work of divine providence, of the power of faith on the one hand, and of unbelief with obdurate presumption on the other, there is not on record in the whole book of God. Here we have the end and issue of the long controversy that was between these two people, the Egyptians and the Israelites; a certain type and evidence of what will be the last end of the contest between the world and the church. Their long conflict shall end in the complete salvation of the one, and the utter destruction of the other” (John Owen).

Though it was night, the divine pillar of cloud “gave light” unto Israel (Exo 14:20). Dreadful indeed must have appeared those walls of water, for the sea would be raised unto a very great height on either side of them. It called for no ordinary faith to put themselves between such walls, as were ready in their own nature to fall on them unto their destruction any moment, abiding upright only under an invisible restraint. But they had the command of God for their warrant and the promise of God for their security, and these, when laid hold of, are sufficient to overcome all fears and dangers. That Moses himself, to guide and encourage them (and as the type of Christ) took the lead, is clear from Isaiah 63:11-12, God “led them by the right hand of Moses” through the sea.

Let us now briefly consider the remarkable incident related in our text from a *sacramental* viewpoint. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-2, we are told, “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” From this Scripture we learn that Israel’s passage through the Red Sea had the same signification that Christian baptism now has. The points of resemblance are many and were developed at length by Manton, and more so by William Gouge (1575-1653), from whom we here give a digest.

1. The ministry of Moses was confirmed by this miracle, so that the Israelites were obliged to take him for their leader and lawgiver. So the miracles wrought by Christ assure us that He was sent by God as our lawgiver, which we must hear and obey. 2. Israel’s experience is (figuratively) denominated a “baptism,” because it signified the difference which God puts between His people and His enemies—the deliverance of Israel from the Egyptians was sealed by their passage through the Red Sea. Similarly, baptism is said to be an answering figure to the ark of Noah (1Pe 3:20-21)—as those in the ark were exempted from the deluge, so those in Christ are exempted from the deluge of wrath which will yet overwhelm the world.

3. They were baptized “in the cloud and in the sea,” because by submitting to God’s command they gave up themselves to His direction. So in baptism, we dedicate ourselves unto Christ, avowing Him to be our Lord and Master. 4. The passing through the Red Sea and baptism had both the same outward sign, which is water (Mat 3:6). 5. They had like rites, which were entering into the water and coming out of it (Act 8:38-39). 6. They had both the same ground, which was God’s command and promise (Exo 14:13, 16 and Mat 28:19; Mar 16:16). 7. They were both for the same people, namely, the children of God (Matt 28:19). 8. They were but once administered (Eph 4:5).

Let us now consider some of the *practical* lessons which this marvelous incident is designed to teach us. 1. The children of God are sometimes called on *to face great trials*—a Red Sea of difficulty and trouble confronts them. Let it be duly observed that it was not an enemy who put the sea there, but God Himself! This tells us that the Red Sea represents some great and trying providence which the Lord places in the path of each new-born Christian. It is in order to try his faith and test the sincerity of his trust in God. Often this trial is encountered soon after conversion. Sometimes it arises from opposition of ungodly members of our own family. Or you are engaged in some business—perhaps requiring you to work on the Sabbath day—in which you cannot now conscientiously continue. It means renouncing your means of livelihood, and you cannot see how it can be done and provide things honest in the sight of all men. As you emerged from the bondage of Egypt, you thought it would be easy to surrender everything to God, but now a Red Sea of testing is before you and it appears unfordable.

2. The children of God are sometimes *terrified by powerful enemies*. The Egyptians who pursued Israel up to the Red Sea may be spiritualized to represent those sins of the Christians from which he expected to be completely delivered. For a little while after conversion sin does not much trouble the newly-regenerated saint. He is filled with joy and praise at the great things which the Lord has done for him. But it is not long before he discovers with the apostle, “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom 7:23). Satan now pursues the young saint and often it seems as though all the powers of hell were let loose against him. At such a time, our sins appear more formidable to us than before they were forgiven. In Egypt, our taskmasters only appeared with their whips, but now they are mounted and in chariots! Ah, after conversion sin looks far more frightful to the saint than ever it did before and we feel the plague of our heart much more acutely.

3. The people of God are often *troubled with faint hearts*. When the children of Israel saw the Egyptians, they were sore afraid and when they beheld the Red Sea, they murmured against their deliverer. A faint heart is the worst foe a Christian has here. When the anchor of faith is fixed deep in the Rock, he need never fear the storm, but when the hand of faith is palsied or the eye of faith be dim, it will go hard with us. When faith is dormant, the most insignificant stream will make us quiver and cry, I shall be drowned in the flood, but when faith is dominant, he fears not an ocean of difficulty or danger. The babe in Christ has but little faith, for he has but little experience. He has not yet proved God’s promises and knows not His faithfulness. But as he grows in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, and becomes established in the faith, he will not despair before Red Seas and Egyptians, but meanwhile, he often trembles and asks, “How shall I ever find deliverance?”

4. The people of God are here instructed *how to act under great trials*. The first word which the Israelites received in the hour of their great emergency was, “Fear ye not, stand still.” The second was, “And see the salvation [deliverance] of the LORD, which he will show to you

today.” The third was, “Go forward” (Exo 14:13, 15). It is of first importance that we should diligently attend to the divine order of those three things. We are not equipped and ready to “Go forward” until we have “seen” (by faith) the “salvation of the LORD,” and that cannot be properly seen until our fears are calmed and we stand still. Or in other words, till we turn from all self-help and cease from all the feverish activities of the flesh.

The continuous call of God to the Christian is, “Go forward”—persevering steadfastly along the path of duty, walking in that narrow way which the divine commands and precepts have laid down for us. No matter what obstacles may confront you, no matter what your circumstances may be, no matter what Red Sea of difficulty or danger be before you, “Go forward” is God’s authoritative word to you. “Ah, but often that is far from being an easy thing to do!” Quite true, dear friend. Yea, we will state it still more strongly. It is often *impossible* to mere nature. What, then, is to be done when the heart faints, when the soul is well-nigh overwhelmed by the greatness of the difficulty or danger, standing right in your path? Two things—first, “Stand still.” Your own efforts to better matters have brought no relief, your own wisdom can devise no solutions. Very well, then, “Stand still.” Cease from all attempts at self-help.

“But,” you answer, “I have my responsibilities to discharge, my duties to perform.” Quite true, but admittedly you have now reached the place where a Red Sea is before you. You are dismayed and know not which way to turn. Here, then, is God’s Word to you in this dire emergency, “Stand still.” This means, Get down on your knees, and cry unto the Lord. Tell Him all about your trouble, unburden yourself freely and fully unto Him. Spread your urgent need before Him. Probably, you answer, “I have done so and thus far no way through my Red Sea has appeared before me.” Then you are now ready for His next word.

“And see the salvation [deliverance] of the LORD, which he *will* show you” (Exo 14:13). And what does that mean? This, *the exercise of faith* in the living God, the trusting in Him *to undertake* for you, the confident expectation He *will do so*. Cry unto the Holy Spirit to work this faith in you. Remain on your knees until He has given you real assurance that your Father *will* show Himself strong on your behalf. Wait before Him till one of His promises is applied to your heart in power. *Then* you are ready to “Go forward,” to resume your duties and discharge your responsibilities, to look for work, to go on with renewed strength. That Christian is only ready to “Go forward” when faith has *seen* that which is invisible to sight and sense, namely, the “salvation [deliverance] of the LORD” *before* it is actually wrought for us!

The way in which the Christian is required to walk as he journeys through this world on his way to heaven is *the path of obedience* to God’s commands. Naught but a spiritual faith inclines the heart to comply with God’s demands and upon compliance to expect the mercy promised—

“LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments” (Psa 119:166). This is the great business of faith—as the Israelites were to obey God and to wait for His deliverance out of their imminent danger. Naught but a God-given faith imparts courage to obey God in the most difficult crisis. If we be bidden to go into the Red Sea, we must not forbear, for none of God’s commands are to be disputed, however contrary they be to flesh and blood. Faith teaches us to depend upon God in the greatest extremities. Faith receives the promise of God upon the condition or terms which He has specified. If Israel were to receive the “salvation of the LORD,” they *must* do what He bade. Faith and obedience can no more be separated than can light and heat in the sun.

As Abraham, at the call of God, went out of Chaldea, “not knowing whither he went,” so Israel was required to “Go forward” through the Red Sea stretched before them. Probably it was

not until their feet touched the brink that the waters divided. Nature might have gone over it, but *faith* passed safely “through” it! They feared they would be destroyed by Pharaoh’s hosts. The very last thing that they would have looked to as a means of escape would be the sea! Yet, in obedience to the divine command, “And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left” (Exo 14:22). Learn, then, dear reader, we never lose by obeying God.

“By faith they passed through the Red Sea” (Heb 11:29). True faith lifts a man above himself, puts into him a spirit which is more than human, and enables him to rise above the obstacles of reason and sense. Faith emboldened the hitherto trembling Israelites to venture through that strange chasm between the watery walls. “As by dry land” is added to magnify the divine providence in making a path in the ocean’s bottom fit for women and children to tread upon—like a plain and beaten highway. By faith they “passed through”—they took not only a few steps, but continued to perseveringly march mile after mile and hour after hour. Hesitate not, my brethren, to venture upon anything which God calleth you unto. Be assured that He will safely carry you through all difficulties and dangers. “Which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned” (Heb 11:29)—the very means of Israel’s deliverance was their destruction, *see* 2 Corinthians 2:16! It was a just retribution for the slaying of the male Hebrew children in the waters (Exo 1:22).

5. The people of God may *be assured of the divine providence*. When Israel “by faith,” obeyed the divine command to “Go forward,” God wrought a miracle and delivered them from their dire situation. This is recorded for the encouragement of *our* hearts. It was God who had placed the Red Sea where it was and it was God who opened the way for Israel through it. So, Christian reader, it is God (and *not* the devil) who has brought about the problem, the emergency, the danger which now confronts you, for “*of Him...are all things*” (Rom 11:36). As He has made thy Red Sea, only He can cleave a way through it for you. Trust, then, in His unerring wisdom. Count upon His mighty power working on your behalf. “Stand still” and rest yourself upon God. View “by faith” anticipatively, expectantly, His “salvation” or deliverance. “Go forward” in obedience to His commands and He will show Himself strong on thy behalf. *He* never fails those who fully trust and unreservedly obey Him.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

27. His Pursuit of the Amalekites

We are now to be engaged with *the blessed sequel* to David’s putting matters right between his soul and God, and his encouraging himself in the Lord. At the close of the preceding article, we saw that the first result of his returning to God was that he summoned the high priest with his ephod, and “inquired of the Lord” (1Sa 30:7-8). whether or not he should pursue after those who had burned Ziklag and carried away his wives captive. This exemplifies a principle which is ever operative when there has been a true reformation of heart—our own wisdom and strength are disowned, and divine help and guidance are earnestly sought. Herein are we able to check up the

state of our souls and discover whether or not we are really walking with the Lord. Backsliding and a spirit of independence ever go together; contrariwise, communion with God and dependence upon Him are never separated.

As we pointed out in our last article on David, the Mosaic law required that Israel's ruler should stand before the priest, who would ask counsel for him as to whether he should go out or no (Num 27:21). In like manner, the saint today is bidden to, "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psa 37:5). No step in life should be taken, be it great or small, without first waiting upon God for direction, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (Jam 1:5). To seek not wisdom from above is to act in self-sufficiency and self-will—to honestly and earnestly apply for that wisdom betokens a heart in subjection to God, desirous of doing that which is pleasing to Him.

"In all thy ways acknowledge him." If this be faithfully done, then we may be fully assured that, "and he shall direct thy paths" (Pro 3:6). The serious trouble into which David fell when he sought refuge in the land of Gath had arisen immediately from failure *to inquire of the Lord*, but now he consulted Him through the high priest, "Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them?" (1Sa 30:8). Blessed indeed is this. Would that we might learn to imitate him, for our fleshly efforts to undo the consequences of our unbelief and folly only cause us to continue going on in the same path which brought God's chastening upon us, and this is certain to end in further disappointment. "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psa 46:10) is the word we need to heed at such a time—to unsparingly judge ourselves, and suffer the hand that has smitten to now lead in *His* path, is the only way to recovery. Only then do we give evidence that disappointment and sorrow have been *blest* to our souls.

Unspeakably precious is it to note the Lord's response to David's inquiry, "And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all" (1Sa 30:8). "See the goodness and perfectness of the grace of God. There was no delay in this answer—no reserve—no ambiguity; more even was told than David had asked. He was told not only that he might pursue, but that he should surely recover all. In a moment the black cloud of sorrow, that had hung so darkly over David's soul, was gone. Agony gave place to joy and he whom his companions had been dooming to death, stood suddenly before them as the honoured servant of the Lord his God, commissioned to pursue and to conquer. He did pursue and all was as God had said" (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899).

"So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him" (1Sa 30:9). The force of this can only be perceived and appreciated by recalling what was before us in verse 6, "David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him"! What a change we behold now! The enmity of his men has been stilled and they are again ready to follow their leader. Herein we see the third consequence of David's spiritual return and encouraging himself in the Lord. First, he had submitted to the divine order and sought guidance from God. Second, he had promptly received a gracious response, the Lord granting the assurance he so much desired. And now the power of God fell upon the hearts of his men, entirely subduing their mutiny, and making them willing, weary and worn as they were, to follow David in a hurried march after the Amalekites. O how much do we lose, dear reader, when we fail to right matters with God!

"So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him" (1Sa 30:9). Here is David's response to the word he had received from God through the high priest. Without taking rest or refreshment, he at once set out in pursuit of the ravagers. Tired and weak as he well might be,

David was now nerved to fresh endeavours. Ah, is it not written, “But they that wait upon the LORD shall *renew their strength*; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa 40:31). So it ever is. If we truly desire spiritual guidance of the Lord, and humbly and trustfully seek it from Him, our inner man will be renewed and we shall be empowered to follow the path of His ordering.

“And came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed” (1Sa 30:9). This teaches us that when we *are* in the current of the revealed will of God, all will not, necessarily, be plain sailing. We must be prepared to meet with difficulties and obstacles even in the path of obedience. It was *by faith* in the word that he had received from Jehovah that David turned from the ruins of Ziklag and faith must be *tested*. A severe trial now confronted David. Fatigued from their former journey and their spirits further depressed by the sad scene they had gazed upon, many of his men, though willing, were unable to proceed farther, and he left no less than two hundred behind at the brook Besor.

“But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor” (1Sa 30:10). Considerate of the state of his men, David would not drive or force those who were faint to accompany him. Further proof was this that our hero was now again in communion with God, “for *He* knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust” (Psa 103:14)—alas, how often do those who profess His name seem to forget this. But though his company was now reduced by one third, and as verse 17 plainly intimates, was far inferior to the forces of the Amalekites, yet David relied implicitly on the Word of the Lord and continued to push forward.

“And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water; And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights. And David said unto him, To whom belondest thou? and whence art thou? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick. We made an invasion upon the south of the Cherethites, and upon the coast which belongeth to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire. And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company” (1Sa 30:11-15). We shall consider these verses from two angles—as they add to what has been before us above, as they contain a lovely Gospel picture.

In the verses just quoted we may perceive the seventh consequence which followed David’s righting things with God. First, he encouraged himself in the Lord—verse 6. Second, he submitted to the divine order and sought guidance from God—verses 7-8. Third, he obtained light for his path and assurance of God’s help—verse 8. Fourth, the power of God fell upon the hearts of his men, subduing their mutiny (v. 6) and making them willing to follow him on a difficult and daring enterprise—verse 9. Fifth, the renewing of David’s strength, so that he was able to start out on a forced and swift march—verse 9. Sixth, grace granted him to overcome a sore trial of faith—verse 10. And now we are to observe how the Lord showed himself strong on their behalf by ordering His providence to work in David’s favour. Such are some of the divine mercies which we may confidently expect when the channel of blessing between our souls and God is no longer choked by unjudged and unconfessed sins.

A most remarkable intervention of divine providence is here before us. David was pursuing the Amalekites and from this incident we gather that he knew not in which direction they had gone, nor how far ahead they were. God did not work a miracle for them, but by natural means provided him with a needed guide. The men of David came across one in a field, who was sick and famished. He turned out to be an Egyptian slave, whom his master had barbarously abandoned. Upon being brought to David, he furnished full particulars, and after receiving assurance that his life should be spared, agreed to conduct David and his men to the place where the Amalekites were encamped. Let us admire the various details in this wondrous secret provision which God now made for David and the combined factors which entered into it.

First, stand in awe of the high sovereignty of God which suffered this Egyptian slave to fall sick—verse 13. Second, in permitting his master to act so inhumanely, by leaving him to perish by the wayside—verse 13. Third, in moving David’s men to spare his life (v. 11), when they had every reason to believe he had taken part in the burning of Ziklag. Fourth, in the fact that he was himself an Egyptian and not an Amalekite (v. 11)—had he been the latter, they were bound to kill him—Deuteronomy 25:19. Fifth, in moving David to show him kindness—verse 11. Sixth, in causing the food given to so quickly revive him—verse 12. Seventh, in inclining him to freely answer David’s inquiries and be willing to lead him to the camp of the Amalekites. Each of these seven factors had to combine or the result had never been reached. God made “all things *work together*” (Rom 8:28) for David’s good. So He does for us. His providences, day by day, work just as wondrously on our behalf.

Approaching these verses (11-15) now from another angle, let us see portrayed in them a beautiful type of a lost sinner being saved by Christ. There are so many distinct lines in this lovely Gospel picture that we can here do little more than point out each one separately. 1. *His citizenship*—“And they found an Egyptian in the field” (v. 11). In Scripture, Egypt is a symbol of the world—the moral world to which the unregenerate belong and in which they seek their satisfaction. As another has said, “It had its beginning in Cain’s day, when he ‘went out from the presence of the Lord’ (Gen 4:16), and he and his descendants builded cities, sought out witty inventions of brass and iron, manufactured musical instruments, and went in for a good time generally, in forgetfulness of God. And that continues to this day. The land of Egypt figures this. There Pharaoh, type of Satan, ruled and tyrannized.”

2. *His woeful condition*: “I fell sick” (v. 13). Such is the state of every descendant of fallen Adam. An awful disease is at work in the unregenerate—that disease is *sin* and “sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (Jam 1:15). It is sin which has robbed the soul of its original beauty—darkening the understanding, corrupting the heart, perverting the will, and paralyzing all our faculties so far as their exercise Godward is concerned. But not only was this Egyptian desperately sick, he was *starving*. He had had nothing to eat or drink for three days. Well might he cry, “I perish with hunger” (Luk 15:17).

3. *His sad plight*: “My master left me, because three days ago I fell sick” (v. 13). He was a slave and now that his master thought he would be of no further use to him, he heartlessly abandoned him and left him to perish. “And that is the way the devil treats his servants. He uses them as his tools as long as he can. Then, when he cannot use them anymore, he leaves them to their folly. Thus he treated Judas, and hosts of others before and since” (Christopher Knapp, 1870-1945).

4. *His deliverance*: “And brought him to David” (v. 11). No doubt he was too weak and ill to come of himself, and even had he the ability, he had never used it thus, for David was an utter

stranger to him! Thus it is with the unregenerate sinner and that blessed One whom David foreshadowed. Therefore did Christ say, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Joh 6:44). Each of God’s elect is “brought” to Christ by the Holy Spirit.

5. *His deliverer*: No doubt this half-dead Egyptian presented a woe-begone spectacle, as he was led or carried into the presence of the man after God’s own heart. But his very ruin and wretchedness drew out the compassion of David toward him. Thus it is with the Saviour—no matter what ravages sin has wrought, nor how morally repulsive it has made its victim, Christ never refuses to receive and befriend one whom the Father draws to Him.

6. *His entertainment*: “And gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water. And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins” (vv. 11-12). Precious line in our picture is this of the divine grace which is stored up in Christ. None brought to Him by the Spirit are ever sent empty away. How this reminds us of the royal welcome which the Prodigal received and the rich fare that was set before him.

7. *His confession*: When David asked him to whom he belonged and whence he came, he gave an honest and straight-forward reply, “He said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite” (v. 13). Strikingly did this adumbrate the fact that when an elect sinner has been brought to Christ, and been given the bread and water of life, he takes his proper place and candidly acknowledges what he was and is by nature. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us” (1Jo 1:9).

8. *His obligation*: “And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company?” (v. 15). In this way we may see how David pressed his claims upon the one whom he had befriended, though it is blessed to mark that it was more in the form of an appeal than a direct command. In like manner, the Word to the converted is, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom 12:1).

9. *His desire for assurance*: “And he said, Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company” (v. 15). There could be no joy in the service of his new master until assured that he should not be returned unto the power of his old one. Blessed is it to know that Christ delivers His people not only from the wrath to come, but also from the dominion of sin.

10. *His gratitude*: “And when he had brought him down” (v. 16). He was now devoted to the interests of David and did as he requested. So Christians are told, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*” (Eph 2:10). O for grace to serve Christ as ardently as we did sin and Satan in our unregenerate days.

DISPENSATIONALISM

7. The Law of God (Part Three)

The moral law is the eternal rule of righteousness which God has given to men, requiring them to love Him with all their hearts and their neighbors as themselves. In the very nature of the case, such a law can neither be repealed nor modified. The grand reason why the great Governor of the world gave such a law *was because it was infinitely fit we should* love Him with all our hearts, nothing less was due Him. For us to suppose that God should ever annul or alter this law when the grounds and reasons of His first making it remain as forcible as ever, when what it requires is as right as ever, and when it becomes Him as the moral Ruler of His creatures to require it from them as much as ever—to suppose such a thing constitutes the highest reproach upon all God’s moral perfections. It would suppose Him releasing His creatures from doing right and giving them license to do wrong. So far from man being benefited by having such a law abrogated or altered, it would be one of the greatest and sorest calamities that could happen.

How sad it is, then, to think that the mind of fallen man is enmity against the Law-Giver! And how humbling when the Christian realizes that there is still within him that which is opposed to such a holy, such a righteousness, such a spiritual law! And why is it that fallen man hates the law? Because it *condemns* him. But let the Christian place the blame where it truly belongs—within and not without. The law condemns none whose heart and life is in conformity with it. *Sin is the cause* of the condemnation. We have none but ourselves to blame when the holy law denounces our wrong-doing. Instead of looking askance at the law, the Christian should eye it with profound gratitude, for it is the very instrument which the Holy Spirit uses to convince him of his self-will and self-love, for “*by the law is the knowledge of sin*” (Rom 3:20).

How sad and serious, then, is the error that Christ came here in order to make an end of the law. Instead, it was foretold centuries beforehand, “He will *magnify* the law, and make it honourable” (Isa 42:21). To suppose that the Son of God became incarnate, suffered, and died in order that the law might be repealed, would be to suppose that He had become the enemy of God—to His holiness and justice, His claims and His government—and that He had gone over to the side of His Father’s rebellious subjects. The law was, indeed, in the way of the sinner’s salvation and *this* was the ground of the *necessity* for His incarnation, obedience, and death. Yet that was so far from being designed to set the law aside, it was for the express purpose of fulfilling it. It was to obey its precepts and endure its penalty on the behalf of His people, so that the law was as much honoured as though His people had themselves obeyed it or suffered its curse.

So far from the law having been repealed, every Christless sinner is as much under the law today—as much under its demands, its condemnation and curse for his failure to meet those demands—as if Christ had never come into the world and there were no Mediator between God and men. He who believes not in and surrenders to the lordship of Christ, he who is not united to Him by the Spirit so that His merits and righteousness (which consist in what He did and suffered to maintain and honour the law) is properly imputed to his account, is under the condemnation

and wrath of God (i.e., the curse of His law) as much as if there had been no Saviour. In proof of this, we ask the reader to carefully ponder John 3:18-20, 36; Romans 1:18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

So far from the Christian being released from the requirements of the law, he is as much under the law *as a rule* as he ever was, and under as great obligations to a perfect conformity unto it in heart and life, as the non-Christian is. And everything in him or of him which comes short of perfect holiness or full obedience to the law—considered in its utmost spirituality and strictness—is perfectly inexcusable and is as criminal (or evil) in him as if he were not a believer in Christ. Yea, much more so, for the superior light, discernment, and advantages he has, and the special favors and privileges bestowed on him *do vastly increase his obligations* to perfect obedience, and therefore render every degree of opposition or want of conformity to the infinitely excellent law of God immensely more heinous than in others.

The law, considered in all its unmodified strictness, requiring perfect holiness of character and conduct, is as much a rule for Christians to walk by now as ever it was. Christ never designed to deliver His people from their full obligations to the law, but instead greatly increased their obligations by what He has done for them. He has indeed made full atonement for *all* their sins against the law and so has delivered them from the *curse* of the law, being Himself made a curse for them, so that they are, in *this* sense, “not under the law, but under grace” (Rom 6:14). They are no longer subject to the infinitely dreadful punishment which it pronounces upon the transgressor, for they have been completely delivered from this by a free pardon. But that has not cancelled their obligation to obey the law. The design of Christ’s blessed work was to deliver His people from all sin and bring them to a full conformity to the law—and eventually, this shall be fully realized.

To say that Christ came here to purchase a cancellation of the law would be procuring lawless liberty for rebellious subjects. No, He did not magnify the law and make it honourable that His disciples might despise and violate it, but that they should be delivered from its condemnation and brought to delight in and obey its precepts. An unequivocal proof that the law *was not* set aside is seen in the fact that one of its commandments came in power to the conscience of Saul some years after the cross. He distinctly says, “I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Rom 7:7). Most certainly the Holy Spirit would never have applied an abrogated and superseded statute. Had the moral law been cancelled, the Spirit would no more have revived it than He would have restored the Levitical sacrifices.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest” (Exo 34:1). “The treaty that was on foot between God and Israel, being broken off abruptly by their worshipping the golden calf, when peace was made, all must begin anew, not where they left off, *but from the beginning*. Thus backsliders must ‘repent, and do the first works’ (Rev 2:5). Before, God Himself provided the tables and wrote on them; now, Moses must hew him out the tables and God would only write upon them. Thus, in the first writing of the law upon the heart of man in innocency, both the tables and the writing were the work of God, but when those were broken and defaced by sin, and the divine law was to be preserved in the Scriptures, God therein made use of the ministry of man, and Moses first. But the prophets and apostles did only hew the tables, as it were, the writing was God’s still, for, ‘All scripture is given by inspiration of God.’ Observe, when God was reconciled to them, He ordered the tables to be renewed and wrote His law in them, which plainly intimates to us:

“First, that even under the Gospel of peace and reconciliation by Christ (of which the intercession of Moses was typical), the moral law should *continue to oblige believers*. Though Christ has redeemed us from the ‘curse of the law,’ yet not from the command of it, but still we are under the law to Christ. When our Saviour, in His sermon on the mount expounded the moral law and vindicated it from the corrupt glosses with which the scribes and Pharisees had broken it (Mat 5:19), He did in effect renew the tables and make them like the first, that is, reduce the law to its primitive sense and intention. Secondly, that the best evidence of the pardon of sin and peace with God is the writing of the law in the heart. The first token God gave of His reconciliation to Israel was the renewing of the tables of the law. Thus, the first article of the new covenant is, ‘I will write my laws in their hearts’ see Hebrews 8:10” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

The great blessing of the Gospel is that it is the appointed channel through which God gives grace *to keep the law*, ponder Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 36:27, Ephesians 4:24. “None enter into the Gospel state but those that readily and entirely give up themselves to the will of God, and therefore none can have benefited in the sin-offering and sacrifice of Christ but those that consent to return to their duty of the law and live in obedience to God. Surely God never pardons any while they are in rebellion and live under the full power and dominion of sin. No, they must consent to forsake sin and return to the allegiance due to their proper Lord” (Thomas Manton, 1660). Repentance (which is a sorrow for and repudiation of rebellion against God) precedes “the remission [forgiveness] of sins” (Mar 1:5). We must be “converted” (turned round and brought into subjection to God) in order that our “sins may be blotted out” (Act 3:19).

The law does not and cannot change. Its requirements are not modified nor its penalty relieved by the cross of Christ. But the Christian’s *relation* to the law has been changed. He has been placed on a new footing in regard to it. Christ having substituted His obedience for us in the matter of *justification* and endured in His own Person the law’s condemnation, we are forever freed from its penalty, having in Him died to its curse. What, then, is the relation between the Christian and the law, which conversion and faith establishes? Answer, it is now *our Rule of Life* as it is held (so far as Christians are concerned, not in the hands of God as “Judge,” but) in the hands of the Mediator, 1 Corinthians 9:21. The Christian’s new relation to the law is that of Christ Himself—His feelings toward the law ought to be *ours*. He declared, “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart”—the seat of the affections (Psa 40:8), and the Christian having been made a partaker of His nature also “*delights* in the law of God after the inward man” see Rom 7:22, and the more he mortifies the flesh and walks in the Spirit, the greater is his love for the law and the closer and fuller his conformity to it.

“Some speak as if the servant were greater than the Master and the disciple above his Lord; as if the Lord Jesus honoured the law and His people were to set it aside; as if He fulfilled it for us, that we might not need to fulfill it; as if He kept it, not that we might keep it, but that we might not keep it, but something else in its stead, they know not what. The plain truth is, we must either keep it or break it. Which of these men ought to do let those answer who speak of the believer having nothing more to do with the law. There is no midway. If it be not a saint’s duty to keep the law, he may break it at pleasure, and go on sinning because grace abounds.

“The word *duty* is objected to as inconsistent with the liberty of forgiveness and sonship. Foolish and idle cavil! What is duty? It is a thing *due by me to God*, that line of conduct which *I owe to God*. And do these objectors mean to say that because God has redeemed us from the curse of the law, therefore we *owe* Him nothing, we have no duty now to Him? Has not redemption rather made us doubly debtors? We owe Him more than ever and we owe His Holy

law more than ever, more honour, more obedience. Duty has been doubled, not cancelled, by our being delivered from the law. He who says that duty has ceased, because deliverance has come, knows nothing of duty, or law, or deliverance. The greatest of all debtors in the universe is the redeemed man. What a strange sense of gratitude these men must have that, because love has cancelled the penalty of the law and turned away its wrath, therefore reverence and obedience to that law are no longer *due*. Is *terror* in their estimation the only foundation of duty, and when love comes in and terror ceases, does duty become a bondage?

“No, they may say, but there is something higher than duty, there is privilege. It is that we contend for. I answer, the privilege of what? Of obeying the law? *That* they cannot do with, for they are no longer under the law, but under grace. What privilege, then? Of imitating Christ? Be it so. But can we imitate Him whose life was one great law-fulfilling without keeping the law? What privilege, again we ask? Of doing the will of God? Be it so. And what is law but the revealed will of God? And has our free forgiveness released us from the privilege of conformity to the revealed will of God?

“But what do they mean by thus rejecting the word duty and contending for that of privilege? Privilege is not something distinct from duty, nor at variance with duty, but it is duty *and something more*! It is duty influenced by higher motives. Duty uncompelled by terror or suspense. In privilege the *duty* is all there, but there is something super-added, in the shape of motive and relationship, which exalts and ennobles duty. It is my duty to obey government. It is my privilege to obey my parents. But in the latter case is duty gone because privilege has come in? Or has not the loving relationship between parent and child only intensified the duty by super-adding the privilege and sweetening the obedience by the mutual love? ‘The love of Christ *constraineth*.’ There is something more than both duty and privilege added” (Andrew Bonar, 1860).

Many object that the Ten Commandments are insufficient as a rule of duty for the Christian because they do not contain the whole of it. But in Matthew 22:37-39, Christ Himself reduced them unto two, for love to God and love to our neighbour comprehends *every* act of duty that can possibly be performed. He who loves God supremely, willingly obeys Him whatever forms He shall prescribe. The *new* commandment of love to the brethren is comprehended in the *old* commandment (1Jo 2:7-8), for he that loveth God cannot but love His image wherever it is seen, Galatians 5:13-15; Romans 13:8-10. God’s commandment is “exceeding broad” (Psa 119:96), and though the whole of Christian obedience be not *formally* expressed in the Ten Commandments, yet *virtually* it is. When Christ said, “On these two commandments hang *all* the law and the prophets” (Mat 22:40), He made known the fact that all the exhortations and admonitions contained in the entire Scriptures are but an exposition and enforcing of the law. Few perceive the *extent* or scope of the Ten Commandments—what each one includes, implies, and involves. The Ten Commandments are the main root from which all other trunks and branches of duty are drawn.

Yet notwithstanding all that has now been pointed out in these articles, many imagine the whole of it is practically set aside or refuted by the words, “*Love is the fulfilling of the law*” (Rom 13:10). Of course it is, and we have not written a single sentence which in the slightest degree contradicts or clashes with that divine statement. From the moment of Adam’s creation till now, *love* has always been the “fulfilling” of the law. Where love be absent, no matter how carefully our actions be attended to, there is no real and acceptable fulfilling or keeping of the law, for the law itself enjoins and requires *love* to God and to our neighbour. The trouble is that the objector confounds the principle or *spring* of obedience (love) with the *rule* (the law) itself.

The law tells me what to do, love urges me to the doing of it. Romans 13:10 does not say, “Love is a *substitute for* the law,” but, “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” To make love and law synonymous would be like confounding the railroad track on which the engine must run, with the power which pulls the train. “To make the rule of obedience that which is the moving cause of it, is the same thing as for a son to say to his father, ‘Sir, I will do what you desire me when I feel inclined to do so, but I will not be *commanded*.’ Whatever may be argued against the authority of God, I believe there are few if any parents who would put up with such language from their own children” (Andrew Fuller, 1814).

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Carson on Esther

Sometimes the servants of Christ excuse themselves from complete conformity to His institutions and vindicate the observance of the commandments of men in the things of God, by alleging the field of usefulness that accommodation in these things lays open to them. If they can point to any good done by them, they suppose that it is God’s approbation of their situation. But in this they deceive themselves. Their conduct, as a transgression of the law of God, remains sinful, though His sovereignty turns their ignorance to His glory and the good of His people. Obedience is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams. It is a foul calumny on God to suppose that it is necessary to disobey Him in order to do good. This takes it for granted that His laws defeat their own end. When in the wisdom of God, He makes the ignorance of His people to serve His purpose, this no more excuses their ignorance and their conduct that results from it, than the good effects of the death of Christ will justify the crime of Judas Iscariot. God will, no doubt, forgive the ignorance of His people, but He will never hold it innocent. He will never approve it. Through the instrumentality of His people who understand not the nature of His kingdom, God provides that multitudes hear the Gospel, who are to those in a scriptural situation altogether inaccessible. Yet this does not warrant the situation.

Some of the people of God are in mystical Babylon and no doubt, will in some way serve God’s purpose in that vile situation, yet the voice of God does not cease to sound in their ears, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Rom 18:4). A Christian who knows his duty would not break the least of the commandments of Jesus to enable him to turn the revenues of all the kings of the earth to the service of the cause of Christ. I might be asked, If all men should embrace my views of the nature of the Church of Christ and His ordinances, and act on them with rigor, what would be the consequence? Millions who now constantly hear the Gospel would be entirely shut up from it and the hundreds of thousands of pounds that are raised annually for the spreading of the Gospel would fail. If none are to be embodied in the church except such as appear to be born again by the

Spirit through the belief of the truth, how would the Gospel be supported? How would it be spread over the world? And so asks the child, If the moon is not nailed to the sky, will it not fall? This is a prosperous fear. *Leave God's province to Himself; fill your own well.* Follow Jesus, though it should lead the whole world to be involved in darkness.

But there is no fear of such a result. Though God now makes use of the ignorance of His people to support and advance His cause, if they all knew their duty, He would give *still more* signal success. The silver and the gold are His. When it served Him, Jesus said to a rich man, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house" (Luk 19:5). *All the wealth of the world is at His absolute disposal, and the moment He needs it, He will call for it.* Let not the servants of God do evil that good may come. Let them not disobey Him that they may put themselves in a condition to serve Him. I would not set at nought the least of Christ's little ones. I will acknowledge all who know Him, as far as I can know them, notwithstanding all the ignorance they may labor under. But I will not, out of complaisance, cease to declare what I learn from the Word of God. I cannot cease to call on Christians to follow Jesus. Their ignorance is *sin*. The good which they do through ignorance is *no justification* of it. Esther saved the Jews, but by being in a situation to do so, she *transgressed* the law of her God.

The providence of God is seen in every step of the progress of Esther to her destined elevation. As in the case of Joseph, when sold into Egypt, God provided friends for her in all who had the means of seeing her. He filled every heart with good-will towards her, at first sight. The king's chamberlain was pleased with her from the first moment of her arrival and accelerated her progress by every means in his power. "So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women. And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women" (Est 2:8-9). When her turn came to approach the king, "she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her" (Est 2:15). Surpassing as her beauty was, this universal favour cannot be ascribed to it. In courts, envy and intrigue often prevail over every claim. Had not God disposed the hearts of those who beheld her, some far inferior beauty might have been the general favorite.

Notwithstanding her incomparable beauty, it was possible that the king's affections might have been anticipated by some of those who had previous access or from caprice, or peculiarity of taste he might have preferred another. But the providence of God had ordered this also and no one pleased the king before the approach of the lovely Hadassah, and she obtained an instant preference. "So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti (Est 2:16-17).

The conspiracy of two of the king's chamberlains is another event in which we may see the hand of God for effecting the elevation of Mordecai, preserving him from the wrath of Haman, and investing him with authority for the defense of his people, as well as the destruction of their enemies. A plot for the assassination of the sovereign is indeed no unprecedented thing in the courts of absolute monarchs. It is granted that the only impulse on the mind of the conspirators, exciting them to the murder of their master, was their resentment on account of whatever injury or

provocation they had received. Their motives were not, in the remotest degree, to fulfill the counsel of God, nor are they sanctioned by Him. They are therefore themselves solely responsible for their wicked intentions. But that this conspiracy was ordered by God cannot surely be a matter of doubt with any who connect this fact with the others recorded in this history, and who believe the narrative to be the Word of God. It is here as evidently brought in to contribute towards the general issue as any incident in a drama. Take it away, and the whole chain is broken. Let us then admire the wonderful ways of Providence in bringing about events through the freedom *and the sins* of human actions. Why did these officers receive provocation at this particular time? Why did they attend more to the gratification of their revenge than to their safety? Is a conspiracy to slay the sovereign the usual result of every great injury done by him to individuals? Why was not the conspiracy better conducted? Why was it made known and frustrated? Above all, why was Mordecai the man by whom it was discovered? Why was he the man to whom it was known? Take away this link of the chain and all the other links are useless.

Whatever, then, was the means of bringing it to the knowledge of Mordecai, *it was God* that made it known to him, as much as if He had revealed it in a supernatural manner. Indeed, as Dr. Gill observes, “The latter Targum says, it was showed unto him by the Holy Spirit,” for the wisdom of man cannot see how the providence of God can arrange human actions to fulfill His purpose without any miracle. How many chances were there, humanly speaking, that no conspiracy should have existed at this time or that it should not have been found out. Or if discovered, that Mordecai should not have been the discoverer? Was not the event evidently intended to lay a foundation for the future safety, elevation, and power of Mordecai? How encouraging is this doctrine! The Lord’s people are frequently in danger. Their enemies lay snares for them, which no human wisdom can enable them to escape. How consoling it is for them to reflect on this wonderful narrative! Here is a fact that ought to encourage them in their most trying difficulties. *The Lord laid a plan and prepared means for the deliverance of His people in the Persian empire, even before their enemies had prepared the plot for their destruction!* When therefore we are encompassed on every side, let us look to the hand of the Lord to execute the plan which He may have prepared for our deliverance. When Hagar cried unto the Lord, He showed her a well, which is as wonderful in Providence, if the fountain had been there from the creation, as if it had been opened by miracle.

Having considered God’s wise and gracious provision for the safety of His people during the approaching storm, we shall now attend to the events by which it was raised. We may discover the hand of God in this, no less than the former. The providence of God brings His people into danger, not because He is unable to ward off even the appearance of it, but that He may glorify Himself in their deliverance and exercise their graces. Were they never in danger, they would be deprived some of the greatest opportunities of praising the wisdom, kindness, and watchfulness of His providential care, His enemies would want an occasion of manifesting their enmity to them and Him, and their faith would be without its necessary trials. But though, in one point of view, God wills the persecution of His people, the *sin* of the persecutor *is all his own*. He is ignorant of God’s purpose and his enmity to them arises from his enmity to Him. Though he fulfills the appointment of God, yet he wickedly gratifies his own evil dispositions. It is a curious fact, but not a singular one, that God raised up Haman *to bring His people into danger*, as well as Esther to deliver them. In this, as in other things, the divine wisdom is distinguished from the human in a striking manner. No man would nurture the wretch whom he should know to be the future enemy of himself and his offspring. But God exalted Haman in the court of the great king, above all the princes of the empire, for the very purpose of giving him an opportunity of manifesting his

enmity against His people and of attempting the destruction of the whole nation. He puts His enemies in the most favorable situation to oppose Him, that He may show with what ease He can discomfit the utmost efforts of their malevolence. Nay, He makes the very wrath of man to praise Him and the plans of His enemies to destroy His cause are made to effect its establishment.

The motives of Ahasuerus in the promotion of Haman were, no doubt, such as usually influence absolute sovereigns in conferring their favors and in choosing the objects of their particular bounty. In the caprice of affection, they set no bounds to their liberality and the most unworthy men in the empire are often their favorites. It is not strange, then, that it should have been so on the present occasion. But the direction of Providence is clear even amidst apparent casualties. It was God raised Haman, as well as He had for a like occasion raised Pharaoh. The individual, the character, the crisis of his exaltation, the height of his elevation, are linked together by Providence for a good purpose. In such a light is this combination of circumstances exhibited in the inspired text. It is brought forward as one of the grand incidents which contribute their influence to bring about the result. "After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him" (Est 3:1). Why was Haman the favorite at this time? Why was he raised to such a pitch of glory?

The next event that presents itself to our consideration, as contributing to bring the Jews into danger at this time, is the refusal of Mordecai to honor Haman, according to the king's commandment. Notwithstanding all that the commentators have said to justify Mordecai, I cannot but think that this part of his conduct arose from ignorance of his duty and that he might lawfully have done the thing which he refused to do. Were it certain that Haman was an Amalekite, the fact would not vindicate a Jew in refusing him honor in the court of Persia. The command to extirpate the Amalekites was given to Israel only as a nation and living in their own land. "Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it" (Deu 25:19). What had Mordecai to do with this command in his present situation? But if Haman was really an Amalekite, and if this was the ground on which Mordecai refused to honor him, whether it was valid or invalid, the providence of God is visible in the matter. Why was the favorite an Amalekite? Why was one of that nation, at such a time, preferred to all the subjects of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces? On this supposition, had he been a Persian, Mordecai would have honored him without scruple and so no storm would have risen against the Jews.

It is alleged in favor of Mordecai that an idolatrous reverence might have been required. Dr. Gill makes wonderful stretches to justify or excuse his conduct. As divine honors were given to the kings of Persia, he thinks that they might also have been exacted for their favorite, but of this he gives no proof. *It might be*, will prove nothing and nothing to justify such a supposition is in evidence from the passage. On the contrary, the thing which he is said to have refused is what he might lawfully have given. The king's command enjoined all his servants to "bow down and reverence Haman." What should prevent any man to comply with this injunction of supreme civil power? But Dr. Gill's ingenuity finds even in this an argument on his side. The fact that, "*The king had so commanded concerning him*, shows," he thinks, "that it was more than civil honor and respect, for that in course would have been given him as the king's favorite." But this would not have been in all cases a matter of course and that it was enjoined, there is the evidence of this record. The king requires nothing but *to bow and reverence*. Even had Haman pretended to be a god, of which there is not the slightest evidence, this would not excuse any one from bowing to

him according to the king's commandment. Caius made himself a god, but should this have hindered his Christian subjects to bow down to him and reverence him? Even if there was a danger that it might be mistaken by some for religious worship, let the principle on which it is performed be declared, but let not what is lawfully due be withheld.

Dr. Gill argues that it must be more than civil respect that was required, because *that* the Jews did not refuse to give in the most humble and prostrate manner. This is just like saying that no Christian could refuse to uncover to the king, because Christians in general do this without scruple, yet William Penn would not uncover to King Charles. Besides, if Mordecai's conduct was influenced by a consideration of the nation of Haman, or anything in his individual character, this argument has no bearing. I cannot say why he refused. What I say is that he might have lawfully yielded all that was required.

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

1. Introduction

Our first thought was to devote an introductory article unto a setting forth of the principle errors which have been entertained upon this subject by different men and parties, but after more deliberation we decided this would be for little or no profit to the majority of our readers. While there are times, no doubt, when it becomes the distasteful duty of God's servants to expose that which is calculated to deceive and injure His people, yet as a general rule, the most effective way of getting rid of darkness is to let in the light. We desire, then, to pen these articles in the spirit of the godly John Owen (1616-1683), who, in the introduction to his ponderous treatise on this theme said, "More weight is to be put on the steady guidance of the mind and conscience of one believer really exercised about the foundation of his peace and acceptance with God than on the confutation of ten wrangling disputers. To declare and vindicate the truth unto the instruction and edification of such as love it in sincerity, to extricate their minds from those difficulties in this particular instance, which some endeavor to cast on all Gospel mysteries, to direct the consciences of them that inquire after abiding peace with God, and to establish the minds of them that do believe, are the things I have aimed at."

There was a time, not so long ago, when the blessed truth of justification was one of the best known doctrines of the Christian faith, when it was regularly expounded by the preachers, and when the rank and file of church-goers were familiar with its leading aspects. But now, alas, a generation has arisen which is well-nigh totally ignorant of this precious theme, for with very rare exceptions it is no longer given a place in the pulpit, nor is scarcely anything written thereon in the religious magazines of our day and in consequence, comparatively few understand what the term itself connotes, still less are they clear as to the ground on which God justifies the ungodly. This places the writer at a considerable disadvantage, for while he wishes to avoid a superficial treatment of so vital a subject, yet to go into it deeply and enter into detail, will make a heavy tax upon the mentality and patience of the average person. Nevertheless, we respectfully urge each

Christian to make a real effort to gird up the loins of his mind and seek to prayerfully master these articles.

That which will make it harder to follow us through the present series is the fact that we are here treating of the *doctrinal* side of truth, rather than the practical—the judicial, rather than the experimental. Not that doctrine is *impracticable*, no indeed, far, far from it. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable [first] for *doctrine*, [and then] for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2Ti 3:16). Doctrinal instruction was ever the foundation from which the apostles issued precepts to regulate the walk. Not until the 6th chapter will any exhortation be found in the Roman epistle. The first five are devoted entirely to doctrinal exposition. So again in the epistle to the Ephesians—not until 4:1 is the first exhortation given. First the saints are reminded of the exceeding riches of God’s grace, that the love of Christ may constrain them, and then they are urged to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called.

While it be true that a real mental effort (as well as a prayerful heart) is required in order to grasp intelligently some of the finer distinctions which are essential to a proper apprehension of this doctrine, yet, let it be pointed out that the truth of justification is far from being a mere piece of abstract speculation. No, it is a statement of divinely-revealed fact. It is a statement of fact which every member of our race ought to be deeply interested in. Each one of us has forfeited the favor of God and each one of us needs to be restored to His favor. If we are not restored, then the outcome must inevitably be our utter ruin and hopeless perdition. How fallen creatures, how guilty rebels, how lost sinners, *are* restored to the favor of God, and given a standing before Him inestimably superior to that occupied by the holy angels, will (D.V.) engage our attention as we proceed with our subject.

As said Abram Booth in his splendid work, “The Reign of Grace” (written in 1768), “Far from being a merely speculative point, it spreads its influence through the whole body of divinity [theology], runs through all Christian experience, and operates in every part of practical godliness. Such is its grand importance, that a mistake about it has a malignant efficacy and is attended with a long train of dangerous consequences. Nor can this appear strange, when it is considered that this doctrine of justification is no other than the way of *a sinner’s acceptance with God*. Being of such peculiar moment, it is inseparably connected with many other evangelical truths, the harmony and beauty of which we cannot behold, while this is misunderstood. Till this appears in its glory, they will be involved in darkness. It is, if anything may be so called, a *fundamental* article and certainly requires our most serious consideration” (from his chapter on “Justification”).

The great importance of the doctrine of justification was sublimely expressed by the Dutch Puritan, Hermann Witsius (1636-1708), when he said, “It tends much to display the glory of God, whose most exalted perfections shine forth with an eminent lustre in this matter. It sets forth the infinite *goodness* of God, by which He was inclined to procure salvation freely for lost and miserable man, ‘to the praise of the glory of his grace’ (Eph 1:6). It displays also the strictest *justice* by which He would not forgive even the smallest offense, but on condition of the sufficient engagement, or full satisfaction of the Mediator, ‘that he might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus’ (Rom 3:26). It shows further the unsearchable *wisdom* of the deity, which found out a way for the exercise of the most gracious act of mercy, without injury to His strictest justice and infallible truth, which threatened death to the sinner—justice demanded that the soul that sinned should die (Rom 1:32). Truth had pronounced the curses for not obeying the Lord (Deu 28:15-68). Goodness, in the meantime, was inclined to adjudge life to some sinners, but by no other way than what became the majesty of the most holy God. Here wisdom

interposed, saying, ‘I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins’ (Isa 43:25). Nor shall you, His justice and His truth have any cause of complaint because full satisfaction shall be made to you by a mediator. Hence the incredible philanthropy of the Lord Jesus shineth forth, who, though Lord of all, was made subject to the law, not to the obedience of it only, but also to the curse, ‘hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him’ (2Co 5:21).

Ought not the pious soul, who is deeply engaged in the devout meditation of these things, to break out into the praises of a justifying God and sing with the church, “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression” (Mic 7:18). O the purity of that holiness which chose rather to punish the sins of the elect in His only begotten Son, than suffer them to go unpunished! O the abyss of His love to the world, for which He spared not His dearest Son, in order to spare sinners! O the depth of the riches of unsearchable wisdom, by which He exercises mercy towards the penitent guilty, without any stain to the honor of the most impartial Judge! O the treasures of love in Christ, whereby He became a curse for us, in order to deliver us therefrom! How becoming the justified soul, who is ready to dissolve in the sense of this love, with full exultation to sing a new song, a song of mutual return of love to a justifying God.

So important did the apostle Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, deem this doctrine, that the very first of his epistles in the New Testament is devoted to a full exposition thereof. The pivot on which turns the entire contents of the epistle to the Romans is that notable expression, “the righteousness of God”—than which is none of greater moment to be found in all the pages of Holy Writ, and which it behooves every Christian to make the utmost endeavor to clearly understand. It is an abstract expression denoting the satisfaction of Christ in its relation to the divine law. It is a descriptive name for the material cause of the sinner’s acceptance before God. “The righteousness of God” is a phrase referring to the finished work of the Mediator as approved by the divine tribunal, being the meritorious cause of our acceptance before the throne of the Most High.

In the succeeding articles (D.V.), we shall examine in more detail this vital expression, “the righteousness of God,” which connotes that perfect satisfaction which the Redeemer offered to divine justice on the behalf of and in the stead of that people which had been given to Him. Suffice it now to say that that “righteousness” by which the believing sinner is justified is called “the righteousness *of God*” (Rom 1:17; 3:21) because He is the appointor, approver, and imputer of it. It is called “the righteousness *of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*” (2Pe 1:1) because He wrought it out and presented it unto God. It is called “the righteousness *of faith*” (Rom 4:13) because faith is the apprehender and receiver of it. It is called “*man’s* righteousness” see Job 33:26, because it was paid for him and imputed to him. All these varied expressions refer to so many aspects of that one perfect obedience unto death which the Saviour performed for His people.

Yes, so vital did the apostle Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, esteem this doctrine of justification, that he shows at length how the denial and perversion of it by the Jews was the chief reason of their being rejected by God, see the closing verses of Romans 9 and the beginning of chapter 10. Again; throughout the whole epistle to the Galatians, we find the apostle engaged in most strenuously defending and zealously disputing with those who had assailed this basic truth. Therein he speaks of the contrary doctrine as ruinous and fatal to the souls of men, as subversive of the cross of Christ, and calls it another Gospel, solemnly declaring, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you...let him be accursed” (Gal 1:8). Alas, that under the latitudinal liberty and false “charity” of our day, there is now so little holy

abhorrence of that preaching which repudiates the vicarious obedience of Christ which is imputed to the believer.

Under God, the preaching of this grand truth brought about the greatest revival which the cause of Christ has enjoyed since the days of the apostles. "This was the great fundamental distinguishing doctrine of the Reformation and was regarded by all the Reformers as of primary and paramount importance. The leading charge which they adduced against the Church of Rome was that she had corrupted and perverted the doctrine of Scripture upon this subject in a way that was dangerous to the souls of men, and it was mainly by the exposition, enforcement, and application of the true doctrine of God's Word in regard to it, that they assailed and overturned the leading doctrines and practices of the Papal system. There is no subject which possesses more of intrinsic importance than attaches to this one, and there is none with respect to which the Reformers were more thoroughly harmonious in their sentiments" (William Cunningham, 1885).

This blessed doctrine supplies the grand divine cordial to revive one whose soul is cast down and whose conscience is distressed by a felt sense of sin and guilt, and longs to know the way and means whereby he may obtain acceptance with God and the title unto the heavenly inheritance. To one who is deeply convinced that he has been a life-long rebel against God, a constant transgressor of His holy law, and who realizes he is justly under His condemnation and wrath, no inquiry can be of such deep interest and pressing moment as that which relates to the means of restoring him to the divine favour, remitting his sins, and fitting him to stand unabashed in the divine presence. Till this vital point has been cleared to the satisfaction of his heart, all other information concerning religion will be quite unavailing.

"Demonstrations of the existence of God will only serve to confirm and more deeply impress upon his mind the awful truth which he already believes, that there is a righteous Judge, before whom he must appear and by whose sentence his final doom will be fixed. To explain the moral law to him, and inculcate the obligations to obey it, will be to act the part of a public accuser, when he quotes the statutes of the land in order to show that the charges which he has brought against the criminal at the bar are well founded, and consequently, that he is worthy of punishment. The stronger the arguments are by which you evince the immortality of the soul, the more clearly do you prove that his punishment will not be temporary, and that there is another state of existence, in which he will be fully recompensed according to his desert" (John Dick, 1764-1833).

When God Himself becomes a living reality unto the soul, when His awful majesty, ineffable holiness, inflexible justice, and sovereign authority, are really perceived, even though most inadequately, indifference to His claims now gives place to a serious concern. When there is a due sense of the greatness of our apostasy from God, of the depravity of our nature, of the power and vileness of sin, of the spirituality and strictness of the law, and of the everlasting burnings awaiting God's enemies, the awakened soul cries out, "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Mic 6:6-7). Then it is that the poor soul cries out, "*How then can* man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" (Job 25:4). And it is in the blessed doctrine which is now to be before us that we are taught the method whereby a sinner may obtain peace with his Maker and rise to the possession of eternal life.

Again, this doctrine is of inestimable value unto the conscientious Christian who daily groans under a sense of his inward corruptions and innumerable failures to measure up to the standard which God has set before him. The devil, who is “the accuser of our brethren” (Rev 12:10), frequently charges the believer with hypocrisy before God, disquiets his conscience, and seeks to persuade him that his faith and piety are nought but a mask and outward show, by which he has not only imposed upon others, but also on himself. But thank God, Satan may be overcome by “the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 12:11), by looking away from incurably depraved self, and viewing the Surety, who has fully answered for the Christian’s every failure, perfectly atoned for his every sin, and brought in an “everlasting righteousness” (Dan 9:24), which is placed to his account in the high court of heaven. And thus, though groaning under his infirmities, the believer may possess a victorious confidence which rises above every fear.

This it was which brought peace and joy to the heart of the apostle Paul, for while in one breath he cried, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom 7:24), in the next he declared, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). To which he added, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Rom 8:33-35). May it please the God of all grace to so direct our pen and bless what we write unto the readers, that not a few who are now found in the gloomy dungeons of Doubting Castle, may be brought out into the glorious light and liberty of the full assurance of faith.

PREACHING THE LAW

The fairest face on earth, which was endowed with the most comely features, would soon become ugly and unsightly if one feature continued to grow while all the others remained undeveloped. No matter how well-formed or beautiful the mouth, if it became ten times the size of the eyes or ears, how repulsive would it appear. *Beauty is principally a matter of proportion.* So it is with the Word of God. Its beauty and blessedness are best perceived when it is presented in its true proportions. To be all the time dwelling on the love of God and be silent about His wrath, or to be constantly expounding His righteousness and say little or nothing about His mercy, is to present a caricature of the divine perfections. So also to preach ten sermons on the Gospel of God’s grace to one upon God’s law is to lose the balance of truth and to present the truth *disproportionately*.

It has long appeared to the writer that the greatest and most deplorable defect in modern “evangelism” is the almost total absence of the preaching of God’s law. And as this little magazine is sent to a considerable number of preachers and missionaries, the editor feels it laid upon him to write a short article thereon. Before a servant of God is warranted in setting before the unsaved the divine *way of salvation*, he needs to make very clear wherein lies the *need of salvation*. This is the order of Scripture throughout. The Old Testament precedes the New. The ministry of John the Baptist comes before that of the Lord Jesus, and the former came “in the way

of righteousness” (Mat 21:32), calling to repentance. Romans 3:10-20 (read it!) precedes Romans 3:21-26 and so it should be in all preaching.

“By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:20), then why not preach God’s law! Does not the apostle to the Gentiles tell us, in that wondrous and blessed biographical passage of Romans 7, “I had not *known sin*, but by the law” (Rom 7:7)! Fellow-preachers, the knowledge of God’s law is absolutely necessary in order to a true knowledge of sin. Because God’s law is *the rule of man’s conduct*, of all his heart exercises and outward actions, so that he is sinful or not just in proportion as he conforms to the law, or does not conform thereto, it necessarily follows that he cannot possibly judge of his own character and determine whether he be a sinner or no, if he is completely ignorant of the law. And he *must* be ignorant of his own sinfulness, however great a sinner he be, just in proportion to the degree of his ignorance of the law he is under.

“*Sin is the transgression of the law*” (1Jo 3:4), therefore, where there is no law, there is no sin and he who has no idea, no apprehension or knowledge of the law, has no real idea of sin. It is impossible that he should have, for every person’s notion of sin will be according to his notion of the law. If he thinks God’s law requires that which it does not, then he will judge that to be sin which in truth is not so. If he thinks the law he is under does not require what it does (for example, heart-purity), then he will look upon that to be no sin, which in truth is so. And so far as he sees not the ground and reasonableness of the law, he will be ignorant of the crime or real sinfulness in transgressing it. While he is ignorant of the excellency of the law and the authority of its Giver, and so sees not the glory of the law, he must be blind to the turpitude of sin and can have no true idea of it.

There is a threefold knowledge of sin and the law. First, a *speculative* knowledge. Men may have, to a considerable degree, clear and sound intellectual views with respect to the law of God and to sin. They may perceive the reasonableness of God’s law, the obligation they are under to obey it, their great lack of conformity thereto, and the infinite evil there is in all sin. They may reason accurately about these things and yet their hearts remain quite *unaffected* by them. They may live at the greatest ease, trouble not themselves about their disobedience, and continue sinning with a high hand. So it was with Israel of old. So it is with many today who are familiar with the letter of God’s law.

Second, there is a *convicting knowledge*. Unregenerate persons may have their consciences awakened, so as to attend to these things in some measure as solemn realities and with particular application to themselves. They may feel themselves condemned by the law and under the curse of Him against whom they have so grievously rebelled. They may have such a sense of majesty, holiness, and power of God, the dreadfulness of His anger, and their constant exposedness to be cast into hell, as to fill them with sore distress and horror. Self-interest, the instinct of self-preservation, and the movings of self-love may cause them to be greatly concerned how they shall escape the wrath to come. Later, their convictions fade and disappear.

Third, there is a *regenerative* knowledge. Those who have been born again have a heart-realization of the superlative excellence and glory of the divine character, by which He is infinitely distinguished from all other beings, and they feel the deep obligations they are under to love Him perfectly with all their hearts forever. They discern reasonableness, the spirituality, and extent of the law in *such* a manner and degree as produces heart approbation and love to it, and their souls exclaim, “The law is holy, just and good.” Hence they perceive what *sin* is. It appears to them infinitely odious and ill-deserving, a dreadful opposition to the divine character and law, and they hate and abhor sin, and wish to be done with it forever.

“They who have quite wrong ideas of the law of God will have equally wrong ideas of their own character as sinners, and consequently, wrong ideas of the character of the Mediator and the grace revealed in the Gospel. The Gospel has such respect to the law of God, and the latter is so much the reason and ground of the former, and so essential to the wisdom and glory of it, that it cannot be understood by him who is ignorant of the law and consequently, our idea and apprehension of the Gospel will be erroneous and wrong just as far as we have wrong notions of God’s law. The character of a Mediator is necessary, excellent, and glorious, only in this view and on this supposition, that the law of God, which requires perfect persevering obedience, on pain of eternal damnation, is unchangeably right, just, excellent, and glorious, and consequently, sin infinitely criminal and odious. For the most essential part of the character of the Mediator consists in His honouring this law and making atonement for sin. He, therefore, who does not believe there is any such law, or does not view it in this light, and so does not see sin in its true demerit and hatefulness, cannot possibly understand the Gospel, but must be blind to the true wisdom and glory of it.

“This has been, and now is, the sad case of multitudes under the Gospel. They hope and expect to be saved by Christ. They speak much of the grace of the Gospel and the wonderful mercy of God to sinners, but at the same time are ignorant of the divine law and never were reconciled to it as holy, just, and good, so never saw sin in its true odiousness and ill-desert. Let such rise as high as they will in the admiration of Gospel grace, and though they are affected even to raptures, they are wholly ignorant of the true grace of God, of their need of a Mediator, and of the way of salvation by Him. So important are right notions of the law. He who fails here must be in darkness, with respect to the whole system of religious truth the true Gospel will be hid from him and to him Christ crucified will be nothing but a stumbling-block and the most perfect foolishness.

“There are many who speak out and say, ‘We do not believe there is now any such law binding on men which requires perfect obedience on pain of eternal damnation. This law is wholly set aside by the Gospel and we never were under it, nor indeed would it be just in God to hold us to it. Christ—blessed be His name!—has introduced a more mild dispensation, so that we are now not under law, but under grace.’ But pray, what grace is there in abolishing and freeing you from a law which you never could be justly under, and which, therefore, ought in justice to be set aside? And what need of a Mediator to die, to deliver you from this law and introduce a more mild dispensation? Must there be so costly a sacrifice to induce the great Law-giver to give up that which He could not justly insist upon, it being in itself unreasonable? But if it is in itself reasonable, being founded in the reason and nature of things, it cannot be given up and abolished on any consideration whatsoever. Surely, such, however they may ‘desire to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm’ (1Ti 1:7). When will such horrible jargon and blasphemy be banished from the Christian world? How far are such from knowing their own character as sinners and the true grace of the Gospel whereby the sinner is saved!

“And suffer me to add here a hearty submission to, and acquiescence and delight in, the law of God, rightly understood, and so a true hatred of sin must take place in order to any degree of true approbation of the Gospel and faith and trust in Christ. For so far are we from approving of the law of God in our hearts, and a sense of the hatefulness and ill-desert of sin, just so far shall we always be from being pleased with the atonement of Christ, rightly understood, in which the law is set up and honoured as most excellent and glorious, and sin is condemned in the highest possible degree, and its infinite odiousness and ill-desert set in the most clear and striking light

imaginable. Indeed, this approbation and sense of heart is implied in a true idea and knowledge of the law in its excellency and glory, and of sin in its true odiousness and ill-desert. For the very idea of duty and excellence consists in a sense of heart, and is itself a pleasedness with that beauty and delight in it, and there can be no distinction between seeing the true hatefulfulness of an object and hating it.

“Thus evident is it that the sinner who comes to Christ for salvation comes as a true penitent, and that repentance, which most essentially consists in a sense of heart of the true odiousness and ill-desert of sin, is not only implied in faith in Christ, *but is necessary in order to this faith*, and the former takes place before the latter, as there must be the knowledge and approbation of the divine character and law, and a sight and sense of the ill-desert of sin, before there can be any true knowledge of the Mediator and faith in Him. Thus it is only the humble, contrite, broken-hearted penitent who is revived and comforted by Christ, *as none but such ever did or ever will* know His true character or are prepared to receive with approbation and joy the good news He proclaims. This is so plain and demonstrable that it may be reasonably concluded that many who have objected against the notion that repentance toward God is antecedent to faith in Christ, and before it, as being heretical and absurd, have done it through some misunderstanding of the matter.

“There are those who zealously contend that a sight and belief of the *grace* of God through Christ, and a view of God as reconciled to the sinner by Him, is the first and only thing that begets love to God and His law, and repentance of sin, and that it is impossible that the sinner should be reconciled to God and the divine law in any other view. I leave the attentive reader to observe and reflect upon the absurdity of such a notion. It is certain to a demonstration that they who are not heartily reconciled *to God and His law*, and do not hate sin and abhor themselves for it, do not know and are not reconciled to the grace of God through Christ. Nor can they attain to the latter if not first brought to the former, but will remain eternal enemies to both. They, therefore, who have never been reconciled to God and His holy law in any other way but by first seeing and believing in the grace of God through Christ, *are yet ignorant of the true grace of God, and enemies to it*. And all their love to Christ, and supposed reconciliation to God—all their repentance, religious affections, and rapturous admiration of the love and grace of God is nothing but mere enthusiastic delusion, bottomed on that selfishness which is perfect enmity against God” (Samuel Hopkins, 1800—in close fellowship with Jonathan Edwards).

Hence it appears of what *great importance it is* that the law of God should be preached and held constantly before saved and unsaved, as this is absolutely indispensable in order to give a proper view of the Gospel. Alas, how many poor souls are being deceived through preachers studiously keeping the law out of their sight, yea, making remarks derogatory unto the holy law of God. Notwithstanding the high-sounding phrases which may be employed in favor of the Gospel, and no matter how much the grace of God may be magnified in words, they are, in truth, without meaning and convey no proper idea of the true grace of God, and the real Gospel of Christ is neglected. For the Gospel is a message of glad tidings for those who are sick of sin, who desire to be conformed to the law, who are groaning under a felt anguish for their transgressions of it.

1. Make clear *the absolute and infinite authority of the Law-Giver*. This is of first importance, not only that God may be honoured, but that the sinner may the better perceive the infinite enormity and unspeakable guilt of openly defying the Most High. The law is the voice of God to His creatures. It consists not merely of good advice, but of divine commands. It is the rule which the Almighty Jehovah has set up and therefore it is clothed with *His* authority. Because of His excellency and greatness, He is exalted infinitely above all creatures, and it is His right to dictate

to and dispose of them. Failure to submit to His authority, disregard of His righteous law, is the crime of all crimes. It is spiritual anarchy.—(To be completed in the April issue)



April

THE HOLY SPIRIT

15. The Holy Spirit Regenerating (Part 2)

In our last article, we pointed out that at regeneration the faculties of the soul are *spiritually enlivened*, grace putting into them a new ability so that they are capable of performing spiritual acts. At the new birth, the Holy Spirit communicates principles of spiritual life, whereby the soul is qualified to act as a supernatural agent and produce supernatural works. The need-be for this should be evident. God and Christ, as they are revealed in the Gospel, are supernatural objects unto the natural faculties or powers of the soul, and there is no proportion between them—not only such a disproportion as the bat’s eye hath unto the sun, but as a blind man’s eye to the sun. Thus there is a greater necessity for the soul to be given new principles and abilities to act holy and spiritually than at the first creation to act naturally.

Holiness in the heart is the main and ultimate birth brought forth in regeneration, for to make us partakers of God’s holiness is the sum and scope of His gracious purpose toward us, both of His election (Eph 1:4), and of all His dealings afterward (Heb 12:10), without which “no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). Not that finite creatures can ever be partakers of the essential holiness that is in God, either by imputation, or much less by real transubstantiation. We can be no otherwise partakers of it than in the *image* thereof—“which after God [as pattern or prototype] is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24), “after the image of him that created him” (Col 3:10).

Regeneration is the first discovery and manifestation of election and redemption to the persons for whom they were intended, “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man *appeared*” (Ti 3:4), and *how* and *when* did it appear? “According to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Ti 3:5). “God’s eternal love, like a mighty river, had from everlasting ran, as it were underground; and when Christ came, it took its course through His heart, hiddenly ran through it, He bearing when on the cross the names of them whom God had given Him; but was yet still hidden here as to us, and our knowledge of it. But the first breaking of it forth, and particular appearing of it in and to the persons, is when we are converted, and is as the first opening of a fountain” (Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680).

There is a great display of God's *power* apparent in our regeneration. Yea, an "exceeding greatness" thereof, no less than that which raised up Christ from the dead (Eph 1:19-20). Because the work of regeneration is often repeated and accomplished in an instant, as seen in the dying thief and Paul, and often accomplished (apparently) by a few words from one frail mortal falling on the ears of another, we are apt to lose sight of the omnipotent working of the Holy Spirit in the performing thereof. Indeed the Spirit so graciously hides the exceeding greatness of His power working in sinners' hearts, by using such sweet persuasive motives and gentle inducements—drawing with "cords of a man" (Hos 11:4)—that *His* might is inadequately recognized, owned, and adored by us.

The marvel of regeneration is the bringing of a soul out of spiritual death into spiritual life. It is a new creation, which is a bringing of something out of nothing. Moreover the new creation is a far greater wonder than is the old. In the first creation there was nothing to oppose, but in the new, all the powers of sin and Satan are set against it. Regeneration is not like the changing of water into wine, but of contrary into contrary—of hearts of stone into flesh (Eze 36:26), of wolves into lambs (Isa 11:6). This is greater than any miracle Christ showed and therefore did He tell His apostles that, under the mighty enduement of the Holy Spirit, they should work "greater works" than He did (Joh 14:12).

Not only is there a wondrous exhibition of His power when the Spirit regenerates a soul, but there is also a blessed manifestation of His *love*. In the exercise of His gracious office towards God's elect and in His work in them, the Holy Spirit proves to a demonstration that His love toward the heirs of glory is ineffable and incomprehensible. As the principle work of the Spirit consists in making our souls alive to God, in giving us to apprehend the transactions of the Father and the Son in the everlasting covenant, and in imparting to them spiritual principles whereby they are fitted to enjoy and commune with God, it is *internal*. Hence it is that, His work being *within* us, we are more apt to overlook *Him* and are prone to neglect the giving to Him the glory which is distinctly His due, and most sadly do we fail to praise and adore Him for His gracious work in us.

Thus it is with all believers—they find themselves more disposed to think on the love of Christ, or on the Father's love in the gift of Him, than in exercising their minds spiritually in soul-inflaming and heart-warming meditations on the love and mercy of the Holy Spirit towards them, and His delight in them, though all that they really know and enjoy of the Father's love by faith in the finished work of the Son, is entirely from the inward teaching and supernatural influences of the eternal Spirit. This is too plainly evident in our neglect to ascribe distinctive glory to Him as a divine Person in the Godhead as God and Lord.

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him" (1Th 5:9-10). Yet the Father's appointment and the Son's redemption, with all the unspeakable blessings thereof, remained for a season quite unknown to us. In their fallen, sinful, and guilty state, Christians lay "dead in trespasses and sins," without hope. To bring them out of this state, and raise them from a death of sin into a life of righteousness, is the great and grand work reserved for the Holy Spirit, in order to display and make manifest thereby *His* love for them.

The Holy Spirit is fully acquainted with the present and everlasting virtue and efficacy of the Person and work of Immanuel, and what His heart was set upon when He made His soul an offering for sin, and how infinitely and eternally well-pleased was Jehovah the Father with it, who hath it in perpetual remembrance. The Father and the Son having committed the revelation and application of this great salvation unto the persons of all the elect *to the Holy Spirit*, He is pleased

therefore, out of the riches of His own free and sovereign grace, to work in due season in all the heirs of glory. And as Christ died but once—His death being all-sufficient to answer every design to be effected by it—so the Holy Spirit *by one act* works effectually in the soul, producing a spiritual birth and changing the state of its partaker once for all, so that the regenerated are brought out of and delivered from the power of death and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Without this spiritual birth we cannot see spiritual objects and heavenly blessings in their true worth and excellency.

The effect of the new birth is that the man born again loves spiritual things *as spiritual* and values spiritual blessings on account of their being purely spiritual. The spring of life from Christ enters into him, and is the spring of all his spiritual life, the root of all his graces, the perpetual source of every divine principle within him. So says Christ, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (Joh 4:14). This regeneration introduces the elect into a capacity for the enjoyments which are peculiar to the spiritual world and makes the one alteration in their state before God which lasts forever. *All* our meetness for the heavenly state is wrought at our regeneration (Col 1:12-13). Regeneration is one and the same in all saints. It admits of no increase or diminution. All grace and holiness are then imparted by the Spirit. His subsequent work is but to draw it forth into exercise and act.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

76. The Faith of Israel (11:30)

In the preceding verse, we had the faith of the believing remnant of Israel under the command and example of Moses. In our present text, we have an exhibition and triumph of their faith under the leadership of Joshua. There we beheld what faith accomplished under their exodus from Egypt, here we see what it achieved upon their entering the promised land. As the yoke of bondage was by faith broken asunder, so by the same faith the people of God were to obtain possession of Canaan. Thereby we are taught that the true life of the saint is, from the beginning to end, one of faith. Without faith no progress can be made, no victories be obtained, no fruit be brought forth unto God's glory. It is solemn to note that an interval of forty years' duration comes in between Hebrews 11:29 and 30. Those years were occupied in the wilderness. They were a judgment from God because of unbelief (Heb 3). Reader, how many years of your life record no actings of faith to the praise of divine grace?

The remarkable incident referred to in our text is related at length in the 6th chapter of Joshua, which opens by telling us, "Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in" (Jos 6:1). Israel had reached the borders of Canaan. They had safely crossed the Jordan, but could not enter the land because of Jericho, which was a powerful fortress barring their ingress. This was one of the cities which had affrighted the spies, causing

them to say, “The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven” (Deu 1:28)—to their eyes the cities appeared impregnable and far too secure for them to take.

Jericho was a frontier town. It was the key-city at the entrance to Canaan. Its capture was absolutely necessary before any progress could be made by Israel in their conquering and occupying of their promised inheritance. Failure to capture it would not only discourage the children of Israel, but would greatly strengthen the morale of the Canaanites. It was the enemy’s leading stronghold, which doubtless, they considered to be quite invulnerable. Yet it fell to a people who possessed no artillery and without them fighting any battle. All they did, in response to Jehovah’s orders, was to march by faith around the city once each day for six days, and then seven times on the seventh day, when they gave a great shout, and the walls fell down flat before them. Many important lessons are taught us therein, a few of which we will briefly mention, before dwelling at greater length upon the outstanding one.

First, God’s ways are often entirely different from ours. Who ever heard of a powerful fortress being completely demolished in response to a company of people walking around it? Ah, God delights in staining the pride of man. The leader and lawgiver of Israel was preserved in an ark of bulrushes. The mighty giant of the Philistines was overcome by a sling and a stone. The prophet Elijah was sustained by a widow’s handful of meal. The forerunner of Christ dwelt in a wilderness and fed upon locusts and wild honey. The Saviour Himself was born in a stable and laid in a manger. His selected ambassadors were, for the most part, unlettered fishermen. Striking illustrations are these of the sentence beginning this paragraph. The things which are highly esteemed among men are abomination in the sight of God. It is well for us to remember this.

Second, God is independent of all natural means and superior to all the “laws of nature.” It is true that, as a general rule, God is pleased to bless the use of natural means and that He frequently accomplishes His ends by the operations of those laws of nature which He has set in motion, but it is a great mistake to imagine that He is tied down either by the one or the other. What natural “means” were employed in Israel’s crossing of the Jordan or their capturing of Jericho? What natural “means” were used in the preserving of Daniel in the lion’s den or Jonah in the whale’s belly? And what “laws of nature” were observed in connection with the birth of Isaac, the feeding of Elijah by the ravens, or the preserving whole the three Hebrews in Babylon’s fiery furnace? Yes, God *is* superior to all means and laws. It is well for us to remember this too.

Third, formidable difficulties and powerful oppositions are encountered in the warfare of faith. One will not follow the path of faith very far before he comes face to face with that which challenges all his courage and defies all his natural resources and powers. Jordan rivers and Jericho fortresses still exist. But though the one may be unfordable and the other appear impregnable, yet they are the veriest trifles to the Almighty. The dimensions which they assume unto our vision is largely determined by the measure in which our hearts are engaged with the Omnipotent One. Those formidable difficulties and powerful obstacles are placed in our path *by God*, for the purpose of testing us, for the training of faith, as opportunities to trust in and glorify the Lord.

Fourth, Satan’s strongholds cannot stand before a people who are obedient to and who rely fully upon the living God. This fact is surely written in large letters across Joshua 6. The Canaanites were completely under the dominion of the evil one, yet here we see one of their principal fortresses tumbling down like a frail booth when a powerful wind strikes it. To unbelief, these cities might appear “walled up to heaven” and seem impregnable, but faith laughs at such things, knowing that God has only to breathe upon them and they will collapse at once. Thus it

was in the early days of Christianity, when the imposing citadels of Paganism crumbled away before the faithful ministry of the apostles. Thus it was at the time of the great Reformation in the sixteenth century, when the kingdom of the Papacy was shaken to its very foundations by the courageous preaching of Luther and his contemporaries. Thus it was, in many parts, some fifty years ago, when the high places of heathendom fell down before the onslaughts of the missionaries.

And why is it we are not witnessing the same Gospel triumphs in our generation? Why is it that Romanism has now regained so much of its lost ground and is forging ahead in so many directions? Why is it that on the “foreign field” the forces of Satan are advancing instead of retreating? And why is it that in the so-called Christian lands a growing number of Jerichos defy the prayers and efforts of the saints? Is it because God’s arm is now waxed short? Perish the thought. Is it because the Scriptures are obsolete and unfitted to the needs of this twentieth century? Far, far from it. What, then, is the matter? This: *there is a grieved Spirit in our midst* and in consequence *His power is withheld*. The Holy Spirit of God has been “quenched,” see 1Th 5:19, and therefore the feverish and frenzied efforts of present-day Christendom avail not.

And *why* is the Spirit of God “grieved”? *What is it* that has “quenched” His power in our midst? This, we have departed from *God’s way*, we have ignored His orders, we have substituted human devices, we have put our confidence in carnal weapons. Instead of encompassing the walls of Jericho after the divine order, we have resorted to worldly allurements, seeking to win over the Canaanites by fleshly attractions. My brethren, we cannot hope to have Israel’s victories until we emulate Israel’s example. We will never again witness a return to apostolic progress until we get back to apostolic methods. There can be no improvement until we truly recognize that it is, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zec 4:6). And the power of the Spirit will not be manifested in our midst until we once more enter the path of obedience, *doing God’s work in God’s prescribed way*, and confidently counting upon Him to honour and bless such efforts.

Fifth, but the outstanding lesson to be learned from this incident is that which is stated in our text, where the fall of Jericho is attributed to *the faith* of the believing Israelites. “Do we think enough of faith, chosen by divine omnipotent love, to be its channel? God alone doeth great marvels, but it is through the faith of His saints. All the victories of Israel were wrought by faith. Divine power and grace redeemed them on that memorable night, but it was the faith of Moses which kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood. It was God who divided the Red Sea, but in answer to the silent prayer of faith which ascended from the heart of His servant. All miracles of healing recorded in the Gospels were wrought by faith. Jesus prayed to the Father, and then fed the multitude with five loaves and two fishes. Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven, and then said ‘Ephphatha, that is, Be opened’ (Mar 7:34). Jesus by faith thanked God that He heard Him always, and then uttered His mighty ‘Lazarus, come forth’ (Joh 11:43).

“And faith was wrought also in the recipient of divine favour, ‘Thy faith hath made thee whole’ (Mar 5:34), ‘and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee’ (Mat 8:13). Such were frequently Christ’s words. The people who perished in the wilderness entered not into God’s rest because of unbelief, and because of their unbelief, Jesus could not show many miracles in some places, ‘If thou wouldst believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God’ (Joh 11:40).

“Israel’s history is the history of God’s omnipotent saving grace and of man’s faith. From heaven descends miracle, from earth ascends faith. From the election of Abraham to the birth of Moses, from the Passover and the Red Sea to the dividing of the river Jordan, all is miracle, and all has to go through the faith of some chosen saint. Israel is before Jericho, a walled and fenced

city. It is not by power and might, but by faith, that they are to take it” (Adolph Saphir, 1831-1891).

Let us consider the *various aspects of faith* which were manifested by the believing Israelites on this memorable occasion. 1. The *daring* of their faith. When Israel crossed the Jordan, they, as it were, burned all their bridges and boats behind them. They were cut off from flight. They had no houses to which they could retire and no fortress to which they could retreat. They were now in the enemy’s territory, and victory or death were the only alternatives. To march peacefully and quietly around those walls of Jericho seemed a perilous undertaking—what was to hinder the Canaanites from shooting at or casting down rocks upon them? It was truly an adventure of faith and it is venturesome faith which God delights to honour. Unbelief is hesitant and timorous, but bold faith is confident and courageous. O to be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.”

There are three degrees of faith. There is a faith which *receives*, when as empty-handed beggars we come to Christ and accept Him as our Lord and Saviour, John 1:12. There is also a faith which *reckons*, which counts upon God to fulfill His promises and undertake for us, 2 Timothy 1:12. There is also a faith which *risks*, which dares something for the Lord. This aspect of faith was exemplified by Moses when he ventured to confront the king of Egypt and make known Jehovah’s demands. This daring of faith was manifested by David when he went forth to engage the mighty Goliath. We see it again in Elijah, when, single-handed, he encountered the host of Jezebel’s false prophets on Carmel. We see it again when Daniel dared to be cast into the lion’s den rather than comply with the idolatrous edict of Babylon’s king. We see it again and again in the journeys and ministry of the apostle Paul, who flinched not before dangers of every imaginable order, that he might make known the unsearchable riches of Christ.

And in each of the instances mentioned above we behold in the sequel how God honoured those trusting and daring hearts. It is venturesome faith which He ever delights to reward. He Himself bids us come to the throne of grace with holy “boldness,” see Heb 4:16, that we may find grace to help in time of need. O how this rebukes *our* timidity and reserve. How few today are prepared to *risk anything* in the service of our Lord. How little of the courage and daring of our fathers is now in evidence. What a lot of trembling and fearful soldiers are found today in the army of Christ. O how urgent is the need for some Spirit-filled man of faith to go forth and cry in the language of William Carey (1761-1834), “Ask great things of God; expect great things from God; *undertake great things for God.*” It is well to look before we leap, but many look so long that they never leap at all!

2. The *obedience* of their faith. This appears from a reading of Joshua 6:3-4 and 6-8—all concerned carried out the Lord’s instructions to the letter. To do nothing more than walk and walk and walk around the walls of Jericho must have appeared a childish and ridiculous thing, yet the believing remnant complied with the Lord’s command. God promised to deliver Jericho into their hands. Joshua and his believing fellows rested on His word and carried out His orders. The Lord requires us to use whatever means He prescribes, no matter how unlikely and inadequate they may seem to us. It is true that divine power overthrew Jericho’s walls, yet it was also by faith’s obedience they fell. God had made it known that the manifestation of His power should be via a particular way. It was inseparably connected with certain actions which were to be performed by His people.

How was Israel to capture that mighty fortress of the Canaanites? Consider their condition! For centuries they had been a nation of slaves. For the last forty years, they had been weary wanderers in the wilderness. And now their great leader, Moses, was dead! They were without

any military experience, devoid of artillery, and had no trained army. All true, but they were not left to themselves. The living God was for them and so long as they responded to His revealed will, all went well with them. In like manner, God has not left us to our own devisings, but has given us plain and full directions, and He requires us to do the work which He has appointed *us* in the way He has commanded. Implicit obedience to His orders is absolutely essential if we are to have *His* blessing.

Implicit obedience unto the known will of God marked all Israel's arrangements for the siege of Jericho. Minute instructions were given them for their strange campaign. They were to march in a certain order, each being required to take the place assigned him. They were to march at a specified hour and encompass the city a given number of times. At the command of the Lord, they were to be silent and at the command of the Lord, they were to shout. There was no room for human scheming, no place for carnal planning, no need for human reasoning as to what should be done. Everything was prescribed for them and faith's obedience was all that was required from them. The orders which God gave to Joshua might have seemed unreasonable and absurd to his men, yet they *must* be faithfully executed if victory was to be theirs. And as it was then, so it is still. But O how slow we are to learn this lesson.

Reader, the commands and precepts of God *often* appear strange unto carnal wisdom. How absurd did God's orders appear to the great Naaman, when he was bidden to bathe his leprous body in the Jordan. How contrary to all human ideas was it for God to send the prophet Elijah to be fed for many months by a widow who had naught but a handful of meal and a little oil. How unreasonable it must have seemed to the twelve apostles when Christ bade them tell the great multitude to sit down, and only five small loaves and two little fishes were in sight. And how unreasonable does it appear unto multitudes of professing Christians today when they are told to cast away all the worldly devices which have been brought into the "churches" and substitute fasting and prayer. How slow we are to recognize that it is the *obedience of faith* which God requires.

3. The *discipline* of their faith. "And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout" (Jos 6:10). Their silence at the beginning was as necessary as their shouting at the finish. Why? These men were the immediate descendants of the greatest grumblers who ever lived. Their fathers complained and murmured until God swore in His wrath they should not enter into His rest.

How much mischief had been caused if every man had been left free to express *his* "opinion"! How many would have been ready to advise Joshua what method of strategy to employ. One would have reasoned that the only way to capture Jericho was by starving out its inhabitants through a protracted siege. Another would have suggested the use of ladders to scale its walls. Another would have advocated heavy battering-rams to force a way in. Another would have suggested tunneling under the walls. One and all would have ridiculed the plan which Joshua adopted. Ah, my readers, if the Jerichos which now confront the people of God are to be captured, then not only must the mouths of murmurers be stopped, but all leaning unto our own understanding must be abandoned.

O how often are the sinews of faith cut by the injudicious and unfriendly criticisms of those who pose as our Christian friends. How often is the man of God hindered by the Christ-dishonouring doubts and carnal suggestions of his fellows. A brother in the Lord, who had been without employment, recently wrote us that he had been rebuked for not making known his needs to his friends. Ah, let us not forget that the very first line which the Holy Spirit gives us in His

picture of the “blessed” man is, that he “walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly” (Psa 1:1). How much mischief is wrought by people perpetually talking of the *difficulties* in the task confronting us. All real Christian work is beset with difficulties—Satan sees to that!

The soldiers of Christ must be trained. Faith must be disciplined. Each one in the ranks of the Lord’s hosts must learn there is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Ecc 3:7). The children of Israel were not ordered to go forth in battle array and make any sally upon this garrison of the Canaanites. Instead, in solemn silence, in sacred procession, they were to encompass the city. This was a great trial of faith for such a procedure seemed very unlikely to accomplish the desired end. Not only so, but it would expose them to the contempt of their enemies, who must have sneered at their harmless procession. Yet this was the way which *God* had ordered. He loves to do great things by contemptible means, that the glory may be His.

4. The *patience* of their faith, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, *after they were compassed about seven days*” (Heb 11:30). They did not fall the first day that Israel marched around them, nor the second, nor the third. No, it was not until they had journeyed about them thirteen times, that the power of God was displayed. And why? To test their patience, as well as their faith and obedience—to prove whether they really believed the Lord’s promise or no, when He enjoined the use of such weak and unlikely means, and to give them a more distinct apprehension that the conquest of Canaan was the Lord’s and not theirs. When nothing happened the first twelve times Israel encompassed Jericho, it became the more evident that their enemies would not be overcome by the power of man, but by God.

Not only the mercy, but the *timing* of it, is in the hands of God and therefore are we bidden, “Rest in the LORD, and *wait patiently for him*” (Psa 37:7). Alas, how sadly do we fail at this point. How easily we become discouraged if our Jericho does not fall the first or second time we encompass it, “The vision is yet for an appointed time...though it tarry, *wait for it*; because it will surely come” (Hab 2:3). But O how impatient is the flesh. It was at this point that Abraham failed—when Sarah bare not the promised son, he determined to have one by Hagar. It was at this point Moses first failed—taking things into his own hands (Exo 2:11-12), instead of waiting God’s time. “*Tarry ye* in the city of Jerusalem” (Luk 24:49) was the last word which the Redeemer gave unto the apostles before He ascended.

“Men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luk 18:1). How much we need to take this word to heart. How often we have “fainted” when victory was almost in sight! Ah, we thought that the walls of our Jericho would never fall, but they *did*, at the appointed time. God is in no hurry, and it is required of us that “he that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa 28:16). But we find it much harder to *wait* than we do to believe—that is, probably, the weakest spot in our armour and the point at which we fail most frequently. Then let us be more definite and earnest in begging the Holy Spirit to work in us the spiritual grace of patience. Let us seek grace to lay hold of that word, “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal 6:9).

5. The *anticipation* of their faith, “So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city” (Jos 6:20). Our space is nearly exhausted, so we must condense. What we would now particularly observe is that the people shouted *before* the walls fell down—it was faith *expecting* the victory. “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, *believe that ye receive* them, and ye shall have them” (Mar 11:24). It reminds us of the missionary John Moffat (1835-1918), who laboured for years among the Bechuanas and saw not a

single seal to his ministry. Some of his far-distant friends in England wrote him saying they wished to make a present, and asked him to specify what it should be. He answered “a communion set.” Months after, when it arrived, more than a dozen converted natives sat down with him to remember the Lord’s death!

Now the whole of Joshua 6 has been recorded for our learning. “The walls of unbelief, superstition, and ungodliness, yield to no earthly armour and power. It is not by compulsion, nor by reasoning; it is not by weapons which this world supplies, that these walls can be destroyed. It is by the Word of God, and by the Word declared in faith. Ministers and people, they who blow the trumpet, and also the people who are with them, are to be united together in the power of God” (Adolph Saphir). Each of us is confronted with a Jericho—whether it be the preacher in the field of service where God calls him to labour, the Sunday-school teacher in the class before her, or the individual Christian who is seeking to overcome some habit or disposition. Remember Joshua and take courage! If there be the daring, the discipline, the obedience, the patience, and the expectation of faith, the victory is sure in God’s appointed time.

Once more we have been shown the wondrous power of real faith to bring to pass that which is beyond mere nature, compare Matthew 17:20, 1 John 5:4. Persevering trust and obedience enabled Israel to accomplish what had otherwise been impossible. Again, we have seen that faith in God’s promise of protection and the use of His appointed means far surpasses all worldly methods of defense, compare 2 Chronicles 20:20. Contrariwise, we behold what a worthless thing it is to trust in outward and material things—the walls of Jericho were both strong and high, yet they afforded no security against God’s power—“vain is the help of man” (Psa 60:11). Though God required Israel to use the utmost of their courage, submission, and patience, yet He took it upon Himself to bless their efforts and effect the work of power. Barriers more difficult than the walls of Jericho stand between the Christian and holiness—how are they to be removed? By faith’s obedience, compare 2 Corinthians 10:4-5.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

28. His Recovery of His Wives

“And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah. And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled” (1Sa 30:16-17). We resume at the point where we left off in our last article. These verses form a solemn sequel to those previously pondered and set before us the other side of the picture which was then considered.

The Amalekites, in all probability, knew that the Israelites and Philistines were engaged in fighting each other, a considerable distance away, and supposed that David and his men were

assisting the king of Gath. Deeming themselves secure, they imprudently began to riot and make merry over the abundance of spoils they had captured, without so much as placing guards to give notice of an enemy's approach. They lay not in any regular order, much less in any military formation, but were scattered in groups, here and there. Consequently, David and his little force came upon them quite unawares and made a dreadful slaughter of them. How often when men say, "Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1Th 5:3).

Just as the sick and abandoned Egyptian, who was befriended by David, typified one of God's elect being saved by Christ, so these flesh-indulging Amalekites portray careless sinners who will yet be destroyed by Him. Solemnly is this announced in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." And again, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (Jude 1:14-15).

Yet, such unspeakably solemn warnings as those which God has given in His Word have no restraining effect upon the unconcerned and Satan-drugged world. The vast majority of our fellows live as though there were no eternity to come, no judgment-day when they must appear before God, give an account of the deeds they have done in the body, and be sentenced according to their works. They know full-well how brief and uncertain this life is—at short intervals their companions are cut down by the hand of death, but no lasting serious impressions are made upon them. Instead, they continue in their pleasure-loving whirl, impervious to the divine threats, deaf to the voice of conscience, disregarding any entreaties or admonitions which they may receive from Christian friends or the servants of God.

O how tragically true to the present-day life of the world is the frivolous scene presented to us in the verses we are now pondering. Those care-free Amalekites were "eating and drinking and dancing." In their fancied security, they were having what the young people of this degenerate age call "a good time." There was an abundance of food to hand, why then should they deny those lusts of the flesh which war against the soul? They had been successful in spoiling their neighbours, why then should they not "celebrate" and make merry? All were in high spirits, why then should they not fill the air with music and laughter? Yes, similar is the fatal reasoning of multitudes today. But mark well the fearful sequel, "And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day" (1Sa 30:17). Alas, what was their carnal security worth!

David was just as truly a type of Christ in his slaying of the Amalekites as he was in befriending the poor Egyptian. Ah, dear reader, He who saves those who submit to Him as their Lord and trust in Him as their Redeemer, shall as surely judge and destroy them who despise and reject Him. He will yet say, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luk 19:27). How will it fare with *you* in that day? The answer to this question will be determined by whether or not you have truly received Him as Prophet to instruct you, as Priest to atone for your sins, as King to regulate and reign over your heart and life. If you have not already done so, seek grace from above to throw down the weapons of your warfare against Him and surrender yourself wholly to Him.

"The young man of Egypt was with David when he came upon the Amalekites. He once belonged to their company and was one of them. Had he not been separated from them, he would

have surely shared their fate. If unconverted, you are of that world of sinners ‘whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not’ (2Pe 2:3). Turn from it now ere the vengeance of God destroys you with it. God has borne with it long. The sins of Christendom reach up to heaven and cry for vengeance. Christ is your only refuge. Come to Him now, and like Noah in the ark and Lot in the mountain, you will be safe from the sweeping storm. Like the young man of Egypt, you will be taken out of the world and away from this scene before the stroke descends. You will appear with Christ along with those ten thousand holy ones who accompany Him when He comes to earth to war and judge” (Christopher Knapp, 1870-1945).

Let us now return to our narrative and seek its practical teaching for the Christian today. “And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah” (1Sa 30:16). How many miles it was that the befriended Egyptian led David and his men we do not know, but probably some considerable distance—that they were supernaturally strengthened for their strenuous exertions after their previous fatigue, we cannot doubt. Justly did God make use of this poor Egyptian, basely abandoned, as an instrument of death to the Amalekites.

“And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled. And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any thing that they had taken to them: David recovered all” (1Sa 30:17-19). Here is the blessed sequel to all that has occupied us in the preceding verses of this chapter. What a proof that David’s heart was now perfect toward the Lord, for most manifestly did He here show Himself strong on his behalf, by granting such signal success to his endeavours. Ah, when our sins are forsaken and forgiven, and we act by the Lord’s directions, we are very likely to recover what we lost by our previous folly.

“And David took all the flocks and the herds, which they drave before those other cattle, and said, This is David’s spoil” (1Sa 30:20). The seeming ambiguity of this language is removed if we refer back to what is said in verse 16—the Amalekites had successfully raided other places before they fell upon Ziklag. The spoil they had captured was kept separate, and the cattle which they had taken in the territory of Philistia and Judah, David claimed for his own portion. The noble use which he made of the same we shall see in a moment.

“And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that were with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them” (1Sa 30:21). The expression “whom they had *made* also to abide by the brook Besor” shows plainly that those fatigued men earnestly desired to follow David further and had to be constrained not to do so. Typically, it tells us that all Christians are not equally strong in the Lord, compare 1 John 2:13. The Hebrew word for “saluted” signifies “he asked them of peace,” which means he inquired how they did, being solicitous of their welfare. Though all Christians are not alike spiritually robust, all are equally dear unto Christ.

“Then answered all the wicked men and men of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them aught of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart” (1Sa 30:22). In the most favoured company there will be found selfish men, who being ungrateful to God for His kindness and favours will desire to enrich and pamper themselves,

leaving their fellows to starve, for all they care. Even amid David's band were certain sons of Belial, wicked men, of a covetous and grasping disposition. No doubt they were the ones who took the lead in suggesting that David be "stoned" (1Sa 30:6). Their real character was here made quite evident. In their evil suggestion we may see how the heart of David was tested.

"Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the LORD hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand" (1Sa 30:23). David's reply to the selfish suggestion of some of his grasping followers was meek, pious, and righteous, and it prevailed unto their silencing. Note how gently he replied even to the sons of Belial, addressing them as "my brethren," but observe that he, at the same time, maintained his dignity as the general-in-chief, by directly denying their request. Yet it was not a mere arbitrary assertion of his authority. He followed his, "Ye shall not do so," with powerful reasonings.

First, he reminded these selfish followers that the spoil which had been taken from the Amalekites was *not theirs* absolutely, but that "which the LORD has given us." Therein David inculcated an important principle which is to regulate us in the discharge of our Christian stewardship—freely we have received from God, and therefore freely we should give unto others. Miserliness in a child of God is a practical denial of how deeply he is indebted unto divine grace. Second, he reminded them of how mercifully the Lord had "preserved" them when they attacked a people who greatly outnumbered them, and how He had also "delivered" the Amalekites into their hands. They must not ascribe the victory unto their own prowess and therefore they could not claim the booty as wholly belonging unto themselves. It is not a time to give way to a spirit of greed when the Lord has particularly manifested His kindness to us.

Third, he pointed out that their evil suggestion most certainly would not commend itself unto any wise, just, and right-thinking people, "For who will hearken unto you in this matter?" (1Sa 30:24). When the people of God are in the majority, they will vote down the propositions of the covetous, but when the unregenerate are allowed to outnumber them in their assemblies, woe unto them. Fourth, David reminded them that those who tarried at Besor did so out of no disloyalty or unwillingness. They had fought valiantly in the past and now they had faithfully done their part in guarding the "stuff" or baggage, and so were entitled to a share of the spoils, "But as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike" (1Sa 30:24).

The whole of the above illustrates the fact that when a backsliding believer has been restored to communion with God, he is now in a state of soul to enjoy his recovered possessions. They will no longer be a snare unto him. When God takes something from us to teach us a needed lesson, He can, after we have learned that lesson, restore it to us again. Often, though not always, He does so. Faith is now dominant again and receives the recovered blessings from the hand of God. One who has been truly restored, like David, who knew what his own failure has been, will permit of no such selfishness as the sons of Belial advocate. Those who had stayed at home, as it were, should share in the victory. That was true *largeness of heart*, which ever marks one who has learned in God's school.

But there are always some who would wish to stint those possessing less faith and energy, yet he who realizes something of his own deep indebtedness to divine grace, rejoices to give out to others what he has gained. When the Lord is pleased to open up some part of His precious Word unto one of His servants, he, with enlarged heart, welcomes every opportunity to pass on the same to others. But how often there are those who seek to pour cold water on his zeal, urging that it is not "wise" or "timely," yea, that such teaching may prove "dangerous." While it is not fitting that we should take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs, on the other hand, it is sinful to

withhold any portion of the Bread of Life from hungry souls. If God has restored to us any portions of His truth, we owe it to the whole Household of Faith to impart it unto as many as will receive it.

“And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, even to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the LORD” (1Sa 30:26). “David not only distributed of the spoil to all who had followed him in the wilderness, and shared his dangers there—he also remembered that there were some, who, though they had refused to quit their position in Israel, and had shrunk (as well they might) from the cave of Adullam, did nevertheless love and favour him. Yet though they had drawn back from following him, and had declined to partake of his cup of sorrow, David, in the hour of his triumph, refused not to them participation in his joy. Such is the liberality of a heart that has sought and found its portion in *grace*” (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899).

Very blessed is what we find recorded in these closing verses of 1 Samuel 30. Those who view God as the Giver of their abundance will dispense of it with equity and liberality. They will seek to restrain injustice in others (v. 23), establish useful precedents (v. 25), and share with friends (vv. 26-31). The Amalekites had spoiled some of those parts of Judah mentioned in verses 26-31 (see vv. 14, 16), and therefore did David now send relief to those sufferers. It was the part of justice to restore what had been taken from them. Moreover, he had a grateful remembrance of those friends who secretly favoured him during the time of Saul’s persecution, and who had sheltered and relieved his men in the time of this distress (1Sa 30:31). Instead of selfishly enriching himself, he generously befriended others, and gave them proof that the Lord was with him.

Fearfully divergent may be the effects produced on different persons who pass under the same trials and blessings. The “sons of Belial” companied with David during the night of his sorrow (as Judas did with Christ), and were also made the recipients of his mercies, yet they now evidenced a state of soul which marked them in God’s sight as “wicked men” (1Sa 30:22). What more abhorrent to God than that which would narrow the expansiveness of grace. What more hateful in His sight than a selfishness which sought to extract out of His free favours an excuse for enriching itself by despising others, cf. John 12:4-6. But how different with David—from the ruins of Ziklag he rose, step by step, to a higher faith, manifesting dependency upon God, seeking His guidance, obtaining energy to pursue the enemy, and exercising largeness of heart in sharing the spoils with all. Thereby did he furnish an eminent foreshadowing of Him who “took the prey from the mighty” see Isa 49:24, “led captivity captive, and *gave gifts unto men*” (Eph 4:8).

DISPENSATIONALISM

8. The Law of God (Concluded)

All truth is catholic or universal. It embraces many elements and opens upon wide horizons, and therefore involves endless difficulties and apparent inconsistencies. But the mind of man

seeks for unity and tends prematurely to *force* unity in the sphere of his imperfect knowledge by securing one element of truth at the sacrifice of another. This is eminently the case with all rationalists. They are clear and logical, but at the expense of being superficial and half-orbed. Such is the case with heretics. The Greek word from which “heresy” is derived means an act of choice, and hence of diversion, a picking and choosing one part instead of comprehensively embracing the whole truth. The man who holds to the law of God and repudiates divine grace is a heretic. Equally so, the man who glories in the grace of God and throws overboard His law is a heretic. Jude 1:4 speaks of “turning the *grace* of our God into lasciviousness.”

In his Estimate of Manton, J.C. Ryle (1816-1900) wrote, “I admire the scriptural wisdom of a man who, in a day of hard-and-fast systems could *dare to be apparently inconsistent*, in order to ‘declare all the counsel of God.’ I firmly believe that this is the test of theology, which does good in the Church of Christ. The man who is not tied hand and foot by systems, and does not pretend to reconcile what our imperfect eyesight cannot reconcile in this dispensation, he is the man whom God will bless. Manton was such a man and because he was such a man, I think his works, like the ‘Pilgrim’s Progress,’ deserve the attention of all true Christians.”

Alas, how few such men has Christendom been favoured with during the last century. For the most part, certain favorite portions of Scripture have been seized, and every thing which appeared to conflict with them has been either ignored, explained away, or repudiated. Some aspects of the truth have been eagerly contended for by champions of the faith, but anything which appeared “inconsistent” therewith, has been studiously avoided or bitterly denounced. The great majority would not allow that there is a perfect agreement between the invincibility of God’s decrees and the freedom of human actions, insisting that if God has definitely predestinated a certain course of conduct, the individual is reduced to the level of a machine. Some believe in God’s sovereignty and some in man’s responsibility, but few indeed *really* believe fully in both, and with rare exceptions, the more strongly the one is retained, the more loosely the other is held.

Few perceive there is a perfect consistency between justification by the righteousness and blood of Christ and the necessity of our obedience, if ever we are to reach heaven. Nor can they reconcile the efficacy of divine grace with the indispensability of our performance of duty. There have been some good men who have honoured the Spirit in clearly teaching His effectual call, but those same men have denounced others who exhorted unsaved sinners to repent of their sins and believe in Christ. Certain men of God have rightly affirmed that Scripture assures the real saint of the absolute security of his salvation, but have denied that the solemn warnings and admonitions addressed to Christians in the New Testament also belong to them. They gloried in the immutability of God’s promises, but failed to see that the Christian is preserved from apostasy by his own use of appointed means.

Logic takes a certain premise and draws from it a rational and “consistent” conclusion. But faith appropriates a divine statement and leaves God to draw His own conclusions, for faith knows that “logical conclusions” *often contradict the Scriptures*. For example, logic says, “God is one, and *therefore* there cannot be three persons in the Godhead.” Faith says, “God *is* one, yet Scripture affirms there are three divine Persons, and [by God’s grace] I believe it.” Logic says, “Jesus Christ is man, and *therefore* He cannot be God.” Faith says, “Christ *is* man, but Scripture also declares He is *God*, and [by God’s grace] I believe it.” It is really pitiful to see some men such slaves to “logical consistency” that they use one portion of truth to overthrow another portion equally blessed. So it is deplorable to find so many ignoring or despising passage after passage of Holy Writ because they are unable to “harmonize” them with some favorite text. O for grace to receive *all* that God has given us in His Word.

The same spirit of partiality or lopsidedness explains why so many insist that law and grace are antagonistic principles. In his youth, the writer was taught by men he looked up to, that law and grace could no more be united than oil and water. May the Lord forgive him for inserting this error in some of his earlier writings. How many are now being told by the “champions of orthodoxy” that law and grace are hostile to each other, and that where the one is in exercise, the other must necessarily be inactive. But this is a serious mistake. How could the law *of God* and the grace *of God* conflict? The one expresses Him as “light” (1Jo 1:5), the other manifests Him as “love” (1Jo 4:8). The one makes known His righteousness, the other reveals His mercy. The manifold wisdom of God has made known the perfect consistency between them. Instead of their being contradictory, they are complementary. Both shone forth in their full glory at the cross—both are published in the true Gospel.

In all of God’s works and ways we may discern a meeting together of *seemingly* conflicting elements. The centrifugal and centripetal forces which are ever at work in the material realm illustrate this principle. So it is in connection with divine providence. There is a constant interpenetration of the natural and supernatural. So it was in the giving of the Scriptures. They are the product both of God’s and man’s agency. They are a divine revelation, yet couched in human language and given through human media. They are inerrantly true, yet written by fallible men. They are inspired throughout, yet the superintending control of the Spirit over the writers did not exclude nor interfere with the natural exercise of their faculties. So it was with Christ. He was omniscient yet He marveled at unbelief. He was omnipotent, yet He hungered and slept. He was eternal, yet He died. He was man, yet He rose again from the dead by His own power.

In view of what has been pointed out in the preceding paragraph, to which many other examples might be added, why should so many stumble over the fact of divine law and divine grace being exercised side by side, operating at the same season? Do law and grace present any greater contrast than the inexorable justice and abounding mercy of God, or between His fathomless love and everlasting wrath? No indeed, not so great. Grace must not be regarded as an attribute of God which eclipses all His other perfections. As Romans 5:21 so plainly tells us, “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign *through righteousness*,” and not at the expense of righteousness. Divine grace and divine righteousness, divine love and divine holiness, are as *inseparable* as light and heat from the sun. In bestowing grace, God never rescinds His claims upon us, but rather enables us to meet them. Was the prodigal son, after his penitent return and forgiveness, less obliged to conform to the laws of his father’s house than before he left it? No indeed, but more so.

“The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints: from His right hand went *a fiery law* for them. *Yea, he loved the people*” (Deu 33:2-3). What a strange collocation of terms must those words present unto many today! The very giving of the fiery law unto Israel was an effect an evidence of Jehovah’s special *love* for them! His very grant unto them, of what is now so bitterly hated, is here said to be a signal instance of God’s benignity, being a distinguishing blessing which other nations were not favored with. So too, as good old Matthew Henry (1662-1714) says, “The law of God written in the heart is a certain evidence of the love of God being shed abroad there.”

Divine grace was exercised unto Israel throughout the entire Mosaic economy. It seems to be generally overlooked that full provision was made for forgiveness and restoration unto those who transgressed the divine statutes. The ceremonial institutions, which afforded expiation and ablution, were wholly of *grace*. Amongst the “statutes and judgments and laws, which the LORD made between him and the children of Israel in mount Sinai” (Lev 26:46) here deb, was this one,

“If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham” (Lev 26:40-42)! Note how this was reiterated in the time of Solomon, 1 Kings 8:37-40; 44-49! Thus, under the Old Testament dispensation there was *provision of pardon* for penitent sinners.

How deplorable, then, that one who exercised such a wide influence as the late J. N. Darby (1800-1882) should say in volume 1 of his “Synopsis” (p. 126), “Had it been a human righteousness, it would have been by the law, which is the rule of that righteousness—a law given *to the Jews only*.” And again, “It is certain we have not commandments like those of the old law—they would be quite contrary to the spirit of the Gospel of grace” (p. 218). Yet the Lord Jesus plainly enough declared, “If ye love me, keep *my commandments*” (Joh 14:15). Equally baneful is this statement found in the introduction to “The Four Gospels” in the popular Scofield Bible, “The sermon on the mount is not grace...the *doctrines* of grace are to be sought in the epistles, not in the gospels.” We are prepared to show that *every* doctrine of grace contained in the epistles is found clearly expressed in the four gospels, while the law is just as clearly enforced in the epistles.

That there is no conflict whatever between the law and the Gospel is plain enough from Romans 3:31, “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we *establish* the law.” Here the apostle anticipates an objection which might be drawn from what he said in verses 26-30, namely, that justification is entirely by grace through faith. But so far from this annulling the law, it recognizes and enforces it. No greater respect could have been shown to the law than in determining to save some men from its curse, God sent His own co-equal Son to fulfill all its requirements. O marvel of marvels! the great Legislator humbled Himself to full obedience unto its precepts. The God who gave the law became incarnate and bled under its condemning sentence, rather than a tittle thereof fail. Magnified thus was the law indeed and forever “made honourable.”

God’s method of salvation by grace has “established” the law in a threefold way. First, by Christ, the Surety of God’s elect, being “made under the law” (Gal 4:4), fulfilling its precepts (Mat 5:17), and suffering its penalty in the stead of His people, and thus He has “brought in everlasting righteousness” see Dan 9:24. Second, by the Holy Spirit, at regeneration, imparting a nature which delights in the law, which is what is meant by His writing the law in our *hearts* (Heb 8:10). Third, by the Christian’s voluntary consent unto the law as his Rule of Life, so that he can say, “With the mind I myself *serve* the law of God” (Rom 7:25). Thus is the law established both in the high court of heaven and in the affections of the saint. Faith is not opposed to the doing of good works, in obedience to the law of God, from right principles and with right ends, but to trusting in and depending upon them as the matter of justification before God.

The law is a mirror to believers in which, by the light of the Spirit, they behold the deformity of their souls by sin, and the imperfection of their obedience, whereby they grow out of love with themselves. In this view of things, David said, “I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad” (Psa 119:96). So the apostle Paul, comparing his heart and conduct with the law of God, declared, “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom 7:14). The law is also used by the Spirit to make the righteousness of Christ more precious to the Christian, for he sees how imperfect is his own righteousness and how far

short of the demands of the law his obedience comes, and thus he desires to, “be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phi 3:9).

There is therefore no feud whatever between the law and the Gospel. They sweetly stand together in their proper place. In the Gospel, we see the law fulfilled (by Christ) as a *covenant* and established (in the hands of Christ) as a *rule* of obedience. The Gospel brings to light new motives and arguments to obedience, arguments drawn from the consideration of redeeming grace and love, which have a far greater constraining power than all the threats and cursings which the law denounces against those who do not continue in obedience thereto. Thus in the case of the Christian, the law remains, although the motives to obedience are changed. Our obedience is spontaneous, our motive love. Should it be asked, What happens when the Christian deliberately breaks the law? The answer is given in Psalm 89:30-33, “If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail”—he comes under the rod of his heavenly Father’s displeasure, but the Spirit leads him to repentance and confession, and he is forgiven, Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9.

Summing up now what has been before us in the four articles. 1. Adam was under the law of God in a twofold way—His fear and love ruling his heart, there was wrought into the very constitution of his soul that which answered to all the requirements of his Maker, and further, he received from Him, objectively, a revelation of His will, Genesis 1:26, Romans 7:10. 2. The whole human race was, in Eden, placed under the law as a covenant of works, and fell under its penalty when their federal head broke it, Romans 5:18. 3. The law was known long before Sinai, Genesis 26:5. 4. All mankind are under the law and will be judged by it, Romans 3:19. 5. Christ satisfied every demand of the law and His righteousness is imputed to His people, Romans 5:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21. 6. The Holy Spirit implants in the heart of the regenerate a love for the law, Romans 7:22. 7. The true Christian is “under the law to Christ” (1Co 9:21) and gladly obeys it, Romans 7:25.

“It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law” (Psa 119:126).

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Carson on Esther (Part Four)

That nothing more than civil honor was required for Haman by the king’s command is clear from the ninth verse of the fifth chapter, “Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king’s gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.” Here his offense was, that *he stood not up* nor even *moved* himself to Haman. Can any sober mind interpret this of religious worship? Was there any

idolatry in rising out of respect to the second man in the Persian empire? Whatever ceremonial might have been in approaching great men in that country, on this occasion there is no ceremonial, for there was no approach. The great man is passing and Mordecai will not stand up, nor even move to notice him. Dr. Gill himself admits that this was civil respect, but then, Mordecai, it seems, refuses even this, least it should be interpreted as religious worship. Was ever greater violence used in special pleading? So then not even the smallest respect ought to be given to heathen rulers who claim divine honors. But this, it seems, was only part of his reason. Mordecai was influenced, he says, partly by knowing that Haman had planned the destruction of the Jews. And would this justify him in refusing to obey the king's commandment? Another thing that weighed with Mordecai, he alleges, was that he confided in Esther's influence to save the Jews and therefore treated Haman with marked contempt. But may rulers be disobeyed when this can be done with impunity? Ought the man to be treated with contempt who is commanded by an absolute monarch to be honored above all his subjects? Is this the way in which Christians are to recommend the doctrine of Christ to the world?

But where is the necessity of arbitrarily supposing that this reverence must have had something idolatrous in it, when nothing but what is lawful is required in the words of the command? Was Mordecai perfect in knowledge and infallible in conduct that such a violent stretch must be made to justify him? It is argued by Mr. Scott that Mordecai was accepted of God in what he did, and therefore that his conduct must have been justifiable. But God's acknowledging him and interfering to deliver him are *no* proof that *He approved* of this part of his conduct. If God would not deliver his people from the consequences of their ignorance, they would soon be destroyed. Is there any passage in this history which either by implication or expressly commends Mordecai for not bowing to Haman? I admit that his motives may have been good. If he intended to honour God, his motives would be approved, though his conduct might be the effect of ignorance. We see from Romans 14 that God accepts His people even in their ignorance, when they are influenced by a regard to His authority. But this does not change error into truth, nor sin into duty. I think it is manifest that Mordecai acted on principle, for even when he saw the frightful consequences of his conduct, he persisted in it with the utmost steadiness. The text also seems to insinuate that he considered his being a Jew as a reason for refusing honour to Haman. But whether this had an eye to the nation or character of Haman, or in what way he supposed his being a Jew could justify his conduct, is not said and cannot be known.

It has also been very properly replied that the homage required does not seem to differ from that paid to Joseph by his brethren and by the Egyptians, or from those forms of civil reverence which the greatest saints of whom the Old Testament give them account, observed without scruple before their superiors. Ezra and Nehemiah, and even Mordecai himself, must have rendered the same homage to the king of Persia. It is answered that in these cases, with respect to the Persian monarch, the forms of approach may have been dispensed with, in the approach of the Jews. But this is gratuitous and exceedingly unlikely. It is not in evidence and cannot be accepted as truth. But what will utterly destroy this forced supposition is that Esther, in her first approach to the king, must have complied with the ceremonial, and she could not have been excused by her nation, for it was not known that she was a Jewess. And in all this she followed the counsel of Mordecai. What is still more, even after the nation of Esther was known, she not only did without scruple what Mordecai refused to Haman, but she prostrated herself before the king, "And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews" (Est 8:3). Here she submits to the humblest prostrations to the king. Mordecai refuses to stand up, or

even to move, in honour of Haman. Esther prostrates herself at the feet of Ahasuerus. It is utterly vain by special pleading to hope to save Mordecai in this matter.

This point is of no great importance in itself, but the forced interpretations and violent suppositions that are used in order to justify Mordecai is a specimen, in the disciples of Christ themselves, of the effects of human wisdom, to conform the Word of God to itself, *instead of implicitly bowing to its dictates*. Had the learned and good men who have recourse to this criticism, in order to justify a man of God, met with such an instance of outraging the inspired text, in the writings of the opposers of the doctrines of grace, they would have justly exclaimed with wonder, indignation, and horror. But they can consecrate the same licentious principle to make the text speak agreeably to their own wisdom. I have often observed, that in vindicating their own errors, the disciples of Christ avail themselves of the most licentious of the principles of criticism, which are the usual recourse of the wildest heretics. On the contrary, the man of God ought to accustom himself in all things to conform himself to the Word of God, to make his own wisdom bow to the Scriptures, and to *receive implicitly whatsoever they teach*.

Here then, we see that even the ignorance of God's people is employed to fulfill His purposes. Mordecai's ignorance was *sinful*, but had he been better instructed in his duty, he could not have been employed on this occasion. Many a piece of service God has, in every age, allotted to some of His people, for which they are fitted by their ignorance. That He should bestow gifts on His people, to enable them to fill the station allotted to them, is not a matter of surprise to any, but that the very ignorance of His people should fit them for certain situations for which He has designed them, could hardly be anticipated.

From this fact we may also perceive that our ignorance of duty may frequently bring danger and persecution upon ourselves and the whole body of Christians with which we are connected. Haman's resolution to destroy the whole Jewish nation was occasioned by Mordecai's refusal to honour him. It is true, indeed, commentators are willing to believe that Haman's including the whole Jewish nation with Mordecai was influenced by the conviction that they were all of the same sentiment on this subject. This, however, is not only not in evidence, but it is directly contrary to the reason assigned by the Holy Spirit in the narrative. "And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. And he *thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone*; for they had showed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai" (Est 3:5-6).

Mordecai is then fully chargeable with all the natural effects of his ignorance, even though a merciful Providence prevented the execution of threatened vengeance. When an ill-informed Christian manifests a refractory, unsubmitting spirit towards his superiors, it brings odium and persecution on all connected with him. That God should give the government of the world to His enemies, and demand submission to the wicked, is not what the wisdom of this world could expect. If Christians will listen to the counsel of their own hearts, rather than to the dictates of the divine Word, they will think it very unreasonable that the children of the great King, the heirs of God, should tamely yield to the evil men in power and honour their persecutors. But such is the law of *that* kingdom which is not of *this* world. That spirit that refuses honour to worthless men in power is not the spirit of the Gospel. That proud and insolent piety that refuses the customary tokens of respect even to majesty was not practised by the patriarchs nor was it inculcated by the apostles. If it finds shelter in the conduct of Mordecai, it ought to be known that it is sanctioned only by Mordecai's sin.

The next providential circumstance we shall review is Esther's concealing of her kindred. Had it been known to Haman that Esther was a Jewess, and the near kinswoman of Mordecai, he certainly would not have attempted any violent measures against either Mordecai or the Jews. Notwithstanding his mortification on account of the insult, he would have found it prudent to smother his resentment or to gratify it in a more indirect way. He could not have expected to prevail, as long as Esther retained any share of the affections of the king. Mordecai's intention in enjoining Esther to conceal her descent, was, no doubt, lest her being a captive Jewess might prevent her advancement to the situation of queen. The odium of her religion, as well as the captivity of her nation, would appear to him to stand in the way of her elevation. God's intention by that concealment was to preclude a circumstance that would have prevented the danger of His people. He designed to bring them to the very brink of ruin, that He might manifest His power in their deliverance. It was ignorance and carnal policy in Mordecai, yet in another view, *it was ordained by God* for a wise purpose.

From this we may see that worldly policy in religion naturally leads to disappointment and trouble. When by their wisdom, Christians seek preferment, or endeavour to escape the cross, *by concealing any part of the truth*, they are generally preparing a scourge for their own back. Esther, by the advice of Mordecai, concealed her religion for the purpose of obtaining a situation that would enable her to protect the cause and people of God, but by that concealment the ruin of her whole nation would have been effected, had not a merciful God interposed to ward off the intended blow. Every means contrary to the Word of God promises affliction to the people of God. Believers who conceal the truth to obtain any worldly advantage may congratulate their policy when they succeed, but let them look about, for danger and sorrow are pursuing them. They have made a pit in which they will sink if a merciful God prevent not the natural tendency of their conduct.

From the bold and independent spirit of Mordecai, we may reasonably infer that his desire of the advancement of his kinswoman was more influenced by zeal for the good of his nation than by any views of private advancement. The advantage of her exaltation to the cause of the captive Jews would blind him to his sin. How often do Christians, reasoning on the same principle, overlook the laws of God! Jesus Christ, by His apostles, separated His disciples from the world for observance of the ordinances of His kingdom, but human wisdom has violated this order, and sought protection and power to the cause of God, *through a marriage with the world*. In the writings of the apostles, we everywhere meet with the distinction between Christ's people, who are called "Christians," "believers," "saints," and the rest of mankind, who are called "the world," those who are without, etc. But by the marriage of Esther with Ahasuerus, there is now no world. There are none without, for every man in Christendom either belongs to what is called the church or may belong to it if he chooses. That this marriage has produced some good effects, I am not the person to deny. It may often have been *a shield* to the people of God. But with all the advantages that it has ever had, the bans are forbidden, for the marriage is contrary to the Word of God. None ought to have a place in the church of Christ but such as appear to be His disciples. When the Lord shall stand upon the wall that was made by a plumb-line, with a plumb-line in His hand, the high places of Israel shall be desolate and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, Amos 7:7. *The greatest possible good to the cause of God cannot justify the smallest deviation from His commands. Let the ark of God itself fall, rather than attempt to uphold it with a human hand.*

Let us adore the mercy of our God who steps forward in the time of our danger to rescue us from the consequences of our own policy. He might justly have given up Mordecai and Esther to reap the reward of their sin. But as their conduct was the effect of ignorance [in contrast from

presumptuous defiance—A.W.P.], He saves them from ruin and promotes them to honour. Their devotedness to the cause of God is unquestionable. He forgets not the glory of His own name, and though His people are ignorant and sinful, He looks to the perfection of the righteousness of their Substitute, His own dearly beloved Son.

Not only was the great elevation of Haman providential, the commandment of the king for all to reverence him in a marked manner was also directed by the divine counsel. The favour of the king would indeed naturally have procured respect for the object of it, but the royal command made the neglect a breach of the laws of the king and exposed it to the notice of the other servants, who made it known to Haman. “Why transgressest thou the king’s commandment?” (Est 3:3) is a question which shows that the offence was considered not a breach of courtesy merely, but the violation of the royal authority. Without this commandment, Mordecai might have escaped. That Haman was immediately informed of the people to whom Mordecai belonged was also providential, for he had not previously known this. Had not this been discovered, the body of the Jewish nation would have escaped the dangers to which Mordecai was exposed. But a wise Providence took care that this fact should not lie hid, that His name might be glorified in the salvation of His people, and in the destruction of their enemies. Why was Esther’s descent unknown, though she was advanced to the consort to majesty, while Mordecai’s was notified as soon as his offense? Yet the other servants themselves had not previously known this. It was on this very occasion that he himself discovered his kindred, “For he had told them that he was a Jew” (Est 3:4). Here we see that as the caution of Mordecai in advising Esther to conceal her nation was the means of bringing it into the utmost danger of total extinction, his voluntary discovery of his descent was now to have the same effect. The utmost exertions of human wisdom may often be employed to bring about what they are intended to prevent.

But what above all calls for our wonder is that a monarch, who ought to consider himself the father of all his people, shall, for no purpose but the gratification of a wicked favourite, give up a whole nation to perdition. If no sentiments of duty or of pity had any weight with him, why did not his interest as a sovereign forbid his compliance with the cruel request? Yet, in defiance of every principle of humanity, justice, and policy—without even the pretense of any misconduct—he gave the lives of the whole Jewish nation, “both young and old, little children and women” (Est 3:13), a present to his unprincipled favourite. The unsubstantial reasons alleged are not weighed but received implicitly, without examination. After all, there is nothing in the history to show that Ahasuerus was a cruel or tyrannical man. His conduct in this instance is an easy, unsuspecting compliance, in a matter that required the utmost deliberation and caution. Let us attend a moment to the argument employed by the crafty favourite to overreach his master and destroy the people of God. “And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king’s laws: therefore it is not for the king’s profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king’s treasuries” (Est 3:8-9).

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

2. Its Meaning

Deliverance from the condemning sentence of the divine law is the fundamental blessing in divine salvation—so long as we continue under the curse, we can neither be holy nor happy. But as to the precise nature of that deliverance, as to exactly what it consists of, as to the ground on which it is obtained, and as to the means whereby it is secured, much confusion now obtains. Most of the errors which have been prevalent on this subject arose from the lack of a clear view of the thing itself, and until we really understand what justification is, we are in no position to either affirm or deny anything concerning it. We therefore deem it requisite to devote a whole article unto a careful defining and explaining this word “justification,” endeavouring to show both what it signifies and what it does not connote.

Between Protestants and Romanists there is a wide difference of opinion as to the meaning of the term “justify.” They affirming that to justify is to *make* inherently righteous and holy. We insisting that to justify signifies only to formally *pronounce* just or legally *declare* righteous. Popery includes under justification the renovation of man’s moral nature or deliverance from depravity, thereby confounding justification with regeneration and sanctification. On the other hand, all representative Protestants have shown that justification refers not to a change of moral character, but to a change of legal status, though allowing, yea, insisting, that a radical change of character invariably *accompanies* it. It is a legal change from a state of guilt and condemnation to a state of forgiveness and acceptance, and this change is owing solely to a gratuitous act of God, founded upon the righteousness of Christ (they having *none* of their own) being imputed to His people.

“We simply explain justification to be an acceptance by which God receives us into His favour and esteems us as righteous persons, and we say that it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ....Justification, therefore, is no other than an acquittal from guilt of him who was accused, as though his innocence has been proved. Since God, therefore, justifies us through the mediation of Christ, He acquits us, not by an admission of our personal innocence, but by an imputation of righteousness, so that we, who are unrighteous in ourselves, are considered as righteous in Christ” (John Calvin, 1559).

“What is justification? Answer: Justification is an act of God’s free grace unto sinners, in which He pardoneth all their sins, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in His sight, not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone” (Westminster Catechism, 1643).

“We thus define the Gospel justification of a sinner—It is a judicial, but gracious act of God, whereby the elect and believing sinner is absolved from the guilt of his sins, and hath a right to eternal life adjudged to him, on account of the obedience of Christ, received by faith” (Hermann Witsius, 1693).

“A person is said to be justified when he is approved of God as free from the guilt of sin and its deserved punishment, and as having that righteousness belonging to him that entitles to the reward of life” (Jonathan Edwards, 1750).

Justification, then, 1. refers not to any subjective change wrought in a person’s disposition, but is solely an objective change in his standing in relation to the law. That to justify cannot possibly signify to *make* a person inherently righteous or good is most clearly to be seen from the usage of the term itself in Scripture. For example, in Proverbs 17:15, we read, “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.” Now obviously he who shall *make* a “wicked” person just is far from being an “abomination to the LORD,” but he who knowingly pronounces a wicked person to be righteous is obnoxious to Him. Again; in Luke 7:29, we read, “And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God.” How impossible it is to make the words “justified God” signify any moral transformation in His character, but understand those words to mean that they *declared* Him to be righteous, and all ambiguity is removed. Once more, in 1 Timothy 3:16, we are told that the incarnate Son was “justified in [or “by”] the Spirit,” that is to say, He was publicly vindicated at His resurrection, exonerated from the blasphemous charges which the Jews had laid against Him.

Justification has to do solely with the *legal* side of salvation. It is a judicial term, a word of the law courts. It is the sentence of a judge upon a person who has been brought before him for judgment. It is that gracious act of God as Judge, in the high court of heaven, by which He pronounces an elect and believing sinner to be freed from the penalty of the law and fully restored unto the divine favour. It is the declaration of God that the party arraigned is fully conformed to the law. Justice exonerates him because justice has been satisfied. Thus, justification is that change of status whereby one, who being guilty before God, and therefore under the condemning sentence of His law and deserving of nought but an eternal banishment from His presence, is received into His favour and given a right unto all the blessings which Christ has, by His perfect satisfaction, purchased for His people.

In substantiation of the above definition, the meaning of the term “justify” may be determined, first, *by its usage in Scripture*. “And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we *clear* [this Hebrew word “tsadaq” always signifies “justify”] ourselves?” (Gen 44:16). Here we have an affair which was entirely a *judicial* one. Judah and his brethren were arraigned before the governor of Egypt and they were concerned as to how they might procure a *sentence in their favour*. “If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked” (Deu 25:1). Here again we see plainly that the term is a forensic one, used in connection with the proceedings of law-courts, implying a process of investigation and judgment. God here laid down a rule to govern the judges in Israel. They must not “justify” or pass a sentence in favour of the wicked, compare 1 Kings 8:31-32.

“If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse” (Job 9:20). The first member of this sentence is explained in the second—“justify” there cannot signify to make holy, but to pronounce a sentence in my own favour. “Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu...against Job...because he justified himself rather than God” (Job 32:2), which obviously means, because he vindicated himself rather than God. “That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest” (Psa 51:4), which signifies that God, acting in His judicial office, might be pronounced righteous in passing sentence. “But wisdom is justified of her children” (Mat 11:19), which means that they who are truly regenerated by God have *accounted* the wisdom of God (which the scribes and Pharisees

reckoned foolishness) to be, as it really is, consummate wisdom. They cleared it of the calumny of folly.

2. The precise force of the term “to justify” may be ascertained by noting that it is *the antithesis of “to condemn.”* Now to condemn is not a process by which a good man is made bad, but is *the sentence* of a judge upon one because he is a transgressor of the law. “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD” (Pro 17:15 and cf. Deu 25:1). “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Mat 12:37). “It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth” (Rom 8:33-34). Now it is undeniable that “condemnation” is the passing of a sentence against a person by which the punishment prescribed by the law is awarded to him and ordered to be inflicted upon him. Therefore justification is *the passing of a sentence* in favour of a person, by which the *reward* prescribed by the law is ordered to be given to him.

3. That justification is not an experimental change from sin to holiness, but a judicial change from guilt to no-condemnation may be evidenced by *the equivalent terms used for it.* For example, in Romans 4:6, we read, “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works”—so that legal “righteousness” is not a habit infused into the heart, but a gift transferred to our account. In Romans 5:9-10, to be “justified by Christ’s blood” is the same as being “reconciled by his death,” and reconciliation is not a transformation of character, but the effecting of peace by the removal of all that causes offense.

4. From the fact that the judicial side of our salvation is propounded in Scripture under the figures of *a forensic trial and sentence.* “(1) A judgment is supposed in it, concerning which the Psalmist prays that it may not proceed on the terms of the law, Psalm 143:2. (2) The Judge is God Himself, Isaiah 50:7-8. (3) The tribunal whereon God sits in judgment is the throne of grace, Hebrews 4:16. (4) A guilty person. This is the sinner, who is so guilty of sin as to be obnoxious to the judgment of God, Romans 3:19. (5) Accusers are ready to propose and promote the charge against the guilty person—these are the law (Joh 5:45), conscience (Rom 2:15), and Satan, Zechariah 3:2, Revelation 12:10. (6) The charge is admitted and drawn up in a ‘handwriting’ in form of law, and is laid before the tribunal of the Judge, in bar to the deliverance of the offender, Colossians 2:14. (7) A plea is prepared in the Gospel for the guilty person. This is grace, through the blood of Christ, the ransom paid, the eternal righteousness brought in by the Surety of the covenant, Romans 3:23-25; Daniel 9:24. (8) Hereunto alone the sinner betakes himself, renouncing all other apologies or defensitives whatever, Psalm 130:2-3; Luke 18:13. (9) To make this plea effectual, we have an Advocate with the Father, and He pleads His own propitiation for us, 1 John 2:1-2. (10) The sentence hereon is absolution, on account of the sacrifice and righteousness of Christ, with acceptation into favour, as persons approved of God, Romans 8:33-34; 2 Corinthians 5:21” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

From what has been before us, we may perceive what justification *is not.* First, *it differs from regeneration.* “Whom he called, them he also justified” (Rom 8:30). Though inseparably connected, effectual calling or the new birth and justification are quite distinct. The one is never apart from the other, yet they must not be confounded. In the order of nature, regeneration precedes justification, though it is in no sense the cause or ground of it—none is justified till he believes and none believe till quickened. Regeneration is the act of the Father (Jam 1:18), justification is the sentence of the Judge. The one gives me a place in God’s family, the other secures me a standing before His throne. The one is internal, being the impartation of divine life to my soul. The other is external, being the imputation of Christ’s obedience to my account. By

the one, I am drawn to return in penitence to the Father's house, by the other I am given the "best robe" which fits me for His presence.

Second, *it differs from sanctification*. Sanctification is moral or experimental, justification is legal or judicial. Sanctification results from the operation of the Spirit *in* me, justification is based upon what Christ has done *for* me. The one is gradual and progressive, the other is instantaneous and immutable. The one admits of degrees and is never perfect in this life. The other is complete and admits of no addition. The one concerns my *state*, the other has to do with my *standing* before God. Sanctification produces a moral transformation of *character*, justification is a change of legal *status*. It is a change from guilt and condemnation to forgiveness and acceptance, and this solely by a gratuitous act of God, founded upon the imputation of Christ's righteousness, through the instrument of faith alone. Though justification is quite separate from sanctification, yet sanctification ever *accompanies* it.

Third, *it differs from forgiveness*. In some things they agree. It is only God who can forgive sins (Mar 2:7) and He alone can justify (Rom 3:30). His free grace is the sole moving cause in the one (Eph 1:7) and of the other (Rom 3:24). The blood of Christ is the procuring cause of each alike, Matthew 26:28, Romans 5:9. The objects are the same—the persons that are pardoned are justified, and the same that are justified are pardoned. To whom God imputes the righteousness of Christ for their justification, to them He gives the remission of sins, and to whom He does not impute sin, but forgives it, to them He imputes righteousness without works, Romans 4:6-8. Both are received by faith, Acts 26:18; Romans 5:1. But though they agree in these things, in others they differ.

God is said to be "justified" (Rom 3:4), but it would be blasphemy to speak of *Him* being "pardoned"—this at once shows the two things are diverse. A criminal may be pardoned, but only a righteous person can truly be justified. Forgiveness deals only with a man's acts, justification with the man himself. Forgiveness respects the claims of mercy, justification those of justice. Pardon only remits the curse due unto sin. In addition, justification confers a title to heaven. Justification applies to the believer with respect to the claims of the law, pardon with respect to the Author of the law. The law does not pardon, for it knows no relaxation, but God pardons the transgressions of the law in His people by providing a satisfaction to the law adequate to their transgressions. The blood of Christ was sufficient to procure pardon (Eph 1:7), but His righteousness is needed for justification (Rom 5:19). Pardon takes away the filthy garments, but justification provides a change of raiment (Zec 3:4). Pardon frees from death (2Sa 12:13), but righteousness imputed is called "justification of life" (Rom 5:18). The one views the believer as completely sinful, the other as completely righteous. Pardon is the remission of punishment, justification is the declaration that no ground for the infliction of punishment exists. Forgiveness may be repeated unto seventy times seven, justification is once for all.

From what has been said in the last paragraph, we may see what a serious mistake it is to limit justification to the mere forgiveness of sins. Just as "condemnation" is not the execution of punishment, but rather the formal declaration that the accused is guilty and worthy of punishment, so "justification" is not merely the remission of punishment, but the judicial announcement that punishment cannot be justly inflicted—the accused being fully conformed to all the positive requirements of the law in consequence of Christ's perfect obedience being legally reckoned to his account. The justification of a believer is no other than his being admitted to participate in the reward merited by his Surety. Justification is nothing more or less than the righteousness of Christ being imputed to us. The negative blessing issuing therefrom is the remission of sins—the positive, a title to the heavenly inheritance.

Beautifully has it been pointed out that, “We cannot separate from Immanuel His own essential excellency. We may see Him bruised and given like beaten incense to the fire, but was incense ever burned without fragrance, and only fragrance being the result? The name of Christ not only cancels sin, it supplies in the place of that which it has canceled, its own everlasting excellency. We cannot have its nullifying power only, the other is the sure concomitant. So was it with every typical sacrifice of the law. It was stricken, but as being spotless, it was burned on the altar for a sweet-smelling savor. The savor ascended as a memorial before God. It was accepted for, and its value was attributed or imputed to him who had brought the vicarious victim. If therefore, we reject the imputation of righteousness, we reject sacrifice as revealed in Scripture, for Scripture knows of no sacrifice whose efficacy is so exhausted in the removal of guilt as to leave nothing to be presented in acceptableness before God” (Benjamin W. Newton).

“What is placing our righteousness in the obedience of Christ, but asserting that we are accounted righteous only because His obedience is accepted for us as if it were our own? Wherefore Ambrose appears to me to have very beautifully exemplified this righteousness in the benediction of Jacob—that as he, who had on his own account no claim to the privileges of primogeniture, being concealed in his brother’s habit, and invested with his garment, which diffused a most excellent odor, insinuated himself into the favour of his father, that he might receive the benediction to his own advantage, under the character of another—so we shelter ourselves under the precious purity of Christ” (John Calvin, 1509-1564).

PREACHING THE LAW

(Completed)

2. Explain *the inexorable demands of the law*. It requires perfect, perpetual, personal obedience. It is given for the regulation of all the faculties and powers of the creature, and all their exercises and conduct, both internal and external, both of the thoughts and motions of the heart, and all their outward behaviour. It is the one unchanging rule of every moral agent, in all places and at all times, not leaving him at liberty to act without regard to the law in any one instance, so long as he exists. No allowance is made for the slightest infraction. The obedience which it requires is not a forced or feigned obedience, but must be a cordial and loving one.

3. Expound *its spirituality and extent*. The law of God is a perfect rule, being neither too strict nor too lax. It requires not too much or too little in any instance, but points out and prescribes what is exactly right and fit in all cases. Hence every voluntary exercise of the creature is either in perfect conformity to it, and so is perfectly right, or so far as it is not so, is wrong and a violation of it. There is no medium between right and wrong, between virtue and sin. God requireth truth in the *inward parts* (Psa 51:6), and every ungodly thought, imagination, or desire is a violation of the law, Matthew 5:22-48.

4. Announce *its fearful curse*. There is a dreadful penalty annexed to God’s law, which consists in a threat to the disobedient, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which

are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal 3:10). This is peculiar to a law. Where a rule and directory of conduct is given, and where it is clothed with authority, it must be enforced by the authority of the legislator. A rule which carried in it no threat to the transgressor is clothed with no authority at all, has not the force of a law. The penalty (or evil threatened) by God’s law corresponds exactly to the authority of the Law-Giver and the just desert of the transgressor. It cannot be anything short of *eternal* punishment, *infinite* misery.

5. Insist that *every member of the human race is under* God’s law and will yet be judged by it. Show that this *must* be so, for otherwise there would be no rule by which our actions could be squared, and the whole of our conduct would possess no moral quality. “Where no law is, there is no transgression” (Rom 4:15). “Sin is not imputed when there is no law” (Rom 5:13), but God *does* “impute” sin to all men, therefore all men must be under His law. Were it otherwise, they would be irresponsible and sinless creatures. Romans 3:19 makes it plain that “all the world” is under the law and under its curse.

6. Point out that *Christ did not abolish the law*. He expressly announced, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill” (Mat 5:17). The very phrasing of this declaration shows that men *do* “think” He came here to abrogate God’s law, but their thoughts are utterly erroneous and highly insulting to the holy Son of God. Instead of abolishing the law, Christ constantly expounded and enforced it, and was Himself subject to the law, as a perfect example for us to follow. Nor has Christ delivered His people from the law as a rule of life, 1 Corinthians 9:21.

7. Show *what is that salvation* which Christ came to purchase for His people. First, the gift of His Spirit (Act 2:33), to overcome their enmity against God’s law (Rom 8:7), and to work in them a love for it (Rom 7:22). It is by *this* we may know whether we have been regenerated. Second, to bring us into a hearty and cordial consent to the law, so that each true Christian can say, “So then with the mind I myself *serve the law of God*” (Rom 7:25). Third, to deliver from the curse by dying for our sins of disobedience against the law, Himself enduring its penalty in our stead, Galatians 3:13.

Only as the first five points above are faithfully preached is any real foundation laid for the Gospel message! Without that foundation, the preacher is building a house which will not stand. Yea, he is throwing dust in the eyes of the people, bolstering them up in a false hope. Until the law is given its proper place in the pulpit, and is preached regularly, plainly, authoritatively, the tide of lawlessness which has swept over this favoured land (and throughout all the so-called “civilized nations”), will continue rising higher and higher. Well may we pray, “It is time for thee, LORD, to work: *for they have made void thy law*” (Psa. 119:126).

SUBMISSION TO OUR SOVEREIGN

“Our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased” (Psa 115:3). Being God, He consults no one. Yet being omniscient and infinitely holy, He does only that which is good and right. But we are finite creatures. Yea, fallen creatures and sin has darkened our understanding. Therefore *we* are quite incompetent to gauge or grasp *God’s* ways, and to criticize

or murmur against them is the height of impiety and wickedness, “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” (Rom 9:20). True spirituality and practical godliness consist in *yielding ourselves* to the sovereign and perfect will of God, bowing submissively unto whatever He lays upon us, seeking grace to do whatever He commands us.

Much that God does is displeasing to the flesh, and sin within rises up and rebels. This is the very nature of sin—to oppose God, to be dissatisfied with His appointments. Daily does the Christian need to ask God to lay His cooling and quietening hand upon him. Daily does he need to beg Him to increase his faith, so that his *confidence in Him* may be so entire that he will not call into question any of His dealings with him, but rather will say with Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). *That* is the great secret of real and lasting peace of heart. But *that* is something to which all the unregenerate are total strangers, though they will not acknowledge it, and try hard to conceal it. A heart which is truly at rest is one that realizes that *God* (and not the devil) is on the throne of the universe, directing all things by His unerring wisdom and making *all* things “work together for good” unto His own people.

It is true that even to the Christian many of God’s ways are profoundly mysterious. If they were not, there would be no room for the exercise of *faith*. If the writer or the reader were on the throne and had *all* power at his disposal, he would order things in this world very different from what they now are. Yes, and that would only manifest what a *fool* he is. How so? Because Perfect Wisdom *is* now directing all the concerns of every life and all the affairs of this world as a whole, and therefore the very desire to alter what is, only exhibits our folly. *Faith* knows that unerring wisdom is regulating all things, that One too wise to err holds the helm in His hand, and that He “doeth all things well” see Mar 7:37 11:43. Though to sight and sense things *seem* to be all out of order, though human reason is quite unable to perceive the perfection of God’s governmental ways and providential dealings, faith *knows* that, “of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things” (Rom 11:36).

God could put an end to all sin in the world right now did He so please. So too He could save every sinner on earth this moment did He so choose. As to *why* He does not do so, we cannot tell, nor is it any of *our* business! Our business is not to mount the bench and pass judgment on the ways and dealings of the Most High—that is what the devil once sought to do and it resulted in his eternal undoing. Our business is to be clay in the hands of the Potter, to murmuringly submit to His holy and sovereign pleasure, to lie passive, and be molded by Him. Our business is to take our place in the dust before the Almighty, and say, “Lord, in Thy mercy subdue my rebellious will, quieten my restless soul, purify my unbelieving heart.” Our business is to delight ourselves in *the Lord* (Psa 37:4), and to *give thanks* “always for *all* things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 5:20).

We live in the midst of a rebellious generation who are ever murmuring and complaining at God’s appointments—grumbling at *His* weather, chaffing at His restrictions, belching forth their discontent every time He crosses *their* wills. Verily, “The poison of asps is under their lips” (Rom 3:13). And my reader, unless we are constantly on our guard, we shall be corrupted by them, learn their evil ways, and acquire their wicked speech. Our safeguard is to have as little to do with them as possible and to cultivate more and more communion with Him who never murmured, but always delighted in the Father’s will.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

“For the kingdom of God [or our service to Christ] is not [consists not in] meat and drink; but *righteousness*, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men” (Rom 14: 17-18). By which word “*righteousness*,” he meaneth, as James doth, the royal law, the perfect law, which is the moral precept evangelized or delivered to us by the hand of Christ (Jam 2:8-9). The law was given *twice* at Sinai. The last time it was given with a proclamation of grace and mercy of God, and of the pardon of sins going before, Exodus 19 and 34:1-10. The *second* giving is here intended, for so it cometh after faith, which first receiveth the proclamation of forgiveness. Hence we are said to do this “righteousness” in the joy and peace of the Holy Spirit. Now he that in these things serveth Christ, is accepted of God, and approved of men. For who is he that can justly find fault with him that fulfilleth the royal law from a principle of faith and love? “If ye fulfill the royal law according to the Scriptures—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself—ye do well” ye are approved of men. Again, he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law, for love is the fulfilling of the law. He then that serveth Christ according to the royal law, from faith and love going before, he is a fit person for church communion. God accepteth him, men approve him. Now, that the royal law is *the moral precept*, read James 2:8-12. It is also called the “law of liberty,” because the bondage is taken away by forgiveness going before and this it is by which we are judged.—John Bunyan, 1660.



May

THE HOLY SPIRIT

16. The Spirit Quickening (Part 1)

In this article, we shall confine ourselves to *the initial* operation of the Spirit within the elect of God. Different writers have employed the term “regeneration” with varying latitude—some restricting it unto a single act, others including the whole process by which one becomes a conscious child of God. This has hindered close accuracy of thought and has introduced considerable confusion through the confounding of things which, though intimately related, are quite distinct. Not only has confusion of thought resulted from a loose use of terms, but serious divisions among professing saints have issued therefrom. We believe that much if not all of this would have been avoided had theologians discriminated more sharply and clearly between the principle of grace (spiritual life) which the Spirit first imparts unto the soul and His consequent stirrings of that principle into exercise.

In earlier years, we did not ourselves perceive the distinction which is pointed by John 6:63 and 1 Peter 1:23—the former referring unto the initial act of the Spirit in “quickenings” the spiritually-dead soul, the latter having in view the consequent “birth” of the same. While it is freely allowed that *the origin* of the “new creature” is shrouded in impenetrable mystery, yet of this we may be certain, that *life precedes birth*. There is a strict analogy between the natural birth and the spiritual—necessarily so, for God is the Author of them both and He ordained that the former should adumbrate the latter. Birth is neither the cause nor the beginning of life itself, rather is it the *manifestation* of a life already existent. There had been a divine “quickenings” before the child could issue from the womb. In like manner, the Holy Spirit “quickens” the soul, or imparts spiritual life to it, *before* its possessor is “brought forth” (as James 1:18 is rightly rendered in the R.V.) and “born again” by the Word of God (1Pe 1:23).

James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:23, and parallel passages *refer not* to the original communication of spiritual life to the soul, but rather to our being enabled to act from that life and induced to love and obey God by means of the Word of truth, which presupposes a principle of grace already planted in the heart. In His work of illumination, conviction, conversion, and sanctification, the Spirit uses the Word as the means thereto, but in His initial work of “quickenings,” He employs no means, operating immediately or directly upon the soul. First there is a “new creation” (2Co 5:17; Eph 2:10) and then the “new creature” is stirred into exercise. Faith and all other graces *are*

wrought in us by the Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word, but *not so* with the principle of life and grace from which these graces proceed.

In His work of “quickenings,” by which we mean the impartation of spiritual life to the soul, the Spirit acts immediately from within and not by applying something from without. Quickening is a *direct* operation of the Spirit without the use of any instrument. The Word is used by Him afterwards to call into exercise the life then communicated. “Regeneration is a direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human spirit. It is the action of Spirit upon spirit, of a divine Person upon a human person, whereby spiritual life is imparted. Nothing, therefore, of the nature of means or instruments can come between the Holy Spirit and the soul that is made alive. God did not employ an instrument or means when He infused physical life into the body of Adam. There were only two factors—the dust of the ground and the creative power of God which vivified that dust. The divine omnipotence and dead matter were brought into direct contact, with nothing interposing. The dust was not a means or instrument by which God originated life. So, too, in regeneration there are only two factors—the human soul destitute of spiritual life and the Holy Spirit who quickens it.

“The word and truth of God, the most important of all means of grace, is not a means of regeneration, *as distinct from* conviction, conversion, and sanctification. This is evident when we remember that it is the office of a means or instrument to excite or stimulate an *already existing* principle of life. Physical food is a means of physical growth, but it supposes physical vitality. If the body is dead, bread cannot be a means or instrument. Intellectual truth is a means of intellectual growth, but it supposes intellectual vitality. If the mind be idiotic, secular knowledge cannot be a means or instrument. Spiritual truth is a means of spiritual growth, in case there be spiritual vitality. But if the mind be dead to righteousness, spiritual truth cannot be a means or instrument.

“The unenlightened understanding is unable to apprehend and the unregenerate will is unable to believe. Vital force is lacking in these two principal factors. What is needed at this point is life and force itself. Consequently, the Author of spiritual life Himself must operate directly, without the use of means or instruments, and outright give spiritual life and power from the dead—that is, *ex nihilo*. The new life is not imparted because man perceives the truth, but he perceives the truth because the new life is imparted. A man is not regenerated because he has first believed in Christ, but he believes in Christ because he has been regenerated” (W.T. Shedd, Presbyterian, 1889).

Under the guise of honoring the written word, many have (no doubt unwittingly) dishonored the Holy Spirit. The idea which seems to prevail in “orthodox” circles today is that all which is needed for the salvation of souls is to give out the Word in its purity, God being pledged to bless the same. How often we have heard it said, “The Word will do its own work.” Many suppose that the Scriptures are quite sufficient of themselves to communicate light to those in darkness and life to those who are dead in sins. But the record which we have of Christ’s life ought at once to correct such a view—who preached the Word as faithfully as He, yet how very few were saved during His three and a half years’ ministry!

The parable of the sower exposes the fallacy of the theory now so widely prevailing. The “seed” sown is the Word. It was scattered upon various kinds of ground, yet notwithstanding the purity and vitality of the seed, where the soil was unfavorable, no increase issued therefrom. Until the ground was made good, the seed yielded no increase. That seed might be watered by copious showers and warmed by a genial sun, but while the soil was bad there could be no harvest. *The ground must be changed* before it can be fertile. Nor is it the seed which *changes the soil*. What

farmer would ever think of saying, “The seed will change the soil”? Make no mistake upon this point—the Holy Spirit must first quicken the dead soul into newness of life *before* the Word obtains any entrance.

To say that life is communicated to the soul by the Spirit’s application of the Word, and then to affirm that it is the principle of life which gives efficacy to the Word, is but to reason in a circle. The Word cannot profit any soul spiritually until it be “mixed with faith” (Heb 4:2), and faith cannot be put forth unless it proceeds from a principle of life and grace, and therefore that principle of life is not produced by it. “We might as well suppose that the presenting of a picture to a man who is blind can enable him to see, as we can suppose that the presenting of the Word in an objective way is the instrument whereby God produces the internal principle by which we are enabled to embrace it” (Thos. Ridgley, Presbyterian, 1730—quoted by us to show we are not here inculcating some *new* doctrine).

Yet notwithstanding what has been pointed out above, many are likely to still insist upon the quickening power which inheres in the Word itself, reminding us that *its* voice is that of the Almighty. This we freely and fully acknowledge, but do not all the unregenerate resist and refuse to heed that Voice? How, then, is that opposition to be *removed*? Take an illustration. Suppose the window of my room is darkened by an iron wall before it. The sun’s beams beat upon it, but still the wall remains. Were it of ice, it would melt away, but the nature of iron is to harden and not soften under the influence of heat. How, then, is the sun to enter my room? Only by removing that wall—a direct power must be put forth for its destruction. In like manner, the deadly enmity of the sinner must be removed by the immediate operation of the Spirit, communicating life, before the Word enters and affects him.

“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness” (Mat 6:22-23). By the “eye” is not here meant the mind only, but the disposition of the heart, cf. Mark 7:22. Here Christ tells us *in what* man’s blindness consists, namely, *the evil disposition of his heart*, and that the only way to remove the darkness, and let in the light, is *to change the heart*. An “evil eye” is not cured or its darkness removed merely by casting light upon it any more than the rays of the sun communicate sight unto one whose visive faculty is dead. The eye must be cured, made “single,” and then it is capable of receiving the light.

“It is said the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, *that* she attended unto the things that were spoken by Paul, see Act 16:14. It would be a contradiction, and very absurd, to say that God’s Word spoken by Paul was that by which her heart was opened, for she knew not what he did speak until her heart was opened to attend to his words and understand them. Her heart was first opened *in order to* his words having any effect or giving any light to her. And this must be done by an *immediate* operation of the Spirit of God on her heart. This was the regeneration now under consideration, by which her heart was renewed, and formed *unto* true discerning like the single eye” (Samuel Hopkins, 1792).

The soul, then, is quickened into newness of life by the direct and supernatural operation of the Spirit, without any medium or means whatever. It is not accomplished by the light of the Word, for it is His very imparting of life which fits the heart to receive the light. This initial work of the Spirit is absolutely indispensable *in order to* spiritual illumination. It is depravity or corruption of heart which holds the mind in darkness, and it is in *this* that un-regeneracy consists. It is just as absurd to speak of illumination being conveyed by the Word *in order to* a change of

heart, or the giving of a relish for spiritual things, as it would be to speak of giving the capacity to a man to taste the sweetness of honey while he was devoid of a palate.

No, men are not “quickened” *by* the Word, they must be quickened in order to receive and understand the Word. “And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God” (Jer 24:7). That statement would be quite meaningless if a saving knowledge of or experimental acquaintance with God were obtained through the Word *previous* to the “new heart” or spiritual life being given, and was the *means of* our being quickened. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Pro 1:7)—the “fear of the LORD” or divine grace communicated to the heart (spiritual life imparted) alone lays the foundation for spiritual knowledge and activities.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

77. The Faith of Rahab (11:31)

The inestimable value of spiritual faith is strikingly demonstrated in the case we are about to consider. The apostle had cited the faith of such illustrious characters as Enoch and Noah, Abraham and Moses. He had mentioned that of a believing company as they had passed through the Red Sea and had marched around Jericho. Now he gives an instance of one who had been a notorious sinner, as though to shame us if *our* faith falls short of hers who had formerly been an harlot. Having shown that the patriarchs, who were so highly venerated by the Jews, were honored by God solely on account of their faith and its fruits, we next behold how an alien woman, belonging to an accursed race, was, because of her faith, adopted into the Old Testament Church. “It hence follows that those who are most exalted are of no account before God unless they have faith, and that, on the other hand, those who are hardly allowed a place among the profane and the reprobate are by faith introduced into the company of angels” (John Calvin, 1509-1564).

Rahab was a Canaanite, and therefore by nature “an alien from the commonwealth of Israel” and “a stranger from the covenants of promise.” In her conversion and admission into the Old Testament Church, she was, in a peculiar manner, both a type and a pledge of the calling of *the Gentiles* and their reception into the Church of Christ in New Testament times. Thus did coming events cast their shadows before them. In such cases as Rahab and Ruth, God gave early intimations that His redemptive purpose was not confined to a single people, but that it would reach out unto individuals among all nations. Their incorporation among the Hebrews was a plain foreshadowment of the “wild olive tree” being grafted in and being made a partaker of “the root and fatness of the [good] olive tree” (Rom 11:17).

The salvation of Rahab was a signal instance of *the sovereignty* of God. “She was not only a Gentile, but an Amoritess, of that race and seed which in general was devoted unto utter destruction. She was therefore an instance of God’s sovereignty in dispensing with His positive

laws, as it seemed good unto Him. For of His own mere pleasure, He exempted her from the doom announced against all those of her original and traduction” (John Owen, 1616-1683). Being the supreme Potentate, God is not bound by any law or consideration other than His own imperial will and therefore does He have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardens, see Rom 9:18.

Most blessedly do we also behold here the amazing *grace* of God. Not only did Rahab belong to a heathen race, but she was an abandoned profligate, a “harlot.” In singling her out to be the recipient of His saving favors, God indeed made it evident that He is no respecter of persons. By her own choice, she was given up to the vilest of sins, but by the divine choice, she was predestinated to be delivered from that lust which is the most effective in detaining persons under its power, washing her whiter than snow by the precious blood of Christ, and giving her a place in His own family. It is in just such cases that the unmerited favour of God shines forth the more illustriously. There was nothing whatever in this poor fallen woman to commend her unto the favour of God, but where sin abounded grace did much more abound.

Not only may we behold in Rahab’s case the exercise of divine sovereignty and the manifestation of divine grace, but we may also pause and admire the wondrous working of God’s *power*. This is best perceived as we take into careful consideration the almost unparalleled element which enters into her case. Here the Holy Spirit wrought entirely apart from the ordinary means of grace. There were no Sabbaths observed in Jericho, there were no Scriptures available for reading, there were no prophets sounding forth messages from heaven. Nevertheless, Rahab was quickened into newness of life and brought into a saving knowledge of the true God. Let it be duly noted that this woman, who had previously wallowed in open sin, was regenerated and converted *before* the spies came to her house. Their visit simply afforded an opportunity for the avowal and public manifestation of her faith.

Let us also contemplate the marvelous workings of divine *providence* on this occasion. As the two spies, sent forth by Joshua to reconnoiter Jericho, drew near that heathen stronghold, they had no idea that one of God’s elect sojourned there, and had they been aware of the fact, they had no means of knowing how to locate her in a city of such size. Admire and adore, then, the secret hand of God which directed them to the very house in which His child abode. “The Lord knoweth them that are his,” (2Ti 2:19) and in the cloudy and dark day He searches them out. The same God who sent Ananias to the street called “Straight,” to deliver Saul from blindness, guided the two spies unto the house of Rahab to deliver her from death. In like manner, wherever there is one or more of His elect amid the darkness of heathendom, He sends His Word or His servants to enlighten and edify the same.

But it is with *the faith of Rahab* we must be chiefly engaged on this occasion. It will be observed that she is mentioned in Hebrews 11 *after* the destruction of Jericho, though “she received the spies in peace” before that city was destroyed. The reason for this is because her preservation—which was the fruit of her faith—was after the hosts of Israel had encompassed that city seven days. In seeking to ponder what is recorded in Scripture concerning the faith of Rahab, we propose to look separately at the ground, the effect, the nature, the confession, the breadth, the imperfection, and the reward of the same.

1. *The ground of her faith.* “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). This does not mean that faith is *originated* by hearing the Word of God, any more than the shining of the sun imparts light unto the eye. No, faith is imparted by a sovereign act of the Spirit, and then it is instructed and nourished by the Word. In the prophetic song of Moses at the

Red Sea, it was declared, “The people shall *hear, and be afraid*: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased” (Exo 15:14-16).

A striking fulfillment of the above prediction is found in the words of Rahab to the two spies, “I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath” (Jos 2:9-11). This it is which explains the reference in Hebrews 11:31 unto the other inhabitants of Jericho, who perished because they “believed not.” The knowledge which they had of God and His wondrous works, through the reports which had reached their ears, rendered them without excuse.

What has just been before us affords an example of a most solemn fact which is oft repeated—how souls are affected by the truth and how quickly the impressions made wear off. The inhabitants of Jericho were deeply stirred by the reports of God’s judgments upon the wicked. They feared it was their turn next and their hearts melted within them. How, then, are we to explain the fact that they did not all of them immediately and earnestly cry unto God for mercy? We believe the answer is found in Ecclesiastes 8:11, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” As the hosts of Israel encompassed Jericho each day and then returned quietly to their camp, space for repentance was granted its inhabitants, but when six days had passed, and the walls of the city remained as strong as ever, they felt quite secure, and hardened their hearts.

How, then, are we to account for the difference in Rahab? In this way—with them it was simply the stirrings of conscience and the workings of their natural fears, which soon subsided. But in her case, the power of the Holy Spirit had wrought within her—God had opened her heart, and consequently she “attended unto the things which were spoken” (Act 16:14). In other words, Rahab had been sovereignly quickened into newness of life, by which she was capacitated unto a saving knowledge of God Himself and the receiving His Word with meekness. Thus it was with the Thessalonian saints, whom the apostle reminded, “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also *in power*, and in the Holy Ghost” (1Th 1:5). It is only in *such* cases that a radical and lasting effect is produced.

We must learn, then, to distinguish between three things—the divine gift of faith, the foundation provided for its support, and the assurance that issues for its resting upon that foundation. The gift of faith is imparted at regeneration, being one of the attributes of the new nature, “All men have not faith” (2Th 3:2), because all are not born again. The firm foundation which is provided for faith to rest upon is the sure Word of God—by it alone is faith supported, instructed, and fed. The assurance which issues from faith’s resting upon this foundation is that confidence and certainty which fills the heart when God’s Word is received implicitly into it. Thus it was with Rahab. Quickened by the Spirit, faith was planted within her soul, hence when the report reached her of God’s wondrous works, she received it, “not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God,” (1Th 2:13), and therefore did she say, “*I know* that the LORD hath given you the land” (Jos 2:9).

2. *The effect of her faith.* The faith of God's elect is a living, energetic principle, which "worketh by love" (Gal 5:6) and produces fruit to the glory of God. Herein it differs radically from that notional and inoperative faith of frothy professors, which goes no deeper than an intellectual assenting to certain doctrinal propositions, and ends in fair but empty words. That faith which is unaccompanied by an obedient walk and abounds not in good works is "dead, being alone" (Jam 2:17). Different far was the faith of Rahab. Of her we read, "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" (Jam 2:25). This does not mean that her good works were the meritorious ground of her acceptance with God, but that they were the evidence before men that a spiritual principle had been communicated to her, the fruits of which justified or vindicated her profession, demonstrating that she was a member of "the household of faith" (Gal 6:10)

In "receiving the spies with peace," she made it manifest that she had a heart for the people of God and was ready to do all in her power to help them. That clause of our text which we are now considering summarizes all that is recorded of her kindly conduct unto those two men in Joshua 2. She welcomed them into her home, engaged them in spiritual conversation, made provision for their safety, hid them from danger, and refused to betray them. We believe there is a latent reference to her kindness (as well as to Abraham's) in Hebrews 13:1-3, for the word translated "messengers" in James 2:25 is the same as is rendered "angels" in Hebrews 13:2, "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." Alas, that so many professing Christians today, instead of heeding this exhortation, are almost ready to rend each other to pieces over every difference of opinion.

3. *The nature of her faith.* It was a *singular* faith. "The city of Jericho was about to be attacked. Within its walls there were hosts of people of all classes and characters, and they knew right well that if their city would be set upon and stormed, they would all be put to death. But yet strange to say, there was not one of them who repented of sin, or who even asked for mercy, except this woman who had been a harlot. She and she alone was delivered, a solitary one amongst a multitude. Now, have you ever felt that it is a very hard thing to have a singular faith? It is the easiest thing in the world to believe as everybody else believes, but the difficulty is to believe a thing alone, when no one else thinks as you think—to be the solitary champion of a righteous cause, when the enemy mustereth his thousands to the battle. Now this was the faith of Rahab. She had not one who felt as she did, who could enter into her feelings and realize the value of her faith. She stood alone. O it is a noble thing to be the lonely follower of despised truth.

"Rahab's faith was a *sanctifying* one. Did Rahab continue a harlot after she had faith? No, she did not. I do not believe she was a harlot at the time the men went to her house, though the name still stuck to her, as such ill names will, but I am sure she was not afterwards, for Salmon the prince of Judah married her... You cannot have faith and yet live in sin. To believe is to be holy. The two things go together. That faith is a dead faith, a corrupt faith, a rotten faith, which lives in sin that grace may abound. Rahab was a sanctified woman. O that God might sanctify some that are here" (C.H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892).

Hers was a *self-denying* faith. This is seen in her preferring the will of God before the safety of her country and sheltering these men who were strangers before the pleasing of her fellow-citizens. But it appeared most conspicuously in the venturing of her own life rather than to betray the messengers of Joshua, who were worshipers of the true God. Her action was fraught with the

most dangerous consequences to her, but her fidelity to God made her scorn the threats of her citizens, the promiscuous events of war, and the burning of her city. Thus, by faith she, in effect, renounced all for God. When He calls us to do so, we must part with all that we hold near and dear in this world. Spiritual faith is best evidenced by acts of self-denying obedience (condensed from Thomas Manton, 1620-1677).

4. *The confession of her faith.* This is recorded in Joshua 2:9-11, which shows it was made at the first opening she had. It was quite a comprehensive one—she owned the wondrous works of the Lord, was assured He had given Canaan unto His people, and acknowledged Him as the God of heaven and earth. Thereby she renounced all the idols of the heathen, glorified God with her lips, and illustrated the rule we have in Romans 10:10, “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Moreover, by placing the scarlet cord in her window, she, as it were, publicly displayed her colors and made it known under whose banner she had enlisted. How her conducts puts to shame those who after a long profession of the truth are ready to tremble at the first approach of danger and deem it prudence to keep at a safe distance from those who are exposed to persecution.

“It is the nature of true, real, saving faith, immediately, or at its first opportunity, to declare and protest itself in confession before men. Or confession is absolutely inseparable from faith. Where men, on some light and convictions, do suppose themselves to have faith, yet, through fear or shame, do not come up to the ways of expressing it in confession prescribed in the Scripture, their religion is in vain. And therefore our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Gospel, doth constantly lay the same weight on confession as on believing itself, Matthew 10:33; Luke 9:26. And the fearful, that is, those who fly from public confession in times of danger and persecution, shall be no less assuredly excluded from the heavenly Jerusalem, than unbelievers themselves, Revelation 21:8” (John Owen).

5. *The breadth of her faith.* Very blessed is it to note her further word to the spies, “Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father’s house, and give me a true token: And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death” (Jos 2:12-13). Some contracted hearts, in which the very milk of human kindness seems to have congealed, would deem Rahab’s request highly presumptuous. Personally, we believe that her soul was so overflowing with gratitude unto the Lord for His saving such an abandoned wretch, that her faith now perceived something of the infinitude of the divine mercy, and believed that such a God would be willing to show grace unto the whole of her family. Nor was she disappointed.

O that the breadth of Rahab’s faith may speak unto our hearts. O that the blessed Holy Spirit may fill us with compassion for our unsaved relatives and friends, and stir us up to wrestle with God in prayer on their behalf. It is right that we *should* desire God to show mercy unto those who are near and dear to us—not to do so would show we were lacking in natural affection. It only becomes wrong when we ignore God’s sovereignty and dictate instead of supplicate. It is blessed to observe that He who hath said, “According to your faith be it unto you” (Mat 9:29) and “all things are possible to him that believeth,” (Mar 9:23) *responded* to Rahab’s faith, and saved her entire household, though they, of course, only found deliverance by sheltering in the same house with her in which hung the scarlet cord—only under the Blood is there safety.

6. *The imperfection of her faith.* This appears in the reply which she returned to the king of Jericho (recorded in Jos 2:3-5) when he sent unto Rahab requesting her to deliver up the two

spies. Fearful of their lives, she told lies, pretending she knew not whence the men had come, and affirming they were no longer in her house. Such a procedure on her part can by no means be justified, for her answer was contrary unto the known truth. The course she followed resembled the direction which Rebekah gave to her son Jacob. In the general, her intent was the fruit of great faith, for it had respect unto the promise of God (Gen 25:33), but in various details (Gen 27:6-7, etc.) it can in no wise be approved. The Lord, in His tender mercy, is pleased to pass by many of the infirmities of His children, when He sees an upright heart and a desire to accomplish His promises. “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” (Psa 130:3). God bears with much weakness, especially in the lambs of His flock.

“I observe there was a mixture of infirmity in this act, an officious lie, which cannot be excused, though God in mercy pardoned it. This is not for our imitation, yet is for our instruction, and it shows us this, that faith in the beginning hath many weaknesses. Those that have faith do not altogether act out of faith, but there is somewhat of the flesh mingled with that of the spirit. But this is passed by out of God’s indulgence. He accepteth us notwithstanding our sins before faith and notwithstanding our weaknesses in believing. Before faith she was a harlot, in believing she makes a lie. God doth reward the good of our actions and pardons the evil of them, not to encourage us in the sinning, but to raise our love to Him who forgives us so great a debt, receives us graciously, and pardons our manifold weaknesses” (Thomas Manton).

It is blessed to see that neither in our text nor in James 2:25 does the Holy Spirit make any reference unto Rahab’s failure. Instead, in both places, He mentions that which was praiseworthy and to her credit. It is the very opposite with the malevolent world, which is ever ready to overlook the good and reflect only upon the evil of an action performed by a child of God. It is a gracious spirit which throws the mantle of charity over the deformities and defects in a brother or sister in Christ, as it is honouring to God to dwell upon that which His Holy Spirit has wrought in them. If we were quicker to judge ourselves for *our own* sad failures, we would not be so ready to blaze abroad the faults of our fellows. Let each of us seek grace to heed that exhortation, “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think* on these things” (Phi 4:8).

7. *The reward of her faith.* “By faith the harlot Rahab *perished not* with them that believed not” (Heb 11:31). The historical account of this is to be found in Joshua 6:22-23, “But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot’s house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her. And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel.”

But not only was Rahab and the whole of her family preserved from the burning of Jericho which immediately followed, but as Joshua 6:25 tells us, she “dwelt in Israel.” Thus, from being the slave of Satan, she was adopted into the family of God. From being a citizen of heathen Jericho, she was given a place in the congregation of the Lord. Nor was that all. Later, she became the honored wife of a prince in Judah, the mother of Boaz, and one of the grandmothers of David. Her name is inscribed upon the imperishable scroll of sacred history. It is recorded in Matthew 1 among the ancestresses of the Saviour—she was one of the mothers of Jesus! From what depths of sin and shame did sovereign grace deliver this poor woman—to what a height of honor and dignity did sovereign grace elevate her. Truly, the rewards of faith are most excellent and glorious.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

29. His Lamentation for Saul

The final chapter of 1 Samuel presents to us an unspeakably solemn and terrible scene, being concerned not with David, but with the termination of Saul's earthly life. In these articles, we have said very little about him, but here one or two paragraphs concerning his tragic career and its terrible close seem in place. A solemn summary of this, from the *divine* side, is found in Hosea 13:11, when at a later date, God reminded rebellious Israel, "I gave thee a king in mine anger, *and took him away in my wrath,*" the reference being to Saul.

The history of Saul properly begins at the eighth chapter. There we behold the revolted heart of Israel, which had departed further and further from JEHOVAH, desiring a human king in His stead. Though Samuel the prophet faithfully remonstrated, and space was given them to repent of their rash decision, it was in vain. They were determined to have their own way. "Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles" (1Sa 8:19-20). Accordingly, God, "in His anger" delivered them up to their own hearts' lusts and suffered them to be plagued by the one who proved a disappointment and curse to them, until, by his godless incompetency, he brought the kingdom of Israel to the very verge of destruction.

From the *human* side of things, Saul was a man splendidly endowed, given a wonderful opportunity, and had a most promising prospect. Concerning his physique we are told, "And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people" (1Sa 9:2). Regarding his acceptability unto his subjects, we read that when Samuel set him before them, that "all the people shouted, and said, God save the king" (1Sa 10:24). More, "there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched" (1Sa 10:26), giving the young king favor in their eyes. Not only so, but "the Spirit of God came upon Saul" (1Sa 11:6) equipping him for his office and giving proof that God was ready to act if he would submit to His yoke.

Yet notwithstanding these high privileges, Saul, in his spiritual madness, played fast and loose with them, ruined his life, and by disobeying and defying God, lost his soul. In the thirteenth chapter of 1 Samuel, we find Saul tried and found wanting. The prophet left him for a little while, bidding him go to Gilgal and wait for him there, till he should come and offer the sacrifices. Accordingly we are told in verse 8, "He tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed." And then we read, "but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him"—having lost their confidence in the king to lead them against the Philistines to victory. Petulant at the delay, Saul presumptuously invaded the prophet's prerogative and said, "Bring hither a burnt offering to *me*, and peace offerings. And *he* offered the burnt offering" (1Sa 13:9). Thus did he forsake the Word of the Lord and break the first command he received from Him.

In the fifteenth chapter, we see him tested again by a command from the Lord, “Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass” (1Sa 15:2-3). But again he disobeyed, “But Saul and the people *spared* Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and *would not* utterly destroy them” (1Sa 15:9). Then it was that the prophet announced, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king” (1Sa 15:22-23). From that point Saul rapidly went from bad to worse—turning against David and relentlessly seeking his life, shedding the blood of God’s priests (1Sa 22:18-19), till at last he scrupled not to seek the aid of the devil himself (1Sa 28:7-8).

And now the day of recompense had come, when he who had advanced steadily from one degree of impiety to another should miserably perish by his own hand. The divine account of this is given in 1 Samuel 31. The Philistines had joined themselves against Israel in battle. First, Saul’s own army was defeated (v. 1). Next, his sons, the hopes of his family, were slain before his eyes (v. 2), and then the king himself was sorely wounded by the archers (v. 3). Fearful indeed is what follows. No longer able to resist his enemies, nor yet flee from them, the God-abandoned Saul expressed no concern for his soul, but desired only that his life might be dispatched speedily, so that the Philistines might not gloat over him and torture his body.

First, he called upon his armour-bearer to put an end to his wretched life, but though his servant neither feared God nor death, he had too much respect for the person of his sovereign to lift up his hand against him (v. 4). Whereupon Saul became his own murderer, “Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.” And his armour-bearer, in a mad expression of fealty to his royal master, imitated his fearful example. Saul was, therefore, the occasion of his servant being guilty of fearful wickedness and “perished not alone in his iniquity” (Jos 22:20). As he had lived, so he died—proud and jealous, a terror to himself and all about him, having neither the fear of God nor hope in God. What a solemn warning for each of us! What need is there for both writer and reader to heed that exhortation, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12).

The cases of Ahithophel (2Sa 17:23), Zimri (1Ki 16:18), and Judas the traitor (Mat 27:5) are the only other instances recorded in Scripture of those who murdered themselves. The awful sin of suicide seems to have occurred very rarely in Israel and not one of the above cases is extenuated by ascribing the deed unto insanity! When the character of these men be examined, we may perceive not only the enormity of the crime by which they put an end to their wretched lives, but the unspeakably fearful consequences which must follow the fatal deed. How can it be otherwise, when men either madly presume on the mercy of God or despair of it, in order to escape temporal suffering or disgrace, despise His gift of life, and rush headlong, uncalled, unto His tribunal? By an act of direct rebellion against God’s authority (Exo 20:13) and in daring defiance of His justice, suicides fling themselves on the bosses of JEHOVAH’S buckler, with the guilt of unrepented sin on their hands.

“And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa. And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people. And they put his armour in the house of Ashtarothe: and they

fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan” (1Sa 31:8-10). Though Saul had escaped torture at their hands, his body was signally abused—adumbrating, we doubt not, the awful suffering which his soul was now enduring and would continue to endure forever. Saul’s self-inflicted death points a most solemn warning for us to earnestly watch and pray that we may be preserved from both presumption and despair, and divinely enabled to bear up under the trials of life and quietly to hope for the salvation of the Lord (Lam 3:26), that Satan may not tempt us to the horrible sin of self-murder, for which the Scriptures hold out *no* hope of forgiveness.

“Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag” (2Sa 1:1). David had returned to Ziklag, where he was engaged with dividing the spoil he had captured and in sending presents to his friends (1Sa 30:26-31). “It was strange he did not leave some spies about the camps to bring him early notice of the issue of the engagement (between the Philistines and the army of Saul)—a sign he desired not Saul’s woeful day, nor was impatient to come to the throne, but willing to wait till those tidings were brought to him, which many a one would have sent more than half way to meet. He that believeth does not make haste, takes good news when it comes, and is not weary while it is in the coming” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

“It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance. And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped. And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also” (2Sa 1:2-4). The Amalekite presented himself as a mourner for the dead king and as a loyal subject to the one who should succeed Saul. No doubt he prided himself that he was the first to pay homage to the sovereign-elect, expecting to be rewarded for bringing such good news (2Sa 4:10), whereas he was the first to receive sentence of death from David’s hands.

“And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead? And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here am I. And he said unto me, Who art thou? And I answered him, I am an Amalekite. He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me. So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord” (2Sa 1:5-10). This is one of the passages seized by atheists and infidels to show that “the Bible is full of contradictions,” for the account here given of Saul’s death by no means tallies with what is recorded in the previous chapter. But the seeming difficulty is easily solved—1 Samuel 31 contains God’s description of Saul’s death. 2 Samuel 1 gives man’s fabrication. Holy Writ records the lies of God’s enemies (Gen 3:4) as well as the true statements of His servants.

From 1 Samuel 31:4, it is definitely established that Saul murdered himself and *was dead* before his armour-bearer committed suicide. That is the unerring record of the Holy Spirit Himself and must not be questioned for a moment. In view of this, it is quite evident that the Amalekite, who now communicated to David the tidings of Saul’s death, lied in a number of details. Finding Saul’s body with the insignia of royalty upon it—which evidenced both the conceit and rashness of the infatuated king—going into battle with the crown upon his head and

thus making himself a mark for the Philistines archers—he seized them (2Sa 1:10) and then formed his story in such a way as he hoped to ingratiate himself with David. Thus did this miserable creature seek to turn the death of Saul to his own personal advantage and scrupled not to depart from the truth in so doing, concluding, from the wickedness of his own heart, that David would be delighted with the news he communicated.

By the death of Saul and Jonathan, the way was now opened for David to the throne. “If a large proportion of Israel stood up for the rights of Ishbosheth, who was a very insignificant person (2Sa 2-4), doubtless far more would have been strenuous for Jonathan. And though *he* would readily have given place, yet his brethren and the people in general would no doubt have made much more opposition to David’s ascension to the kingdom” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). Yet so far was David from falling into a transport of joy, as the poor Amalekite expected, that he mourned and wept. And so strong was his passion that all about him were similarly affected, “Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him: And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword” (2Sa 1:11-12).

“Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth” (Pro 24:17). There are many who secretly wish for the death of those who have injured them, or who keep them from honors and estates, and who inwardly rejoice even when they pretend to mourn outwardly. But the grace of God subdues this base disposition and forms the mind to a more liberal temper. Nor will the spiritual soul exult in the prospect of worldly advancement for he realizes that such will increase his responsibilities, that he will be surrounded by greater temptations, and called to additional duties and cares. David mourned for Saul out of good will, without constraint—out of compassion without malice, because of the melancholy circumstances attending his death and the terrible consequences which must follow, as well as for Israel’s being triumphed over by the enemies of God.

“And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence art thou? And he answered, I am the son of a stranger, an Amalekite. And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD’S anointed? And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died. And David said unto him, Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORD’S anointed” (2Sa 1:13-16). As an Amalekite, he was devoted to destruction (Deu 25:17-19) and as the elect-king, David was not required to put the sentence into execution.

The last nine verses of our chapter record the “lamentation” or elegy which David made over Saul and Jonathan. Not only did David rend his clothes, weep, and fast over the decease of his archenemy, but he also composed a poem in his honour—2 Samuel 1:17-27. Nor was it mere sentiment which prompted him. It was also because he looked upon Saul as Israel’s “king,” the “anointed” of God (2Sa 1:16). This elegy was a noble tribute of respect unto Saul and of tender affection for Jonathan. First, he expressed sorrow over the fall of the mighty (2Sa 1:19). Second, he deprecated the exultation of the enemies of God in the cities of the Philistines (2Sa 1:20). Third, he celebrated Saul’s valour and military renown (2Sa 1:21-22). Fourth, he touchingly mentioned the fatal devotion of Jonathan to his father (2Sa 1:23). Fifth, he called upon the daughters of Israel, who had once sung Saul’s praises, to now weep over their fallen leader (2Sa 1:24). Sixth, his faults are charitably veiled! Seventh, nothing could truthfully be said of Saul’s piety, so David would not utter lies—how this puts to shame the untruthful adulations found in

many a funeral oration! Eighth, he ended by memorializing the fervent love of Jonathan for himself.

DISPENSATIONALISM

9. The Word of God

A divine revelation, though it consists of many parts and be given through numerous instruments, must be perfectly consistent and harmonious throughout—to say that the God of truth contradicts Himself is to be guilty of uttering blasphemy. The Holy Scriptures have but one Author, though He employed many mouthpieces, yet “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2Pe 1:21). The divine Author of the Scriptures is immutable, though He “at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” and “hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” (Heb 1:1-2), nevertheless, there is absolute agreement between them. Therefore the Word of truth sets forth *one* system of doctrine, *one* way of salvation, *one* rule of faith. We never read of the “doctrines of God,” but always of “the doctrine” (*see* Deu 32:2, Pro 4:2, Mat 7:28, Joh 7:17, Rom 16:17, 1Ti 1:10; 4:16; 6:3, Ti 2:10, and contrast Mar 7:7, Col 2:22, 1Ti 4:1, Heb 13:9), because it is one single, intricate, organic whole.

Though the Scriptures were penned by forty different writers, of every variety of culture and condition, during the space of sixteen centuries, that is, through about fifty successive generations of mankind, yet, without collusion, there is perfect agreement between them. Though those forty writers lived in different ages of the world, and were men of vastly varied interests and capacities, yet they were of one sentiment, they all spoke in substance the same things, they all delivered the same doctrine, they all enjoined the same moral duties. There are no contradictions in their several productions, no jarring discords between the notes they sounded. All is of a piece. They concur in their statements and exactly coincide in the truth they taught. All were of the same judgment, all sought to enforce the same principles, all applied them to the same practical purpose.

The character of their writings varied as much as the men who composed them. There is history and poetry, law and lyrics, prophecy and ritual. Yet amid all this diversity, there is an underlying unity, which is not so much one of mechanism as one of organism. One part depends upon another, both for its interpretation and its completion. Links of connection run throughout the whole, like the nerves of the body uniting its varied members. There is an essential agreement between all parts of the Bible—certain conspicuous concepts pervade its whole, like golden cords on which all else is strung—such as the Messiah-Mediator and the kingdom of God, sin and salvation, law and grace, sacrifice and priesthood, duty and privilege. There is also a marvelous *progress* of doctrine to be observed throughout—where one writer leaves a theme, another picks it up and carries it forward.

Though separated by four hundred years, there is an unmistakable connection between the Old Testament and the New. What was latent in the former, is patent in the latter. What is concealed in the one, is revealed in the other. Only one explanation of the above phenomena is adequate or possible—one Controlling Mind spanned the centuries from Moses to John, superintending and directing each instrument. It is like an orchestra, the members of which take up their different parts, playing what was previously composed for them, and all uniting in one grand harmony. Or we may compare the same unto the building of one of the great cathedrals which took centuries to complete—scores of workmen, of different calibre, being engaged thereon, yet all executing the plan of the one architect. The unmistakable and perfect *unity* of the Scriptures plainly manifests their one divine Author.

The Scriptures as a whole constitute an organism, instinct with the life of God. A whole consisting of many parts, exquisitely correlated and vitally interdependent upon each other. God so controlled all the agents He employed, and has so co-ordinated their efforts, as to produce one single living Book. Within this organic unity there is great variety, but no discord. Man's body is but one, though it is made up of many members, diverse in size, character, and operation. The rainbow is but one—though it reflects distinctly the seven prismatic rays, yet they are harmoniously blended together. So it is with the Bible. Its unity appears in the perfect accord of doctrine taught throughout—the oneness yet triunity of God, the deity and humanity of Christ united in one Person, the everlasting covenant which secures the salvation of the entire election of grace, the justification of the ungodly by faith alone, the highway of holiness as the only path leading to heaven, are plainly revealed in Old and New Testament alike.

The question may be raised, if the Holy Scriptures are a strict unit, then why has God Himself divided them into two testaments? That is an interesting question, which we cannot here fully investigate. It may help us a little to ask, why has God appointed *two* principal heavenly bodies to illumine the earth, the moon and the sun? Why, too, is the human frame duplex, having two legs and arms, two ears and eyes, two lungs and kidneys? Is not the answer the same in each case—to augment and supplement each other. But returning to our first inquiry, four replies may be suggested. First, to more distinctly set forth the *two* covenants, which are the basis of all God's dealings with mankind—the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. Second, to show more plainly the *two* separate companies which are united in that one body which constitutes the Church, redeemed Jews and redeemed Gentiles. Third, to demonstrate more plainly the providence of God, using the Jews to be, for many centuries, the custodians of the Old Testament, which condemns them for their rejection of Christ, and employing the Papists, through the "dark ages," to preserve the New Testament, which denounces their idolatry. Fourth, that one might confirm the other—type in antitype, prophecy in fulfillment.

"The mutual relations of the two testaments. These two main divisions resemble the dual structure of the human body, where the two eyes and ears, hands and feet correspond to and complement one another. Not only is there a general, but a special mutual fitness. They need therefore to be studied together, side by side, to be compared even in lesser details, for in nothing are they independent of each other; and the closer the inspection the minuter appears the adaptations, and the more intimate the association....The two testaments are like the two cherubim of the mercy seat, facing in opposite directions, yet facing each other and foreshadowing with glory one mercy seat; or again, are like the human body bound together by joints and bands and ligaments, by one brain and heart, one pair of lungs, one system of respiration, circulation, digestion, sensor and motor nerves, where division is destruction" (A.T. Pierson, 1837-1911, from "Knowing the Scriptures").

But what has all the above to do with the subject we are now investigating? Much, very much. The central design of “Dispensationalism” is not to make manifest the accord of Scripture, but the discord between that which pertained unto the “dispensation of law” and that which obtains under the “dispensation of grace.” Studied efforts are made to pit passage against passage, and all sound principles of exegesis are thrown to the winds in order to accomplish this purpose. As a sample of what we have reference to, Exodus 21:24 is cited, “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,” and then against this is quoted Matthew 5:39, “But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” Then it is triumphantly asserted that these two passages can *only* be “reconciled” by allocating them to different people in different ages. And with such superficial handling of the sacred Scriptures, thousands of gullible people are deceived. Why, if such *were* the case, not only would large sections of God’s Word *be no longer* “profitable” for *us* (2Ti 3:16-17), but most of the Old Testament would be *of no more value than an obsolete almanac!*

Those possessing a “Scofield Bible” may turn to Exodus 21:24, and they will see that in the margin opposite to it the editor refers to “Leviticus 24:20, Deuteronomy 19:21; cf. Matthew 5:38-44, 1 Peter 2:19-21,” upon which this brief comment is made, “The provision in Exodus is *law* and righteous; the New Testament passages, *grace* and merciful.” How far Mr. Scofield was consistent with himself may be seen by a reference to what he states on page 989, at the beginning of the New Testament under “The Four Gospels” where he expressly affirms, “The sermon on the mount is law, *not grace*” (italics ours). Verily, “The legs of the lame are not equal.” In his marginal note to Exodus 21:24, Mr. Scofield cites Matthew 5:38-44 as “grace.” In his Introduction to the Four Gospels, he declares Matthew 5-7 is “law, and not grace”—which of these assertions did he wish his readers to believe?

Still the question may be asked, how are you going to reconcile Exodus 21:24 with Matthew 5:38-44? Our answer is, there is nothing between them *to* “reconcile.” There is nothing in them which clashes. Exodus 21:24 contains statutes for *public magistrates* to enforce. Matthew 5:38-44 lays down rules for *private individuals* to live by! Why do not these “Rightly Dividers” *rightly* “divide” the Scriptures and distinguish between what belongs to different classes? That Exodus 21:24 *does* contain statutes for “public magistrates” to enforce is clearly established by comparing Scripture with Scripture. In Deuteronomy 19:21, the same “statute” is again recorded, and if the reader will but turn back to Deuteronomy 19:18, he will there read, “And the *judges* shall make diligent inquisition” etc.! It would be real *mercy unto the public* if our judges dealt thus with conscienceless criminals today!

Ere leaving what has been before us in the last three paragraphs, let it be pointed out that when our blessed Lord added to Matthew 5:38, “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you” (Mat 5:44), He was *not* advancing a sentiment which had never previously been revealed. No, *the same* gracious principle of conduct had been enforced in the *Old Testament*! In Exodus 23:4-5 Moses had commanded, “If thou meet thine *enemy’s* ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.” Again, in Proverbs 25:21, we read, “If thine *enemy* be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink”!

The same God who bids *us*, “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath” (Rom 12:17-19), also commanded His people in *Old Testament* times, “Thou *shalt not avenge*, nor bear any grudge

against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD” (Lev 19:18), and therefore was David grateful to Abigail for dissuading him from taking vengeance on Nabal, “Blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, *and from avenging myself* with mine own hand” (1Sa 25:33). So far was the Old Testament from allowing any spirit of bitterness, malice, or revenge, it expressly declared, “Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee” (Pro 20:22). And again, “*Rejoice not* when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth” (Pro 24:17). And again, “*Say not*, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work” (Pro 24:29)!

As another example of the fearful confusion which now prevails, take the following from page 18 of Mr. I. M. Haldeman’s, “How to Study the Bible.” Under “Classification of Dispensational Truth,” he states, “It is not only necessary to know the Dispensations, but eminently important to keep truth in its proper dispensational relation. To put the truth applicable to one dispensation into another is to risk confusion, and not only theological, but spiritual death. Take, for example, the imprecatory psalms, as indicated in Psalms 58:10; 137:8-9. These Scriptures are full of imprecation and breathe the spirit not of forgiveness, but vengeance on the enemy. This spirit seems such a contradiction to the age in which we live, such a contradiction to the attitude of love, grace, and forgiveness occupied by the church, that many efforts have been made by good Christians to reconcile them with the teachings of Christianity; others finding the attempt useless have been led to expurgate them altogether from their Bibles.”

Yes, Mr. Haldeman, these Scriptures do breathe the spirit of “vengeance on the enemy,” but *whose* “enemy”? Why not *rightly* “divide” the Word on these passages? Was David thirsting for “vengeance” on his *personal* enemies? Read his history and ponder his magnanimous treatment of Saul! Let Scripture interpret Scripture and there will be no difficulty. Hear him saying, “The enemies *of the LORD* shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away” (Psa 37:20). “Let God arise, let *his* enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him” (Psa 68:1). “For, lo, *thine* enemies, O LORD, for, lo, *thine* enemies shall perish” (Psa 92:9). It is true that in many Psalms David speaks of “mine enemies.” In some he refers to his *spiritual* foes—his lusts and sins. In others, it is the Spirit of prophecy speaking through him messianically, as in Psalm 110:1-2. In yet others, he so identifies himself with God that the Lord’s enemies are *his*!

But it is affirmed these imprecations of the Psalmist against enemies is quite at variance with the benign and gracious spirit which characterizes the present “dispensation of grace.” We reply that such an objector errs grievously, “*not* knowing the Scriptures.” Why, the New Testament “breathes” identically the same “spirit” as the Old. Did not Peter say to one who was deceiving the people and who sought to purchase the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, “Thy money *perish with thee*” (Act 8:20)? Did not the apostle Paul write, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be *Anathema* Maranatha” (1 Cor 16:22)? Did he not also affirm, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, *let him be accursed*. As we said before, so say I now *again*, [the resistance of the human heart to such an imprecation requiring this repetition] If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, *let him be accursed*” (Gal 1:8-9). Did he not also write to the Galatians, “I would they were *even cut off* which trouble you” (Gal 5:12)? Did he not say, “Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him *according to his works*” (2Ti 4:14)! One really wonders how much these “Dispensationalists” really read *their Bibles*!

We are well aware that what has been pointed out in the last paragraph will not be at all palatable to those who are filled with the sickly sentimentality of this degenerate age, nevertheless, it is the Word *of God*! They who want to see capital punishment abolished, and are in favour of turning penitentiaries into social clubs, where the prisoners are coddled and pampered—given tobacco, regaled with the radio, and provided with dining rooms superior to a hotel—are not likely to welcome such expressions of holy hatred of that which is dishonouring to God. For his own part, the writer desires grace to emulate the Psalmist when he said, “Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. For they *speak* against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. *Do not I hate them*, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them *mine* enemies” (Psa 139:19, 22).

As one more sample of the excuseless ignorance betrayed by these “Dispensationalists,” we quote from E. W. Bullinger’s “How to Enjoy the Bible.” On pages 108, 110, he says, “*Law and Grace*. To those who lived under the Law it could rightly and truly be said, ‘It shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us’ (Deu 6:25). But to those who live in this present Dispensation of grace, it is as truly declared, ‘By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight’ (Rom 3:20). But this is the very opposite of Deuteronomy 6:25! What then are we to say or to do? Which of these two statements is true? and which is false? The answer is that neither is false. But both are true if we rightly divide the Word of truth as to its Dispensational truth and teaching....Two words distinguish the two dispensations. ‘Do’ distinguishes the former; ‘Done’ the latter. Then, salvation depended on what man was to *do*; now it depends upon what Christ has *done*.” It is by such statements as these that “unstable souls” are “beguiled.”

Think of a man with such a reputation for academical learning pitting Deuteronomy 6:25 against Romans 3:20—as well might he argue that fire is “the very opposite of water”—nevertheless each has its use in its right place—the one to cook by, the other for refreshment and cleansing. Think of one who posed as a teacher of preachers being so culpably ignorant as to affirm that under the old dispensation, “Salvation depended on what man was to *do*.” Salvation has *never* been procured by human merits, on the ground of any human performances. Read Genesis 4:4; 15:6; Exodus 12:13; Leviticus 17:11, Psalm 51:17, etc., and the error of such a statement is at once apparent. Deuteronomy 6:25 is paralleled by such verses as Matthew 5:20, James 2:20-26, 1 John 2:29. Deuteronomy 6:25 is speaking of *practical* “righteousness” in the daily walk of God’s people, whereas Romans 3:20 is affirming the impossibility of *acceptance with God* on the ground of creature-doings—true in all ages.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Carson on Esther (Part Five)

What was the head and the front of the offence of this people? Their laws were different from those of all other nations. They would not observe the religious institutions that were ordained by man. The civil law of the countries of their captivity it was their duty to obey. Their God commanded them to, “Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it” (Jer 29:7). But to neglect the ordinances of their God, or to observe the religious rites appointed by man, they had no license. Why were the Jews to be blamed for the singularity of their institutions, for their scrupulous separation from other nations, and for their firmness in refusing compliance with the rites of all other religions? If their laws were singular, were they not the laws of God? Why do kings and rulers pretend to interfere between God and His people? Why do wretched mortals assume an authority to set aside what God enjoins? Let Christians in every country render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, but to God the things that are God’s. If rulers must usurp the throne of God, let them attempt to alter the rising of the sun or regulate the changes of the moon, but let them not dare to meddle with the laws of the kingdom of Christ.

The allegations of Haman against the Jews are still substantially the ground of accusation against those who fully follow the churches planted by the apostles, and refuse compliance with all the institutions of man in the things of God. They are held up as a singular kind of people, who, by the peculiarity of their religious observances and their uncompliant spirit with respect to every deviation from the ordinances of God, manifest disaffection to the government of the country. In their religious observances, they are accused as being “diverse from all people.” Fear of this accusation, more, perhaps, than any other cause, keeps the people of God from discovering the ordinances of Christ and induces them to accommodate, as far as possible, to some of the great sects in the countries where they live. Israel grew weary of the government of God and desired a king that they might be like other nations. How long will the children of God neglect the laws of His kingdom! When will they return to the order and ordinances of His house!

How grateful ought Christians to be who live in a land of liberty! What a blessing it is to have the exercise of their religion secured to them by the laws of the state! If any of them are so ill-informed as not to be impressed with the value of this privilege, let them think of the Jews in the time of Esther—let them think of the state of Christians in this country in ages past—and in some other countries at the present moment. What a wretched thing it is to live in a country whose rulers assume the authority of God and dictate in the things of religion! What a revolting idea to live in a country where an incensed favorite may receive a present of the lives of a whole nation! How degraded is the state of man in a country where an insolent courtier offers the sovereign a price for the lives of a whole people!

Yet the Christian has nothing to fear in any country. If he is called to suffer, it will be for God’s glory and his own unspeakable advantage. If God has no purpose to serve by the sufferings of His people, He can, even under the most despotic governments, procure them rest. *Jesus rules in the midst of His enemies and is Master of the resolves of despots.* He restrains their wrath or

makes it praise Him. If He chooses, He can give His people power even with the most capricious tyrants. They are as safe in the provinces of the empire of Ahasuerus as in the dominions of Great Britain. The history of the book of Esther demonstrates that *there is no danger from which the Lord cannot rescue His people*, even through the medium of the ordinary course of events. Without a single miracle, He brings them from the very brink of ruin and precipitates their enemies into the abyss. We see them, as a nation, formerly given over to destruction by an irrevocable decree, yet they escape without the suffering of an individual. "And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy. And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee" (Est 3:10-11). Even the power of the king himself could not revoke the grant. Letters were sent to all the provinces of the empire, to secure the entire extirpation of the hated race. The enmity of the nations to the Jews is simulated by their avarice. They are permitted "to take the spoil of them for a prey" (Est 3:13). Can human wisdom descry any possible means of escape for the captives of Israel in the midst of their enemies? Yet God is their Deliverer!

Haman now thought his victory secure. The royal decree is obtained and messengers are sent out with it to all the king's lieutenants in the provinces, in the languages of all the nations subject to Persia. "And the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city Shushan was perplexed." Little did that unthinking monarch reflect on the misery to which his rash indulgence of a favorite had consigned so many of his innocent subjects. Could absolute monarchs get a view of the mischief caused by the oppression of their wicked favorites, they would often shrink from it with horror. Many a bloody decree originates not so much in the cruelty of their nature, as in the seducing flatteries of their courtiers. They watch the pliant hour, and in the moment of good-humor, they obtain the fatal grant. From that moment, they keep the matter at a distance from his ear, and divert his attention by the gratifications of intemperance and debauchery. How insensible is the mind of men in certain situations! "There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart, it does not feel for man." Despots and their sycophants sit down to their drunken banquets, after giving decrees that involve whole nations in misery!

As God can protect His people under the greatest despotism, so the utmost civil liberty is no safety to them without the immediate protection of His almighty arm. I fear that Christians at present in this country have too great a confidence in political institutions and in the enlightened views of the public on the rights of conscience. We hear more boasting of the march of mind than of the government of God. It is thought impossible, into whatever hands power may fall, that rulers in this country should ever attempt to effect uniformity in religion or apply force in the affairs of religion. Such an opinion is as unfounded in the philosophy of human nature as it is destitute of the authority of history and of the Word of God. There are not wanting some symptoms of the rise of Haman, and if he does not at length obtain a present of the lives of his enemies, it will be owing, *not to the light of our politicians*, but to the overruling providence of God in opposition to that light. At all events, let Christians confide in the power and watchfulness of their God, not in the schemes of fanatical politicians. Even at the present moment, I am confident that there are many places in the empire where there is not entire liberty of conscience. There may be the liberty of the statute book when there is danger from the mob, and where there is not perfect safety for the Christian in exercising, and in publishing, and spreading his religion, there is not practical liberty of conscience. To have liberty of conscience, we must not only be freed from all force constraining us to profess a religion which we do not assume, we must also be safe in the most active and public efforts to spread our own. Let us now attend to the

providence of God effecting the deliverance of His people from this awful danger and precipitating their enemies into the pit which they had prepared for others.

The disposal of the lots cast before Haman, to ascertain the most lucky day for striking the intended blow, attracts our attention as the first providential circumstance for the salvation of the Jews. Even before Haman had obtained the royal consent for destroying them, he had used divination to discover the most fortunate time for executing his purpose. *Shall the oracle of Satan be compelled to speak for God?* Shall the god of this world lose all his sagacity when he comes to fix the destruction of the people of the Lord? *Why did he choose the last month in the whole year*, when the execution of his plan would have been promoted by immediate dispatch? “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD” (Pro 16:33). He works His own will by the counsels of demons, as well as through the agency of the angels of His presence. “In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar” (Est 3:7). From the directing of this oracle, the day of execution was fixed on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, that is, more than eleven months after the decree. Whether the laws of nature or the agency of infernal spirits guided this answer, it was evidently *ordained by God* for the salvation of His people. Had the day of execution been immediate, there was nothing to prevent Haman’s wicked purpose from taking effect. But his very superstition is made to co-operate in God’s plan for the preservation of Israel. When the devil himself is consulted, he gives the most foolish advice to his friends when God has any purpose to fulfill by it. He that was a murderer of the saints from the beginning is here made an instrument to effect their preservation.

We have here a key to the providence of God with respect to the heathen oracles. Though they uttered the responses of demons, they were made the means of fulfilling the purposes of God. Satan by them rules the world, but God in them overruled Satan himself. While the devil was the god of this world and held men captive at his pleasure, *Jehovah ruled the earth* as absolutely as He did the angels of heaven. While men in general were serving the prince of darkness, the Lord effected His own sovereign purposes through their agency. Human wisdom may exclaim, How is this! Let it fathom the depths of the divine wisdom before it repeats the question. If God is God, the rebellion of devils and of man *must be* in some way for His glory.

By a like expedient, Jehovah provided that Jonah should be cast into the sea. He raised a tremendous storm against the ship in which the refractory prophet was sailing. But what providence is in a storm? The philosopher sees in this nothing but what he calls nature and the laws of nature. “But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea” (Jon 1:4). Although storms and earthquakes, and pestilence, and thunder, and war, and famine may all be brought about by natural causes, they are all the work of the Almighty. But when the storm is raised, how is it to manifest Jonah? It is through the impression of the heathen mariners that it was sent as a judgment. Why were they struck with this impression now? Did they look on all storms in this light? or did they judge from the peculiarly tremendous nature of this tempest? In whatever manner the impression came, it was to fulfill the purpose of God. But even with this impression, how is the guilty person to be detected? How are these heathen to find out the will of the God of Israel? It is through the means of their own superstition. It is by casting lots, and though God *always* disposes the lot, there is no reason to believe that He will always in this way manifest a guilty person. Were this the case, rulers would have no difficulty in detecting guilt, and discriminating between the guilty and the innocent. But the heathen mariners acted on their own superstitious opinion, which was nothing better than the origin of dueling, and in this instance God spake through their oracle: “So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.”

Here, then, we see the way of Providence. The Ruler of the world effects His purposes by every agent, and makes use of the opinions and motives of the resolutions and actions of all men. Nay, He overrules their very crimes to fulfill His plans. In these sentiments of the heathen mariners, however erroneous they are in some respects, yet it is pleasing to see the strong conviction of an overruling Providence. This is strikingly obvious, both in their opinion of the cause of the storm and in their expedient of the lots. As Aelian has observed, "Atheism is the refinement of speculation and not the dictate of human nature. No one of the barbarians," says he, "ever fell into atheism or started a doubt as to the existence of the gods. They have no such discussion as, Are there gods? and if there are gods, do they take care of us? Neither Indian, nor Celt, nor Egyptian, ever conceived such a notion as Epicurus and the atheistic Grecian sages."

Now, this observation of the heathen historian is of great importance. In whatever way the impression has been received, it is general that divine Providence rules in all the affairs of man. This view of nature is only stifled by some of the greatest fools in human shape, who style themselves philosophers.

But let us return to the history of Mordecai. How wonderful is the providence of God in restraining Haman from taking immediate vengeance on receiving a fresh insult, as he returned in triumph from Esther's banquet! "Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai. Nevertheless *Haman refrained himself*:" (Est 5:9-10). There is something more wonderful in this than even in a miracle. In my view, Almighty power would not have been so illustriously displayed had God interfered to save Mordecai by causing the earth to open and swallow his adversary, as by ruling his impetuous passions without interfering with the freedom of his determinations. Haman has a royal irrevocable decree for the destruction of the whole Jewish nation. He is elated beyond measure by being the only person invited to the queen's banquet with the king. He is again insulted by the man whom he so much abhorred. His mind is full of wrath, yet he refrains from immediate violence! Where did he learn his self-command? Look at the mouths of the hungry lions with Daniel before them. Look again at the enraged Haman and Mordecai untouched in his presence. God, who stopped the mouths of the lions, and preserved His children in the furnace, manifested here a more wonderful power in directing the free will of a bloody persecutor, armed with the authority of the Persian empire. It was Haman's own action—"he restrained himself," yet it was the working of the providence of God. Not so wonderful would it be to see a ship standing motionless in the midst of the tumult of the waves, or the raging billows rolling to the shore without touching the rocks, as to see Haman "restraining himself" on *this* occasion. Let the children of God read, and believe, and rejoice. When their enemies are maddened with rage, their God can make them restrain themselves, even without changing their heart. By His inscrutable providence, they willingly resolve to refrain from injury or to delay vengeance, even while they feel no pity.

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

3. Its Problem

In this and the following article our aim will be fourfold. First, to demonstrate the impossibility of any sinner obtaining acceptance and favour with God on the ground of his own performances. Second, to show that the saving of a sinner presented a problem which nought but omniscience could solve, but that the consummate wisdom of God has devised a way whereby He can pronounce righteous a guilty transgressor of His law without impeaching His veracity, sully His holiness, or ignoring the claims of justice. Yea, in such a way that all His perfections have been displayed and magnified, and the Son of His love glorified. Third, point out the sole ground on which an awakened conscience can find solid and stable peace. Fourth, seek to give God's children a clearer understanding of the exceeding riches of divine grace, that their hearts may be drawn out in fervent praise unto the Author of "so great salvation."

But let it be pointed out at the onset that any reader who has never seen himself under the white light of God's holiness and who has never felt His Word cutting him to the very quick will be unable to fully enter into the force of what we are about to write. Yea, in all probability, he who is unregenerate is likely to take decided exception unto much of what will be said, denying that any such difficulty exists in the matter of a merciful God pardoning one of His offending creatures. Or, if he does not dissent to that extent, yet he will most likely consider that we have grossly exaggerated the various elements in the case we are about to present, that we have pictured the sinner's condition in far darker hues than was warranted. This must be so, for he has no experimental acquaintance with God, nor is he conscious of the fearful plague of his own heart.

The natural man cannot endure the thought of being thoroughly searched by God. The last thing he desires is to pass beneath the all-seeing eye of his Maker and Judge, so that his every thought and desire, his most secret imagination and motive, stands exposed before Him. It is indeed a most solemn experience when we are made to feel with the psalmist, "O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me" (Psa 139:1-5).

Yes, dear reader, the very last thing which the natural man desires is to be searched through and through by God, and have his real character exposed to view. But when God undertakes to do this very thing—which He either will do in grace in this life or in judgment in the day to come—there is no escape for us. Then it is we may well exclaim, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me" (Psa 139:7-11). Then it is we

shall be assured, “Yea, the darkness *hideth not from thee*; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee” (Psa 139:12).

Then it is that the soul is awakened to a realization of *Who it is* with whom it has to do. Then it is that he now perceives something of the high claims of God upon him, the just requirements of His law, the demands of His holiness. Then it is that he realizes how completely he has failed to consider those claims, how fearfully he has disregarded that law, how miserably he falls short of meeting those demands. Now it is that he perceives he has been “a transgressor from the womb” (Isa 48:8), that so far from having lived to glorify His Maker, he has done nought but follow the course of this world and fulfill the lust of the flesh. Now it is he realizes that there is “*no soundness*” in him but, from the sole of the foot even unto the head, “wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores” (Isa 1:6). Now it is he is made to see that all his righteousness are as “filthy rags” (Isa 64:6).

“It is easy for anyone in the cloisters of the schools to indulge himself in idle speculations of the merit of works to justify men, but when he comes into the presence of God, he must bid farewell to these amusements, for there the business is transacted with seriousness, and no ludicrous logomachy practiced. To this point, then, must our attention be directed, if we wish to make any useful inquiry concerning true righteousness—how we can answer the celestial Judge when He shall call us to an account. Let us place that Judge before our eyes, not according to the spontaneous imaginations of our minds, but according to the descriptions given of Him in the Scripture, which represents Him as one whose refulgence eclipses the stars, whose power melts the mountains, whose anger shakes the earth, whose wisdom takes the subtle in their own craftiness, whose purity makes all things appear polluted, whose righteousness even the angels are unable to bear, who acquits not the guilty, whose vengeance, when it is once kindled, penetrates even to the abyss of hell” (John Calvin, 1509-1564).

Ah, my reader, tremendous indeed are the effects produced in the soul when one is really brought into the presence of God and is granted a sight of His awesome majesty. While we measure ourselves by our fellow men, it is easy to reach the conclusion that there is not much wrong with us, but when we approach the dread tribunal of ineffable holiness, we form an entirely different estimate of our character and conduct. While we are occupied with earthly objects, we may pride ourselves in the strength of our visive faculty, but fix the gaze steadily on the midday sun and under its dazzling brilliance the weakness of the eye will at once become apparent. In like manner, while I compare myself with other sinners I can but form a wrong estimate of myself, but if I gauge my life by the plummet of God’s law, and do so in the light of His holiness, I must “abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6).

But not only has sin corrupted man’s being, it has *changed his relation to God*. It has “alienated” him (Eph 4:18) and brought him under His righteous condemnation. Man has broken God’s law in thought and word and deed, not once, but times without number. By the divine tribunal, he is pronounced an incorrigible transgressor, a guilty rebel. He is under the curse of his Maker. The law demands that its punishment shall be inflicted upon him. Justice clamours for satisfaction. The sinner’s case is deplorable, then, to the last degree. When this is painfully felt by the convicted conscience, its agonized possessor cries out, “*How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?*” (Job 25:4). How indeed! Let us now consider the various elements which enter into this problem.

1. *The requirements of God’s law*. “Every question therefore, respecting justification necessarily brings before us the judicial courts of God. The principles of those courts must be

determined by God alone. Even to earthly governors we concede the right of establishing their own laws and appointing the mode of their enforcement. Shall we then accord this title to man and withhold it from the all-wise and almighty God? Surely no presumption can be greater than for the creature to sit in judgment on the Creator and pretend to determine what should or should not be the methods of His government. It must be our place reverently to listen to His own exposition of the principles of His own courts and humbly to thank Him for His goodness in condescending to explain to us what those principles are. As sinners, we can have no claim on God. We *do* have claim to a revelation that should acquaint us with His ways.

“The judicial principles of the government of God, are, as might be expected, based upon the absolute perfectness of His own holiness. This was fully shown both in the prohibitory and in the mandatory commandments of the law as given at Sinai. That law prohibited not only wrong deeds and wrong counsels of heart, but it went deeper still. It prohibited even wrong desires and wrong tendencies, saying, ‘Thou shalt not be concupiscent’—that is, thou shalt not have, *even momentarily*, one desire or tendency that is contrary to the perfectness of God. And then as to its positive requirements, it demanded the perfect, unreserved, perpetual surrender of soul and body, with all its powers, to God and to His service. Not only was it required, that love to Him—love perfect and unremitted—should dwell as a living principle in the heart, but also that it should be developed in action and that unvaryingly. The mode also of the development throughout was required to be as perfect as the principle from which the development sprang.

“If any among the children of men be able to substantiate a claim to perfectness such as this, the courts of God are ready to recognize it. The God of truth will recognize a truthful claim wherever it is found. But if we are unable to present any such claim—if corruption be found in us and in our ways—if in anything we have fallen short of God’s glory, then it is obvious that however willing the courts of God may be to recognize perfectness wherever it exists, such willingness can afford no ground of hope to those, who, instead of having perfectness, have sins and short-comings unnumbered” (B. W. Newton, 1807-1899).

2. *The indictment preferred against us.* “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward” (Isa 1:2-4). The eternal God justly charges us with having broken all His commandments—some in act, some in word, all of them in thought and imagination.

The enormity of this charge is heightened by the fact that against light and knowledge we chose the evil and forsook the good. That again and again we deliberately turned aside from God’s righteous law and went astray like lost sheep, following the evil desires and devices of our own hearts. Above, we find God complaining that inasmuch as we are His creatures, we ought to have obeyed Him, that inasmuch as we owe our very lives to His daily care, we ought to have rendered Him fealty instead of disobedience, and have been His loyal subjects instead of turning traitors to His throne. No exaggeration of sin is brought against us, but a statement of fact is declared which it is impossible for us to gainsay. We are ungrateful, unruly, ungodly creatures. Who would keep a horse that refused to work? Who would retain a dog which barked and flew at us? Yet we have broken God’s Sabbaths, despised His reproofs, abused His mercies.

3. *The sentence of the law.* This is clearly announced in the divine oracles, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal

3:10). Whoever violates a single precept of the divine law exposes himself to the displeasure of God and to punishment as the expression of that displeasure. No allowance is made for ignorance, no distinction is made between persons, no relaxation of its strictness is permissible, “The soul that sinneth it shall die” is its inexorable pronouncement. No exception is made whether the transgressor be young or old, rich or poor, Jew or Gentile. “The wages of sin is death,” for “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against *all* ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom 1:18).

4. *The Judge Himself is inflexibly just.* In the high court of divine justice, God takes the law in its strictest and sternest aspect, and judges rigidly according to the letter. “But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things...who will render to every man according to his deeds” (Rom 2:2, 6). God is inexorably righteous and will not show any partiality either to the law or to its transgressor. The Most High has determined that His holy law shall be faithfully upheld and its sanctions strictly enforced.

What would this country be like if all its judges ceased to uphold and enforce the laws of the land? What conditions would prevail were sentimental mercy to reign at the expense of righteousness? Now God is the Judge of all the earth and the moral Ruler of the universe. Holy Writ declares that “justice and judgment,” and not pity and clemency, are the “habitation” of His “throne” (Psa 89:14). God’s attributes do not conflict with each other. His mercy does not override His justice, nor is His grace ever shown at the expense of righteousness. Each of His perfections is given free course. For God to give a sinner entrance into heaven simply because He loved him, would be like a judge sheltering an escaped convict in his own home merely because he pitied him. Scripture emphatically declares that God, “will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo 34:7).

5. *The sinner is unquestionably guilty.* It is not merely that he has infirmities or that he is not as good as he ought to be. He has set at nought God’s authority, violated His commandments, trodden His laws under foot. And this is true not only of a certain class of offenders, but “*all* the world” is “guilty before God” (Rom 3:19). “There is none righteous, no, not one...They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Rom 3:10, 12). It is impossible for any man to clear himself from this fearful charge. He can neither show that the crimes of which he is accused have not been committed, nor that having been committed, he had a right to do them. He can neither disprove the charges which the law preferred against him, nor justify himself in the perpetration of them.

Here then is how the case stands. The law demands personal, perfect, and perpetual conformity to its precepts, in heart and act, in motive and performance. God charges each one of us with having failed to meet those just demands and declares we have violated His commandments in thought and word and deed. The law therefore pronounces upon us a sentence of condemnation, curses us, and demands the infliction of its penalty, which is death. The One before whose tribunal we stand is omniscient and cannot be deceived or imposed upon. He is inflexibly just and swayed by no sentimental considerations. We, the accused, are guilty, unable to refute the accusations of the law, unable to vindicate our sinful conduct, unable to offer any satisfaction or atonement for our crimes. Truly, our case is desperate to the last degree.

Here, then, is the problem. How can God justify the willful transgressor of His law without justifying his sins? How can God deliver him from the penalty of His broken law without compromising His holiness and going back upon His word that He will “by no means clear the guilty”? How can life be granted the guilty culprit without repealing the sentence, “The soul that

sinneth it shall die”? How can mercy be shown to the sinner without justice being flouted? It is a problem which must forever have baffled every finite intelligence. Yet, blessed be His name, God *has*, in His consummate wisdom, devised a way whereby the “chief of sinners” may be dealt with by Him as though he were perfectly innocent. Nay more, He pronounces him *righteous*, up to the required standard of the law, and *entitled to the reward* of eternal life. How this can be must remain for our next article.

A PRAYER AND CONFESSION

O most merciful God! I rejoice that Thou dost reign over the universe with a sovereign sway, so that Thou dost according to Thy will, in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. Thou art the Maker of my body and Father of my spirit, and Thou hast a perfect right to dispose of me in that manner which will most effectually promote Thy glory. And I know that whatsoever Thou doest is right, and wise, and just, and good. And whatever may be my eternal destiny, I rejoice in the assurance that Thy great name will be glorified in me. But as Thou hast been pleased to reveal Thy mercy and Thy grace to our fallen miserable world, and as the Word of this salvation has been preached unto me, inviting me to accept of eternal life upon the gracious terms of the Gospel, I do cordially receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour and only Redeemer, believing sincerely the whole testimony which Thou hast given respecting His divine character, His real incarnation, His unspotted and holy life, His numerous and beneficent miracles, His expiatory and meritorious death, and His glorious resurrection and ascension. I believe also in His supreme exaltation, in His prevalent intercession for His chosen people, in His affectionate care and aid afforded to His suffering members here below, and in His second coming to receive His humble followers to dwell with Himself in heaven, and to take vengeance on His obstinate enemies. My only hope and confidence of being saved rests simply on the mediatorial work and prevailing intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ, in consequence of which the Holy Spirit is graciously sent to make application of Christ’s redemption, by working faith in us, and repentance unto life, and rendering us meet for the heavenly inheritance, by sanctifying us in the whole man, spirit and soul and body.

Grant, gracious God that the rich blessings of the new covenant may be freely bestowed on Thy unworthy servant. I acknowledge that I have no claim to Thy favour on account of any goodness in me by nature, for alas, there dwelleth in me, that is in my flesh, no good thing, nor on account of any works of righteousness done by me. For all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Neither am I able to make atonement for any one of my innumerable transgressions, which I confess before Thee, are not only many in number, but heinous in their nature, justly deserving Thy displeasure and wrath. So that if I were immediately sent to hell, Thou wouldst be altogether just in my condemnation. Although I trust that I have endeavoured to serve Thee with some degree of sincerity, yet whatever good thing I have ever done, or even thought, I ascribe entirely to Thy grace, without which I can do nothing acceptable in Thy sight. And I am deeply convinced that my best duties have fallen far short of the perfection of Thy law and have been so mingled with sin in the performance that I might be justly condemned for the most fervent prayer I ever

made. And I would confess with shame and contrition that I am not only chargeable with sin in the act, but that there is a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, aiming to bring me into captivity to the law of sin and death. This corrupt nature is the source of innumerable thoughts and desires, and damps the exercise of faith and love, and stands in the way of well-doing, so that when I would do good, evil is present with me. And so deep and powerful is this remaining depravity, that all efforts to eradicate or subdue it are vain without the aid of divine grace. And when at any time I obtain a glimpse of the depth and turpitude of the sin of my nature, I am overwhelmed and constrained to exclaim with Job, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

And now, *righteous Lord God Almighty*, I would not attempt to conceal any of my actual transgressions, however vile and shameful they are. But would penitently confess them before Thee, and would plead in my defense nothing but the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died, the Just for the unjust, to bring me near to God. For His sake alone do I ask or expect the rich blessings necessary to my salvation. For although I am unworthy, He is most worthy. Though I have no righteousness, He has provided by His expiatory death and by His holy life a complete justifying righteousness, in which spotless robe I pray that I may be clothed. So that Thou, my righteous Judge, wilt see no sin in me, but wilt acquit me from every accusation and justify me freely by Thy grace, through the righteousness of my Lord and Saviour, with whom Thou art ever well-pleased. And my earnest prayer is that *Jesus* may save me from my sins, as well as from their punishment, that I may be redeemed from all iniquity, as well as from the condemnation of the law, that the work of sanctification may be carried on in my soul by Thy Word and Spirit, until it be perfected at Thine appointed time. And grant, O Lord! that as long as I am in the body, I may make it my constant study and chief aim to glorify Thy name, both with soul and body, which are no longer mine, but Thine. For I am "bought with a price"—not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Enable me to let my light so shine, that others, seeing my good works, may be led to glorify Thy name. O! make use of me as a humble instrument of advancing Thy kingdom on earth and promoting the salvation of immortal souls. If Thou hast appointed sufferings for me here below, I beseech Thee to consider my weakness and let Thy chastisements be those of a loving father that I may be made partaker of Thy holiness. And let me not be tempted above what I am able to bear, but with the temptation make a way for escape.

O most merciful God! cast me not off in the time of old age. Forsake me not when my strength declineth. Now, when I am old and gray-haired, let Thy grace be sufficient for me and enable me to bring forth fruit, even in old age. May my hoary head be found in the ways of righteousness. Preserve my mind from dotage and imbecility, and my body from protracted disease and excruciating pain. Deliver me from despondency and discouragement in my declining years, and enable me to bear afflictions with patience, fortitude, and perfect submission to Thy holy will. Lift upon me perpetually the light of Thy reconciled countenance and cause me to rejoice in Thy salvation, and in the hope of Thy glory. May the peace that passeth all understanding be constantly diffused through my soul, so that my mind may remain calm through all the storms and vicissitudes of life.

As, in the course of nature, I must be drawing near to my end, and as I know I must soon put off this tabernacle, I do humbly and earnestly beseech Thee, O Father of mercies, to prepare me for this inevitable and solemn event. Fortify my mind against the terrors of death. Give me, if it please Thee, an easy passage through the gate of death. Dissipate the dark clouds and mists which naturally hand over the grace and lead me gently down into the gloomy valley. O my kind

Shepherd, who has tasted the bitterness of death for me and who knowest how to sympathize with and succour the sheep of Thy pasture, be Thou present to guide, to support, and to comfort me. Illumine with beams of heavenly light the valley and shadow of death, so that I may fear no evil. When heart and flesh fail, be Thou the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Let not my courage fail in the trying hour. Permit not the great adversary to harass my soul in the last struggle, but make me a conqueror and more than a conqueror in that fearful conflict. I humbly ask that my reason may be continued to the last, and if it be Thy will, that I may be so comforted and supported, I may leave a testimony in favor of the reality of religion, and Thy faithfulness in fulfilling Thy gracious promises, and that others of Thy servants, who may follow after, may be encouraged by my example to commit themselves boldly to the guidance and keeping of the Shepherd of Israel. And when my spirit leaves this clay tenement, Lord Jesus, receive it. Send some of the blessed angels to convoy my inexperienced soul to the mansion which Thy love has prepared. And O! let me be so situated, though in the lowest rank, that I may behold Thy glory. May I have an abundant entrance administered unto me into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for whose sake and in whose name, I ask all these things. Amen. (A. Alexander, 1844).

A PRAYER

Reveal, blessed Jesus! reveal Thy glory to mine eyes and shed abroad Thy love in my heart. Cause me to rest completely satisfied in Thy undertaking as the fulfilling-end of the law, and enable me to live upon Thy inexhaustible fulness. Empty me of all self-dependence and make me truly humble. Show me the beauty of holiness as delineated in Thy most perfect pattern, and help me to copy it in my own conduct. Raise my affections to heavenly things and grant me the abiding earnest of my eternal inheritance. Then, though in a sinful world and a militant state—though harassed with bodily pain or pinched with worldly poverty, I shall not only be safe, but happy. The slavish fears of damnation shall be far distant and the beams of celestial joy shall shine into my soul. Then, ye sons of sensuality and children of pride, ye may take your sordid pleasures and boast of your tinsel honours. I shall neither covet your lawless mirth, nor envy your sounding titles. Being dead to the law and alive to my God, being safe in the hands of my Saviour and blest with a sense of His love, having death in remembrance and heaven in view, I shall despise your mean pursuits and abhor your illicit enjoyments. While the world is satisfied with the feather of fading honours and the froth of perishing pleasures, be it thy concern O my soul to glorify Him who died for thee and rose again. Then shall substantial pleasures be thy present enjoyment and unfading honours thy eternal crown. (Abraham Booth, 1734-1806).



June

THE HOLY SPIRIT

16. The Spirit Quickening (Part 2)

“For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will” (Joh 5:21). “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing” (Joh 6:63). All the divine operations in the economy of salvation proceed from the Father, are through the Son, and are executed by the Spirit. Quickening is His *initial* work in the elect. It is that supernatural act by which He brings them out of the grave of spiritual death on to resurrection ground. By it He imparts a principle of grace and habit of holiness. It is the communication of the life of God to the soul. It is an act of creation (2Co 5:17). It is a divine “workmanship” (Eph 2:10). All of these terms denote an act of omnipotency. The origination of life is utterly impossible to the creature. He can receive life. He can nourish life. He can use and exert it, but he cannot create life.

In this work the Spirit acts as *sovereign*. “The wind bloweth *where it listeth*, [or “pleaseth”]...so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (Joh 3:8). This does not mean that He acts capriciously or without reason and motive, but that He is above any obligation to the creature and is quite uninfluenced by us in what He does. The Spirit might justly have left every one of us in the hardness of our hearts to perish forever. In quickening one and not another, in bringing a few from death unto life, and leaving the mass still dead in trespasses and sins, the Spirit has mercy “on whom he will have mercy.” He is absolutely free to work in whom He pleases, for none of the fallen sons of Adam have the slightest claim upon Him.

The quickening of the spiritually dead into newness of life is therefore an act of *amazing grace*. It is an unsought and unmerited favour. The sinner, who is the chosen subject of this divine operation and object of this inestimable blessing, is infinitely ill-deserving in himself, being thoroughly disposed to go on in wickedness till this change is wrought in him. He is rebellious and will not hearken to the divine command. He is obstinate and refuses to repent and embrace the Gospel. However terrified he may be with the fears of threatened doom, however earnest may be his desire to escape misery and be happy forever, no matter how many prayers he may make and things he may do, he has not the least inclination to repent and submit to God. His heart is defiant, full of enmity against God, and daily does he add iniquity unto iniquity. For the Spirit to give a new heart unto *such as one* is indeed an act of amazing and sovereign grace.

This quickening by the Spirit is *instantaneous*. It is a divine act and not a process. It is wrought at once and not gradually. In a moment of time the soul passes from death unto life. The soul, which before was dead toward God, is now alive to Him. The soul, which was completely under the domination of sin, is now set free, though the sinful nature itself is not removed nor rendered inoperative, yet the heart is no longer en rapport (in sympathy) with it. The Spirit of God finds the heart wholly corrupt and desperately wicked, but by a miracle of grace He changes its bent, and this by implanting within it the imperishable seed of holiness. There is no medium between a carnal and a spiritual state—the one is what we were by nature, the other is what we become by grace, by the instantaneous and invincible operation of the Almighty Spirit.

This initial work of quickening is entirely *unperceived* by us, for it lies outside the realm and the range of human consciousness. Those who are *dead* possess no perception, and though the work of bringing them on to resurrection ground is indeed a great and powerful one, in the very nature of the case its subjects can know nothing whatever about it until *after* it has been accomplished. When Adam was created, he was conscious of nothing but that he now existed and was free to act. The divine operation which was the cause of his existence was over and finished before he began to be conscious of anything. This initial operation of the Spirit, by which the elect become new creatures, can only be known by its effects and consequences. “The wind bloweth where it listeth,” that is first. Then, “*thou hearest the sound thereof*” (Joh 3:8). It is now made known, in a variety of ways, to the conscience and understanding.

Under this work of quickening *we* are entirely *passive*, by which is meant that there is no co-operation whatever between the will of the sinner and the act of the Holy Spirit. As we have said, this initial work of the Spirit is effected by free and sovereign *grace*, consisting of the infusion of a principle of spiritual life into the soul, by which all its faculties are supernaturally renovated. This being the case, the sinner must be entirely passive, like clay in the hands of a potter, for until divine grace is exerted upon him he is utterly incapable of any spiritual acts, being *dead* in trespasses and sins. Lazarus cooperated not in his resurrection. He knew not that the Saviour had come to his sepulchre to deliver him from death. Such is the case with each of God’s elect when the Spirit commences to deal with them. They must first be quickened into newness of life before they can have the slightest desire or motion of the will toward spiritual things. Hence, for them to contribute the smallest iota unto their quickening is utterly impossible.

The life which the Spirit imparts when He quickens is *uniform* in all its favoured subjects. “As seed virtually contains in it all that afterwards proceeds from it, the blade, stalk, ear, and full corn in the ear, so the first principle of grace implanted in the heart seminally contains all the grace which afterwards appears in all the fruits, effects, acts, and exercises of it” (John Gill, 1697-1771). Each quickened person experiences the same radical change, by which the image of God is stamped upon the soul, “that which is born of the Spirit *is spirit*” (Joh 3:6), never anything less and never anything more. Each quickened person is made a new creature in Christ and possesses all the constituent parts of “the new man.” Later, some may be more lively and vigorous at their birth, as God gives stronger faith unto one than to another, yet there is no difference in their original—all partake of the same life.

While there is great variety in our perception and understanding of the work of the Spirit within us, there is no difference in the initial work itself. While there is much difference in the carrying on of this work unto perfection in the *growth* of the “new creature”—some making speedy progress, others thriving slowly and bringing forth little fruit—yet the new creation itself is the same in all. Each alike enters the kingdom of God, becomes a vital member of Christ’s mystical body, is given a place in the living family of God. Later, one may appear more beautiful

than another, by having the image of his heavenly Father more evidently imprinted upon him, yet not more truly so. There are degrees in sanctification, but none in vivification. There has never been but one kind of spiritual quickening in this world, being in its essential nature specifically the same in all.

Let it be pointed out in conclusion that the Spirit's quickening is only *the beginning* of God's work of grace in the soul. This does not wholly renew the heart at once. No indeed, the inner man needs to be "renewed day by day" (2Co 4:16). But from that small beginning, the work continues—God watering it "every moment" (Isa 27:3)—and goes on to perfection. That is, till the heart is made perfectly clean and holy, which is not accomplished till death. God continues to work in His elect, "both to will and to do of his own good pleasure," they being as completely dependent upon the Spirit's influence for every right exercise of the will after, as for the first. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phi 1:6).

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

78. The Faith of the Judges (11:32)

In some respects the verse we have now arrived at is the most difficult one in our chapter. It commences the last division of the same. Therein the apostle changes his method of treatment and instead of particularizing individual examples of faith, he groups together a number of men and summarizes the actings of their faith. The selection made, out of many others who could have been given, is most startling. Those whose names we might have expected had been registered on this honour roll are omitted, while others we have never thought of are given a place. The order in which they are recorded seems strange, for it is not that of the chronological. This has puzzled some. One eminent commentator stating, "The apostle does not observe strict order, reciting them in haste," which is not to be allowed for a moment, for it ignores the superintending guidance of the Holy Spirit. Again, the prodigies performed by these men cannot be presented for *our* emulation. Why, then, are they referred to?

The principle of guidance in the selection of some of the men here mentioned is obviously that of *sovereign grace*—no otherwise can we account for the passing over of such illustrious characters as Caleb and Deborah, Hannah and Asaph, and the inclusion of Jephthah and Samson—in the latter the free favour of God was more conspicuously displayed. The order in which they are mentioned is not that of time, but of *dignity*, for Barak lived before Gideon, Jephthah before Samson, and Samuel before David. God reckons those most excellent who bring forth the best fruits of faith—the more we excel in faith, the more God will honour us. Where faith shines the brightest the least are accounted the greatest and the last become first. Then how *we* should labour daily for an increase of faith.

Five of the six men named in our text were judges who ruled over Israel, though they came from very humble callings. From this we may learn that faith is a spiritual grace suited not only unto the temple, but also to the judicial bench and throne. That it is needed not only by those who occupy positions in the private walks of life, but also by those who fill public office. Governors equally with the governed require to have a true faith in the living God. Instead of disqualifying them for the discharge of their important duties, it would be of inestimable value to them—enabling them to face difficulties and danger with calmness, inspiring with courage, endowing with wisdom, and preserving from many temptations which confront those in high places. He who is blest with a spiritual faith will have lowly thoughts of himself, as had Barak, Gideon, and David.

Remarkable achievements are credited to the men whose names are now before us. As we read the historical account of them in the book of Judges we may well marvel at them, but it is only as we view them in the light of what is said here in Hebrews 11 that we shall understand them aright. Other men besides these have vanquished lions, put armies to flight, and subdued kingdoms, yet *their* deeds proceeded from a very different principle. The mighty works of men chronicled in the Old Testament are given for a far higher purpose than the indulging of our love of the sensational. The exploits of Gideon and Barak, Samson and David, are only recorded in Holy Writ as they were wrought *by faith*. Thus the Holy Spirit honours *His own* work.

One prominent feature which distinguishes many of the extraordinary performances of men of God set down in Scripture, from the prodigies done by men of the world, is that the Holy Spirit moved the sacred historians to faithfully register the infirmities under which faith so often wrought and the weakness which preceded it. The faith of these men was very far from being perfect, either in degree, stability, or unmixed purity. Like ours so often is, their faith was mingled with fear, oppressed by unbelief, hard beset by carnal reasonings. We have only to read through the sixth chapter of Judges to see that the faith of the first one named in our text was painfully slow in exercise, though by grace, it was afterward mighty in execution. They were men of like passions with us and from that fact we may take comfort—not in sheltering behind the same, but by refusing to despair when our faith is at a low ebb.

One thing which is common to all the individuals mentioned in our text is that the history of each of them was cast in a day of great spiritual declension. The time in which they lived is described at length in the book of Judges. Following the deaths of Moses and Joshua, Israel grievously departed from the Lord—cast off His law, worshipped the idols of the heathen, and “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Jdg 21:25). Darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people. Yet even in those days God left not Himself without witness. Inexpressibly blessed is it to behold the faith of individuals shining in the midst of a failed testimony. That here and there was a lamp maintained, illuminating the surrounding darkness. Nor is the number here specified without significance, for to the six individuals mentioned are linked the “prophets” (who also ministered in seasons of apostasy), making *seven* in all—telling of the completeness of the provision made by the grace of God.

Thus we may see how that Hebrews 11, which describes at length the life of faith, would have been incomplete had no notice been taken of those times when Israel so grievously departed from God. It was during seasons of great spiritual darkness and gloom that faith wrought many of its mightiest works and achieved some of its most notable victories. For faith is not dependent on favourable outward conditions. It is sustained and energized by One who is infinitely superior to all circumstances. What is mentioned in our text, and the verses which immediately follow, are recorded *for our encouragement*. We too are living in a day when Christendom is in a sad state,

when there is widespread departure from God and His Word, when vital and practical holiness is at a low ebb. But the arm of the Lord is not waxed short and they who lean upon it shall be sustained and enabled to do exploits in His name.

“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets” (Heb 11:32). The apostle had already given abundant proof that “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1) and had shown that “by it the elders obtained a good report” (Heb 11:2), yet he had by no means said all which might be given on the subject. Numerous and notable examples of the power and fruits of faith had been advanced, and many others might still be cited, but it would not be convenient to enumerate each instance of faith recorded in the Old Testament. To have done so would extend the epistle beyond due limits. So we now have a bare mention of the names of others, followed by a description in general terms of the effects of their faith.

The characters which we are now to contemplate, like the apostles of Christ, and in smaller measure the Reformers at the close of the “Dark ages,” were extraordinary men, specially raised up by God in times of crisis, for the good of His Church and the benefit of the commonwealth. This needs to be carefully borne in mind or otherwise we shall view them in a false perspective. Their calling was extraordinary and so were their performances. They were endowed with uncommon powers and supernaturally energized for their particular tasks. That which distinguished them from men like Caesar, Charlemagne, and Napoleon was that they were *men of faith*. It is not that the apostle by any means commends *all* that they did or that he excuses their manifold imperfections, which cannot be vindicated. He makes mention here only of their faith.

Gideon was raised up by God at a time when Israel’s fortunes were sunk to a low ebb. Three judges had preceded him, delivering the people of God from the hand of their enemies, but a fourth time they had apostatized and now they were groaning under the servitude of the Midianites. So great was the number of those who had invaded their territory that they “left no sustenance for Israel” and “Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites” (Jdg 6:4, 6). But that was not the worst. The worship of Baal prevailed to such an extent among the favoured covenant people of God that to oppose it was considered a criminal act, deserving of death (Jdg 6:28-30). Nevertheless, God had promised “the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone” (Deu 32:36), and now, once again, He was about to make good this word.

To be delivered from the dire situation which now faced Israel called for a “mighty man of valor,” and such was Gideon, as we learn from the language in which the angel of the Lord first addressed him (Jdg 6:12). But something more than natural courage and daring were required in the one whom the Lord would employ—he must be a *humble* man of God that the glory might rebound unto Him alone. In order to that, the instrument had first to be prepared for the tasks to be performed—the servant fitted for the service he must do. “God must first do His work with Gideon, before Gideon could do his work for God. To accomplish this, God makes the wine-press of Joash to be to Gideon what he makes the backside of the desert to be to Moses” (E. W. Bullinger, 1837-1913). The servant of God must first be made to feel his weakness, before he is taught that all-sufficient strength is available for him in the Lord. Thus it was with Gideon. Thus it is still.

It is blessed to observe the Lord’s dealings with Gideon. He now said, “The LORD is with thee” (Jdg 6:12). This was to exercise his heart, which is ever the prime requisite. Aroused,

Gideon inquired, “Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of?” etc. (Jdg 6:13). Second, “The LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?” (Jdg 6:14). It is at this point so many interpreters go astray in their understanding of this incident. The *saints* “might” is in realized helplessness, “For when I am weak, then am I strong” (2Co 12:10). That word of Jehovah’s was designed to bring Gideon to the consciousness of *his own* utter inability to deliver Israel from the yoke of the Midianites.

The instrument must be experimentally fitted ere the Lord will employ it in His service and the first part of this fitting process is to empty it of self-sufficiency that it may then be thoroughly dependent upon Himself. Gideon’s “might” consisted in conscious weakness and as soon as that was realized, he would be forced to believe the Lord’s declaration, “Thou shalt save Israel.” That was the word addressed to his heart and was the foundation on which his faith was to rest. Gideon now asked, “Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is *poor* in Manasseh, and *I am the least* in my father’s house” (Jdg 6:15). The divine arrow had hit its mark, as Gideon’s humble confession attests.

The Lord has only one response unto acknowledged helplessness, “*Surely I will be with thee*, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man” (Jdg 6:16). How blessed! When faith truly realizes this, it exclaims, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phi 4:13). From that assuring word of the Almighty’s, Gideon knew that he had “found grace” in His sight and asked for a sign, “Not because he doubted, but because he believed. Not to prove the truth of JEHOVAH’S word, but because he would prove the truth of JEHOVAH’S grace in the acceptance of his offerings which he proposed to go and fetch, verses 17-18” (E. W. Bullinger).

Next, Gideon prepared and presented his offering (Jdg 6:19) and was bidden to place the same upon a rock (Jdg 6:20). This was followed by a miracle, fire issuing from the rock and consuming the offering, by which he “obtained witness” that he had found grace in JEHOVAH’S sight—the supernatural fire denoting his acceptance with God, filling him with awe and terror. Immediately the Lord quietened his heart with, “*Peace* be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die” (Jdg 6:23). Thus did he receive JEHOVAH’S blessing. That Gideon’s faith laid hold of that benediction is very evident from the next verse, “Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it JEHOVAH-shalom”—“The Lord send *peace*.”

The heart of Gideon being now fitted and established, God gave him his first commission, “Take thy father’s young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it: And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down” (Jdg 6:25-26). Such definiteness of language at once evidenced to Gideon that he had to do with One who knew everything—the bullocks his father had and their very ages. Like his father Abraham, Gideon believed God and obeyed His command, for we read that, “Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father’s household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night” (Jdg 6:27). At this distant date, his action may seem to us trivial, but the sequel shows that Gideon acted at the imminent peril of his life, “Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it” (Jdg 6:30).

The immediate sequel supplied a much more severe testing of Gideon, “Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel” (Jdg 6:33). Enraged at the overthrow of the altar of Baal, the Midianites gathered their forces together and with their allies came up against Israel for battle. It is to be expected that Satan will wax furious when his territory is invaded and the Lord is magnified in the place where he has reigned supreme. That is why it so often follows that when a Christian has done his duty, it *seems* as though he has only made bad matters worse by increasing his troubles. Then it is that he is sorely tempted to regret he has been so “radical” in his conduct and to effect a compromise. Such a temptation is to be steadfastly resisted. More, the increasing troubles which faithfulness brings upon him are to be regarded as a golden opportunity for further exercises and acts of *faith*. Thus Gideon acted and so should we.

We cannot now enter into a detailed comment upon the response made by Gideon to the open menace of the Midianites, and all that is recorded of him in Judges 6-8, but we commend those chapters unto the careful pondering of the reader. Let him carefully note, first, that “the spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon” (Jdg 6:34), which supplies the key to all that follows—safeguarding the glory of God (preventing us from ascribing the honor to Gideon) and furnishing the vital word of instruction for our own hearts. We cannot overcome Satan nor refuse his temptation in our own strength. We cannot increase faith, or even maintain it in exercise by any resolution of mind or act of our own will. We cannot achieve victories to the praise of our God by our own faithfulness. It is only as we are strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit in the inner man that we are furnished for the battle against the forces of evil and that strength is to be definitely, diligently, and trustfully sought.

The infirmities of Gideon appear in that he imagined he must head a large army if the Midianites were to be vanquished. It was little by little that his heart was instructed and the lesson was learned that God is not dependent upon *numbers*. His repeated request for confirmatory signs (Jdg 6:36-40) also shows us that it is not all at once the saint learns to walk by faith and not by sight. But the Lord is long-suffering to usward and bears with our infirmities when the heart is truly upright before Him. He granted Gideon the signs requested, though that is no guarantee He will do so for us, and He corrected his notion that a large force was needed. Only a small fragment was employed—“by the three hundred men that lapped will I save you” (Jdg 7:7). Then, when Gideon *believed* the Lord and *obeyed* His orders this word was given, “Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand” (Jdg 7:9), which was completely verified in the sequel. Thus did the Lord use and work mightily by one who was poor and little in his own eyes (Jdg 6:15), and who “did as the LORD had said unto him” (Jdg 6:27).

Barak. Time (or space) fails us to enter into a full consideration of his history and exploits, so we must condense. Barak was raised up by God near the close of the twenty years, when Jabin the king of Canaan “mightily oppressed the children of Israel” (Jdg 4:3). Deborah was acting as judge at that time—proof of the terribly low state into which the covenant people had fallen (cf. Isa 3:12), though she was not a “judge” in the proper sense of the term (see Jdg 4:4 and carefully compare Jdg 2:18), but a “prophetess,” and therefore a mouthpiece of God. It was through her that the Lord spake to Barak, saying “Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand” (Jdg 4:6-7)—*that* was to be the ground of Barak’s faith, *that* was the sure promise which described the thing to be “hoped for.” The infirmity of Barak is seen in Judges 4:8, but the obedience of his faith

appears in Judges 4:10. A further word was given to him, “Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee?” (Jdg 4:14). He “heard,” “believed,” and obeyed, and a great victory was secured. It was *by faith* in God’s promise that Barak went forth against the enormous army of Sisera and vanquished the same.

Samson. Many mighty deeds are recorded of him in the book of Judges, such as his rending to pieces a lion, as though it had been a kid; his slaying of a thousand Philistines, single-handed, with the jawbone of an ass; his carrying of the gates of Gaza and their posts on his shoulders up a steep hill; his bursting asunder the strongest cords when bound by his enemies; his overturning the pillars on which stood the great temple of Dagon. How, then, did Samson perform these prodigies? *By faith.* In the Old Testament it is said, “The Spirit of the LORD came upon him,” (Jdg 14:6). but that does not mean he was involuntarily impelled by a divine power, like a hurricane carries things through the air blindly and unwittingly. No, the Spirit deals with men not as stocks and stones, but as moral agents—enlightening their minds, controlling their hearts, inclining their wills, and supplying physical strength for whatever task God allots.

“Faith cometh by hearing,” and in Samson’s case he “heard” through his parents the promise which God had made concerning him, “He shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines” (Jdg 13:5). The strength of his mother’s faith comes out beautifully in Judges 13:23, where, quietening the fear of her husband, she said, “If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.” Brought up in the strong faith of his parents, Samson *believed* what he “heard” from God through them, grew up in the confidence of the same and conducted himself accordingly. His last act was his greatest and best, furnishing the strongest evidence of his faith in God and being of most profit to His church. After being so sorely chastened for his sins, and considering the situation he was then in, it called for no ordinary confidence in the Lord to do what is recorded in Judges 16:28-30.

Jephthah. By calling, Gideon was a farmer, Barak a soldier, Samson a religious Nazarite, while David was the youngest of his family and despised by his brethren. Samuel was first used by God while still a child. Thus we may see how God delights to use lowly and weak instruments. But more striking still is the case now before us. Jephthah was one of dishonorable birth, a bastard, (Jdg 11:1-2), which the law excluded from the congregation of the Lord (Deut 23:2). Yet God, in an especial and extraordinary manner conferred His Spirit upon Jephthah, and advanced him to the highest dignity and function amongst His people and prospered him exceedingly. From this we may learn that no outward condition, be it ever so base, can serve as a hindrance to God’s grace. That he was a man who feared the Lord is clear from Judges 11:9-10. His message to the king of Ammon (Jdg 11:14-27) shows that he *believed* what was recorded in the Scripture of truth. He ascribed Israel’s victories to the Lord (Jdg 11:21, 23) and called on Him to judge between Israel and Ammon (Jdg 11:27), and Jehovah rewarded his faith by delivering the Ammonites into his hand. His fidelity and perseverance in the faith is seen in the keeping of his vow of banning his daughter to continual virginity.

David. There is little need for us to attempt here an enumeration of the many works and fruits of his faith, nor to point out how often unbelief wrought within and through him. We agree with John Brown (1784-1858) that it is likely the Holy Spirit has particular reference in our text unto David’s victorious combat with Goliath, when, quite a youth, and totally inexperienced in the arts and guiles of warfare, armed only with a sling and a few pebbles, he engaged in open fight the mighty giant of the Philistines, who was a veteran in the field and heavily armed for the duel. How are we to explain David’s temerity and success? In this way—he had received a revelation

from God (as 1Sa 17:46-47 plainly intimates), he rested on the same with implicit confidence, and acted accordingly. By faith he ventured. By faith he overcame.

Samuel. “The event to which we are disposed to think it most probable, from its miraculous character, that the apostle refers, is that recorded in 1 Samuel 12:16-18, ‘Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king. So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.’ A revelation was made to Samuel that the divine power was to be put forth in connection with certain words which he spoke. He believed that revelation. He spoke the words, and the event followed” (John Brown).

The Prophets. They too exemplified the power of faith, both in what they did and in what they suffered. By faith they were enabled to achieve and endure what otherwise they could not have achieved or endured. They delivered nothing but what they received, hence the frequency of their announcement, “Thus saith the LORD.” They concealed nothing they had received, though it was a “burden to them” (See Mal 1:1, etc.) and though they knew full well their message would be most unpalatable, they faithfully delivered the Word of God. They were undaunted by the people’s opposition, setting their face as a flint (Eze 3:8-9). They humbly submitted to God’s requirements: Isaiah 20:3; Jeremiah 27:2; Ezekiel 4:11-12. They wrought mighty works, especially Elijah and Elisha. All these things manifested the efficacy and might of a real faith in the living God. “Lord, increase our faith.”

THE LIFE OF DAVID

30. His Sojourn at Hebron

The news of Saul’s death had been received by the exiled David in characteristic fashion. He first flamed out in fierce anger against the lying Amalekite, who had hurried with the tidings, hoping to curry favor with him by pretending that he had killed Saul on the field of battle. A short shrift and a bloody end were his. And then the wrath gave place to mourning. Forgetting the mad hatred and relentless persecution of his late enemy, thinking only of the friendship of his earlier days and his official status as the anointed of the Lord, our hero cast over the mangled corpses of Saul and Jonathan the mantle of his noble elegy in which he sings the praise of the one and celebrates the love of the other. Not until those offices of justice and affection had been performed did he think of himself and the change which had been affected in his own fortunes.

It seems clear that David had never regarded Saul as standing between himself and the kingdom. The first reaction from his death was not, as it would have been with a less devout and less generous heart, a flush of gladness at the thought of the empty throne, but instead, a sharp pang of grief from the sense of an empty heart. And even when he began to contemplate his

immediate future and changed fortunes, he carried himself with commendable self-restraint. At the time David was still a fugitive in the midst of the ruins of Ziklag, but instead of rushing ahead, “making the most of his opportunity,” and seizing the empty throne, he sought directions from the Lord. Ah, we not only need to turn unto God in times of deep distress, but equally so when His outward providences appear to be working decidedly in our favour.

David would do nothing in this important crisis of his life—when all which had for so long appeared a distant hope now seemed to be rapidly becoming a present fact—until his Shepherd should lead him. Impatient and impetuous as he was by nature, schooled to swift decisions, followed by still swifter actions, knowing that a blow struck speedily while all was chaos and despair in the kingdom might at once set him on the throne, nevertheless, he held the flesh, carnal policy, and the impatience of his followers in check to hear what God would say. To a man of David’s experience it must have appeared that now was the opportune moment to subdue the remaining adherents of the fallen Saul, rally around himself his loyal friends, grasp the crown and the scepter, vanquish the gloating Philistines, and secure unto himself the kingdom of Israel. Instead, he refused to take a single step until JEHOVAH had signified *His will* in the matter.

The manner in which David conducted himself on this occasion presents an example which we do well to take to heart and punctually emulate. The important principle of action which was here exemplified has been well expressed by another, “If we would possess temporal things with a blessing, we must not eagerly seize upon them, nor be determined by favorable events or carnal counsel, but we must observe the rules of God’s Word and pray for His direction; using those means, and those only, which He has appointed or allowed, and avoid all evil or ‘appearance of evil,’ in our pursuit of them—and then whatever else we fail in, we shall be directed in the way to the kingdom of heaven” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and *he shall direct thy paths*” (Pro 3:5-6).

To “acknowledge” the Lord in all our ways means that instead of acting in self-sufficiency and self-will, we seek wisdom from above in every undertaking of our earthly affairs, beg God to grant us light from His Word on our path, and seek His honor and glory in all that we attempt. Thus it was now with David, “And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” (2Sa 2:1). This is very blessed and should be linked with all that was before us in 1 Samuel 30:6-31. What is here recorded of David supplies further proof of his having been restored from backsliding. Previously he had *left* the cities of Judah “inquiring” of his own heart (1Sa 27:1), but now he would only think of *returning* thither as God might conduct him. Alas, that most of us have to pass through many painful and humiliating experiences ere we learn this lesson.

“David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” (2Sa 2:1). Though the Lord had promised him the kingdom, though he had already been anointed by Samuel unto the same, and though Saul was now dead, David was not hasty to take matters into his own hands but desired to submit himself unto God’s directions and act only according to His revealed will. This evidenced the fact that he really trusted in Him who had promised him the kingdom, to give it to him in His own due time and manner, and thus he would possess it with a clear conscience and at the same time avoid all those appearances of evil with which he might know the remaining adherents of Saul would be ready to charge him. So fully did he fulfill the word of his early Psalm, “His strength will I wait upon thee” (Psa 59:9). We never lose anything, my reader, by believing and patiently waiting upon God, but we are always made to suffer when we take things into our own hands and rush blindly ahead.

“Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” (2Sa 2:1). David was prepared to go where the Lord bade him. His particular inquiry about “the cities of *Judah*” was because that was his own tribe and the one to which most of his friends belonged. “And the LORD said unto him, Go up,” that is, from Ziklag into the territory of Judah, though He did not specify any particular city. This is usually the Lord’s method—to first give us a *general* intimation of His will for us and later more specific details little by little. He does not make known to us the whole path at once, but keeps us dependent upon Himself for light and strength, step by step. This is for our good, for our training, though it be a trying of our patience. Patience is a grace of great price in the sight of God, and it is only developed by discipline. May grace be diligently sought and divinely bestowed so that we shall heed that exhortation, “Let patience have her perfect work” (Jam 1:4).

“And the LORD said unto him, Go up.” (2Sa 2:1). The absence of anything more definite was a *testing* of David. Had the flesh been dominant in him at this time, he would have eagerly jumped to the conclusion that he was fully justified in leaving Ziklag immediately and taking prompt measures to obtain the kingdom. Blessed is it to see how he responded to the test. Instead of rushing ahead, he continued to wait on the Lord for more explicit instructions, and asked, “*Whither* shall I go up? (2Sa 2:1)—to which part of Judah, Jerusalem or where? He had paid dearly in the past for taking journeys which the Lord had not ordered and for residing in places which He had not named for him, and now he desired to move only as God should appoint. Reader, have you yet reached this point in your spiritual experience? Have you truly surrendered unto the lordship of Christ, so that you have turned over to Him the entire government and disposing of your life? If not, you know not how much peace, joy, and blessing you are missing.

“And he said, Unto Hebron” (2Sa 2:1). This is recorded for our encouragement. The Lord is never wearied by our asking! Nay, the more childlike we are, the better for us. The more we cast *all* our care upon Him (1Pe 5:7), the more we seek counsel of Him, the more He is honored and pleased. Has He not told us, “In *every thing* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phi 4:6)? That means just what it says and we are greatly the losers, and God is dishonored just in proportion to our disregard of that privilege and duty. The old hymn is true when it says, “O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pains we bear, All because we do not carry, Everything to God in prayer.” The readiness of JEHOVAH to respond unto David’s inquiry is a sure intimation of His willingness to hear us, for He is, “The *same* yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Heb 13:8).

“And he said, Unto *Hebron*” (2Sa 2:1). There is a spiritual beauty in this word which can only be perceived as we compare Scripture with Scripture. In the Old Testament, “Hebron” stands, typically, for *communion*. This may be seen from the first mention of the word, “Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there *an altar* unto the LORD” (Gen 13:18). Again, “So he [Jacob] sent him [Joseph, on an errand of mercy to his brethren] out of the vale of Hebron” (Gen 37:14)—figure of the Father sending the Son on a mission of grace unto His elect. “And they gave Hebron unto Caleb” (Jdg 1:20). The place of fellowship became the portion of the man who followed the Lord “fully” (Num 14:24). How fitting, then, that the restored David should be sent back to “Hebron”—it is ever back unto *communion* the Lord calls His wandering child. O how thankful we should be when the Holy Spirit restores us to communion with God, even though it be at the cost of disappointment and sorrow (Ziklag) to the flesh.

“So David went up thither” (2Sa 2:2). God had graciously granted him the needed word of guidance and he followed out the same. O that all his actions had been controlled by the same rule. How much trouble and grief he had then escaped. But they were not and this makes the more

solemn the contrast presented in the next statement, “And his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal’s wife the Carmelite” (2Sa 2:2). Here was the one blot on the otherwise fair picture—the lusts of the flesh obtruded themselves. Yes, immediately after his having sought guidance from God!—what a warning for us. We are never safe a single moment unless upheld by the arm of Omnipotence. As we have seen in earlier articles, divine chastisement was the sequel to what we read of in 1 Samuel 25:44, so now we may be assured that his retention of “two wives” omened ill for the future. The closing verses of our lesson show plainly that he missed God’s best.

“And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron” (2Sa 2:3). Those who had been David’s companions in tribulation were not forgotten now that he was moving forward toward the kingdom. Blessed foreshadowment was this of, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him” (2Ti 2:12).

“And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah” (2Sa 2:4). David had been *privately* anointed as Saul’s successor (1Sa 16:12-13), now the principal princes in the tribe of Judah *publicly* owned him as their king. They did not take it upon themselves to make him king over all Israel, but left the other tribes to act for themselves. No doubt in this they acted according to the mind of David, who had no desire to force himself on the whole nation at once, preferring to obtain government over them by degrees, as Providence should open his way. “See how David rose gradually. He was first appointed king in reversion, then in possession of one tribe only, and at last over all the tribes. Thus the kingdom of the Messiah, the Son of David, is set up by degrees—He is Lord of all by divine designation, but ‘We see not *yet* all things put under him,’ Hebrews 2:8” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

“And they told David, saying, That the men of Jabesh-gilead were they that buried Saul” (2Sa 2:4). Most probably the first act of David after his anointing by the princes of Judah was to inquire after the body of the late king, that it might be given a decent interment, and so upon his inquiry, he learned what is recorded in 1 Samuel 31:11-13.

“And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the LORD, that ye have showed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him” (2Sa 2:5). David expressed his appreciation of what the men of Jabesh had done in rescuing the bodies of Saul and his sons from the Philistines, and for the kindly care they had taken of them. He pronounced the blessing of the Lord upon them, which probably means that he asked Him to reward them. By thus honouring the memory of his predecessor, he gave evidence that he was not aiming at the crown from any principles of carnal ambition or from any enmity to Saul, but only because he was called of God to it.

“And now the LORD show kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing” (2Sa 2:6). David not only prayed God’s blessing upon those who honoured the remains of Saul, but he promised to remember them himself when opportunity afforded. Finally, he bade them fear not the Philistines, who might resent their action and seek revenge—especially as they no longer had a head over them, but *he*, as king of Judah, would take their part and assist them, “Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them” (2Sa 2:7). Thus did he continue to show his regard for the late king. By sending a deputation to Jabesh, David instituted a conciliatory measure toward the remaining adherents of Saul.

“But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul’s host, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim” (2Sa 2:8). This is a solemn “But,” traceable, we believe, to the “two wives” of verse 2! David was not to come to the throne of all Israel without further opposition. Abner was general of the army and no doubt desired to keep his position. He took Ishbosheth, apparently the only son of Saul now left, to Mahanaim, a city on the other side of the Jordan, in the territory of Gath (Jos 13:24-26)—partly to keep the men of Jabesh-gilead in awe and prevent their joining with David and partly that he might be at some distance both from the Philistines and from David, where he might mature his plans. “Ish-bosheth” signifies “a man of shame.” He was not considered fit to accompany his father to battle, yet was now deemed qualified to occupy the throne to the exclusion of David.

“And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel” (2Sa 2:9). The nation in general had rejected the “Judges” whom God had raised up for them, and had demanded a king—and now in the same rebellious spirit, they refused the prince which the Lord had selected for them. In type, it was Israel preferring Barabbas to Jesus Christ. Abner prevailed till he got all the tribes of Israel, save Judah, to own Ishbosheth as their king. All this time David was quiet, offering no resistance, thus keeping his oath in 1 Samuel 24:21-22!

“The believer’s progress must be gradual. His faith and his graces must be proved and his pride subdued before he can properly endure any kind of prosperity. And for these purposes the Lord often employs the perverseness of his brethren without their knowledge or contrary to their intention. In the professing church, few honour those whom the Lord will honour. Before Jesus came, and in each succeeding generation, the very builders have rejected such as heaven intended for eminent situations, and His servants must be conformed to Him. Ambition, jealousy, envy, and other evil passions cause men to rebel against the Word of God, but they generally attempt to conceal their real motives under plausible pretenses. The believer’s wisdom, however, consists in waiting quietly and silently under injuries, and in leaving God to plead his cause, except it be evidently his duty to be active” (Thomas Scott).

DISPENSATIONALISM

9. The Word of God (Concluded)

“For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness...David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom 4:3, 6-8). In view of such a plain declaration, who dares to affirm that the patriarchs were strangers unto the salvation of which *we* are made partakers? Christians are “heirs” of Abraham (Gal 3:18, 29), which means they possess (by faith) the identical blessings which God covenanted unto the father of all them that believe.

We have the same Gospel which was preached unto Abraham (Gal 3:8), yea, which was preached unto Israel in the wilderness after they received the law at Sinai (Heb 4:2). The Old Testament saints were participants in the same covenant blessings which we are (2Sa 23:5 compared with Heb 13:20). The apostle makes the redeemed Israelites equal to us in the significance of the ordinances (or “sacraments”). “Since the Lord not only favored them with the same benefits, but illustrated His grace among them by the same symbols, 1 Corinthians 10:1-11” (John Calvin, 1509-1564). They desired the same “heavenly country” which we do and God “hath prepared for *them* a city” (Heb 11:16), as He has for us.

Abraham “rejoiced to see my day” declared Christ, “and he saw it, and was glad” (Joh 8:56). Dying Jacob said, “I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD” (Gen 49:18). *What* “salvation” could he expect when he felt himself about to expire, unless he had seen in death the commencement of a new life? Moses “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of *Christ* greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of *the reward*” (Heb 11:24-26). Job exclaimed, “I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God” (Job 19:25-26). David avowed, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but *God* is the strength of my heart, and *my portion forever*” (Psa 73:25-26).

What is true here in the general pertains also unto particulars. Not only was God’s dealings with His people in Old Testament times substantially the same as those with His people under the New Testament era, but in many, many details too. So instead of seeking to pit Scripture against Scripture (as the “Dispensationalists” are constantly doing), let us rather compare passage with passage, and note the blessed harmony which exists between the two Testaments. For example, do we read “He believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for *righteousness*” (Gen 15:6), then in Acts 13:39, we are also told, “By him all that *believe* are *justified*” (pronounced righteous). Did God say to His people of old, “Ye are strangers and sojourners” (Lev 25:23), so does He now address them, “I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims” (1Pe 2:11). Are we told that “The LORD’S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of *his inheritance*” (Deu 32:9), Paul also prayed that we might know what is “the riches of the glory of *his inheritance in the saints*” (Eph 1:18).

In Deuteronomy 33:3, we are told, “All his saints are in *thy hand*,” while in John 10:28, Christ says of His sheep, “They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of *my hand*.” “Yield yourselves unto the LORD” (2Ch 30:8). Compare with this, “Yield yourselves unto God” (Rom 6:13). “And my God *put into mine heart* to gather together the nobles” (Neh 7:5). Compare with this, “For it is God which *worketh in you* both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13). “Thou gavest also thy good spirit *to instruct them*” (Neh 9:20). Compare with this, “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will *guide you into all truth*” (Joh 16:13). “I will *behold thy face* in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with *thy likeness*” (Psa 17:15). Compare with this, “We shall be *like him*; for we shall *see him* as he is” (1Jo 3:2). Read carefully Psalm 34:12-16 and compare 1 Peter 3:10-12.

“I will cry unto God most high; unto God that *performeth all things for me*” (Psa 57:2). Compare, “But our sufficiency is of God” (2Co 3:5). “Men shall be blessed *in him*” (Psa 72:17). Compare, “Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ*” (Eph 1:3). Read carefully Psalm 89:30-33 and compare Hebrews 12:8-11. “For there the LORD *commanded* the blessing, even *life for evermore*” (Psa 133:3). Compare, “The Father which sent

me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his *commandment is life everlasting*” (John 12:49-50). “Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places” (Psa 135:6). Compare “Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph 1:11). “In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with *strength in my soul*” (Psa 138:3). Compare, “Strengthened with might by his Spirit *in the inner man*” (Eph 3:16).

Before pointing out some more of the numerous parallelisms between the Old and New Testaments, let us here anticipate an objection. While there be many close comparisons between the earlier and the later Scriptures, yet there are more numerous points of dissimilarity—how are the latter to be explained? In meeting this objection, let us begin by noting that Christians are said to “*Walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham*” (Rom 4:12). How, we ask, could they do so if they had a *different* rule of faith to walk by? To this it may be answered, Abraham circumcised all the male members of his household (Gen 17:23). Ought we to do the same? If we answer, No, then the objector imagines he has scored a victory. That is his mistake, arising from failure to distinguish between *two distinct kinds of divine laws*. This brings us to a point of considerable importance and one upon which there is widespread ignorance today. We ask the reader to give his best attention to what follows.

The divine commands and precepts recorded in Scripture need to be classified under two heads—moral and positive—a distinction well-known among God’s people in days gone by when they were better instructed. Moral duties are those which pertain prior to any command to perform them, existing in the very nature of the case. Positive duties are binding only because of the divine command and would not be duties at all did not God enjoin them. Hence, there is a *double* responsibility resting on us to discharge the former, but only a single one to discharge the latter. For example, the worship of God is a *moral* duty, something which in the very nature of the case we owe unto God—as His creatures, as the recipients of His bounties. But to worship God in a certain place (the temple), after a prescribed order, at specified times, were *positive* duties which God required of the nation of Israel under the old covenant. Again—to believe in Christ and surrender to His Lordship is a *moral* duty devolving on all who hear the Gospel, whereas baptism is a *positive* duty required of His disciples.

“Positive laws are taken to be such as have no reason for them in themselves, nothing in the matter of them is taken from the things themselves commanded, but do depend merely and solely on the sovereign will and pleasure of God. Such were the laws and institutions of the sacrifices of old, and such are those which concern the sacraments and other things of the like nature under the New Testament. Moral laws are such as have the reasons of them taken from the nature of the things themselves, required in them. For they are good, from their respect to the nature of God Himself, *and* from that nature and order of all things which He hath placed in the creation. So that this sort of law is but declarative of the absolute goodness of what they require. The other is constitutive of it, as unto some certain ends. Laws positive, as they are occasionally given, so they are esteemed alterable at pleasure. Being fixed by mere will and prerogative, without respect to anything that should make them necessary, antecedently to their being enacted, they may by the same authority at any time be taken away and abolished. Such, I say, are they in their own nature and as to any firmitude that they have from their own subject matter. But with respect to God’s determination, positive divine laws may become eventually unalterable.

“And this difference is there between legal and evangelical institutions. The laws of both are positive only, equally proceeding from sovereign will and pleasure, and in their own natures equally alterable. But to the former, God had in His purpose fixed a determinative time and

season wherein they should expire, or be altered by His authority. To the latter, He hath attached a perpetuity and unchangeableness during the state and condition of His church in this world. The other sort of laws are perpetual and unalterable in themselves, so far as they are of that sort that is moral. For although a law of that kind may especially enjoin such circumstances as may be changed and varied, as did the whole Decalogue in the commonwealth of Israel, yet so far as it is moral, that is, as its commands or prohibitions are necessary emergencies, or expressions of the good or evil of the things it commands or forbids, it is invariable” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

“By positive laws of God we mean such institutions as depend only on the sovereign will and pleasure of God, and which He might not have enjoined and yet His nature has remained the same. Such was the command given to Adam not to eat the forbidden fruit, for we can easily conceive that some other test of obedience might have been given and which, if it had been given, would have been equally binding. And all the ceremonial precepts under the Mosaic dispensation were certainly of this description, for they have long since been actually abrogated by Christ, the Law-Giver of the Church” (Ashbel Green’s Lectures on the Shorter Catechism, 1762-1848).

If the above be carefully pondered, the very real distinction between moral and positive duties ought not to be difficult to grasp. The former are manifestations of the *nature* of God, the latter are expressive of His *will*. The former proceed from God’s goodness and righteousness, the latter issue from His absolute sovereignty. The former are designed for *our* good, the latter are for the enforcement of *His* authority. The former are necessarily unchanging, the latter may be rescinded when and as the Law-Giver pleases. These two diverse elements may combine in a single institution. That is seen in *the holy Sabbath*—it is a bounden moral duty that some part of our time be set apart and dedicated unto God as it is for our own good that we periodically rest from all work, but it is by a *positive* decree God makes known how much time and *which* day of the week shall be sanctified to His worship. The moral duty of the Sabbath is permanent and perpetual, but the particular day on which it falls may be changed by God as He pleases.

The natural pre-eminence of the man above the woman ensues from the order of creation, in that the man was first made and the woman for the man, as the apostle argues in 1 Timothy 2:12-13, and therefore it is the moral duty of the wife to be subject to her husband. In like manner, the original creation of only one man and one woman gave the natural or moral law of marriage—polygamy and fornication becoming the violation of the law of nature. A divine precept given for the due exercise of this principle *completes* the law of it, with the addition of a *formal* obligation. The moral nature with which we are now endowed inclines unto actions suitable thereto. The command of God concerning the regulation thereof transforms it into a formal law.

“The LORD *will perfect* that which concerneth me” (Psa 138:8). Compare, “He which hath begun a good work in you *will perform it*” (Phi 1:6). “*Draw me*, we will run after thee” (Song 1:4). Compare, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me *draw him*” (Joh 6:44). “Thou art all fair, my love; there is *no spot in thee*” (Song 4:7). Compare, “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son *cleanseth us from all sin*” (1Jo 1:7). “How beautiful are *thy feet with shoes*, O prince’s daughter!” (Song 7:1). Compare, “And your feet *shod with* the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15). “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa 64:6). Compare, “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom 7:18). “That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations” (Isa 66:11). Compare, “Desire the sincere *milk of the word*” (1Pe 2:2). “I have loved thee with an everlasting love” (Jer 31:3). Compare, “Beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation” (2Th 2:13). “From me is thy fruit found” (Hos 14:8). Compare, “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit” (Joh 15:5). “The just shall live by his faith” (Hab 2:4). Compare, “We

walk by faith” (2Co 5:7). “I will strengthen them *in the LORD*” (Zec 10:12). Compare, “Be strong *in the Lord*” (Eph 6:10).

Above we have given twenty-five examples of the minute harmony which exists between the Old and New Testaments. The moral teachings of the one are harmonious with the moral teachings of the other. The promises given to the patriarchs were made to them not as Jews, *but as believers* and therefore the spiritual contents of them belong unto believers today. The promises given to carnal Israel are the legitimate property of the spiritual Israel now. The moral laws and precepts given under the old economy are equally binding upon those who live under the new covenant. The positive (including the “ceremonial”) laws which God gave throughout the Old Testament, and which were either *special* injunctions to particular individuals or *typical* institutions which were imposed “*until* the time of reformation,” (Heb 9:10) are *not* binding on Christians today.

In Genesis 22:2, we hear God bidding Abraham, “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac...and offer him there for a burnt offering,” whereas in Genesis 22:12, we find Him saying, “Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him.” With as much propriety might seducers of souls say that *these* two commandments “can only be reconciled by rightly dividing the word and placing them in separate dispensations,” as to make the other arbitrary divisions of Scripture which they do. As well might they say that the book of Acts “does not belong to *us* because God does not require Christians to remain on an endangered ship and refuse to get into the lifeboats” See Act 27:31, as to argue that Matthew’s Gospel “is not for us” because when the Lord is pleased to grant physical healing to one of His elect today, he is no longer required to go and show himself “to the priest” (Mat 8:4).

Our unwelcome task (for the present, at any rate) is completed. From what has been before us in these papers we now draw up the following bill of indictment against the “Dispensationalists.”

1. Their starting-point is wrong. They begin at the Garden of Eden instead of going back to the everlasting covenant.
2. They rob God’s children of many of their Father’s precious promises.
3. They force into 2 Timothy 2:15 a meaning which its context in nowise warrants.
4. They are all at sea concerning the mystical Body of Christ, failing to see that the Church of God is commensurate with the entire election of grace.
5. They introduce the utmost confusion into the study of prophecy by ignoring the fundamental distinction between carnal or national Israel and the spiritual “Israel of God.”
6. They ignore the grace of God in Old Testament times and teach the monstrous error that under the Mosaic economy sinners were saved by their own doings.
7. They repudiate the moral law of God as a rule of life for the Christian today.
8. They invidiously seek to pit Scripture against Scripture, instead of showing their perfect unity and lovely harmony.
9. They split up the one predestinated, adopted, redeemed, and regenerated family of God into various groups and cliques, many of them going so far as to insist that the father of the faithful will have no part in the inheritance of many of his children.
10. They are woefully ignorant of the vast difference there is between the commands and precepts of God which are special and peculiar and those which are general and universal, between those which are evanescent and those which are perpetual, between ceremonial and moral duties. Thus they are perverters of God’s truth, enemies of the faith, and their preachings and writings should be shunned by all who desire the *pure* milk of the Word.

N.B: God willing, these articles will be followed by a shorter series on “The Covenants.”

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Carson on Esther (Part Six)

We may recognize the hand of Providence in overcoming the fears of Esther when solicited to approach the king in behalf of the Jews. By going uncalled into the inner court, she would subject herself to death by law. Judging from the manners of our own country, we may think that her risk was small. But in estimating her danger, we ought to take into account the caprice of despots in countries where polygamy prevails. This moment they devote to destruction the object on which they doted the moment before. Besides, Esther had reason to apprehend an alienation of affection or at least a coldness, as she had not been called into his presence for thirty days previously. Here, indeed, is another providential circumstance that ought to excite our wonder. Whatever was the reason why the king had so long neglected her, the thing was undoubtedly a part of the divine plan, that Esther's danger might be increased, her faith put to the severer trial, and His own power more fully manifested in obtaining for her a gracious reception. Let the children of God look at this and take a lesson. When He calls them to arduous duties, instead of smoothing the way and removing the appearance of difficulty or danger, He often, by His providence, throws obstacles in their way. A wife, in following Christ, instead of delighting her husband, may give him the greatest offence. Children may make their very parents their enemies by their obedience to their heavenly Father. Instead of inducing His disciples to discover His laws and ordinances by the prospects of greater acceptance with the world, He promises them nothing but ridicule and hatred. Instead of flattering every instance of obedience with additional honours and rewards from men, the discovery of the laws and institutions of Christ's kingdom may be followed by the loss of all things. God will not bribe His people to serve Him. He will not secure their allegiance by hiding them from danger. They must give their life, if He calls for it, or give up the hope of the heavenly inheritance. They must count the cost and be willing to incur it. They must take up the cross and follow Him. They are not to fear him who has power to kill the body, but rather Him who can punish both soul and body in hell forever. *Christ must be obeyed in the prospect of every danger.* He that loves his life shall lose life eternal. Yet, in general, it may be observed, that when Christians are made willing to face every danger for Christ's sake, the greatest real dangers that they may have dreaded are turned away from them. When God has tried them sufficiently, *He removes the trial.* Esther's apparent danger was heightened by her long neglect. Yet, after all, her God procured her acceptance with the king.

It is absurd in any at this time to underrate the trial of Esther. She must herself, doubtless, have been a better judge of the extent of her danger than we can now possibly be and she estimated it so highly that at first she altogether refused to comply with the request even of Mordecai, to whom she had in all other things paid the deference due to a father. "All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days" (Est 4:11). Her life, then, was actually forfeited by the act and to spare her was the pardon of a criminal condemned to

die. Besides, she must, in this approach to the king, appear in a new character, as a captive, as a Jewess, as one of these already given up to death in the grant to Haman. In such circumstances she might well be apprehensive that by her death he might make way for a successor. What trust is to be put in the affections of a capricious despot? What confidence is to be placed in the unfeeling man who could give up the beautiful Vashti? Might not some reasons of state operate to the destruction of Esther?

Her apprehensions of the magnitude of her danger was evident in the preparations with which she thought it necessary to approach him. All the Jews in Shushan fasted three days, night and day, before she ventured on the dangerous service. [The Jews still, superstitiously, observe this “fast,” called the Fast of Purim. A.W.P.]. It is also evident in the words in which she expressed her determination, that having counted the cost, she was prepared to give her life as a sacrifice for her friends, “If I perish, I perish” (Est 4:16). She consented not to undertake this mission till she overcame the fear of death.

What a blessing is marriage according to the institution of God! Was she truly a wife who could not trust her life with her husband? Better to be the wife of a Christian peasant, than the queen of a Persian despot. In the midst of all her regal honours, what happiness could Esther enjoy in her situation? Yet with what preposterous artifice did she and her guardian court the dangerous height! The prospect of wretchedness will not deter the fallen human mind from seeking the glories of this world, even at the expense of the soul. Man is a strange compound of meanness and of pride.

Let us glance at the arguments by which Mordecai prevailed on the queen to undertake to intercede for the Jews. They are such as were calculated to produce the desired effect and were, no doubt, suggested by a gracious Providence. The faith manifested by Mordecai in the divine protection, approaches to that of Abraham himself. If, then, faith is the gift of God, there is no doubt that Providence directed the resolution of Esther. “Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Est 4:13-14). Notwithstanding the greatness of the danger, Mordecai appears confident that his God would raise up deliverance from some quarter. He rightly interprets the intention of Providence in raising her to royalty for this very occasion. Here we have a beautiful example of the view of Providence entertained at that time by the people of God. Mordecai knew well the events that led to the exaltation of Esther. He knew that she was raised in the ordinary course of human affairs. He knew that her exaltation was owing to the divorce of Vashti and to her own surpassing beauty. An atheist would have no difficulty in accounting for it. Yet Mordecai believed also that *God* raised her and justly concluded from the present danger that His purpose in raising her was for the very purpose of interceding for the Jews. At all events, he concluded, that as she had it in her power to make an effort for their preservation with probable hopes of success, should she refuse to make trial of her influence, she might expect that God would signally punish her and save His people in some other way.

Let all Christians learn from this not to be backward in using their influence to protect the people of God and serve the interests of His kingdom. If they hide their face, God will provide other instruments and they shall not be without chastisement. If from apprehensions of danger they decline any service that the providence of God lays before them, the very thing that is dreaded may come upon them and others may be honoured to do the work in safety. “Thou

therefore,” says God to Jeremiah, “gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee” (Jer 1:17-19).

By the Gospel, the elect of God are to be saved from a greater destruction than that which threatened the Jews in the time of Esther. The Gospel is to be spread over the world by the means of the disciples of Christ. Let them therefore brave danger, and shame, and loss, in publishing the glad tidings of salvation. Why have eighteen centuries passed since the giving of the command to preach the Gospel to all nations, while many have not yet heard of the name of Jesus? The Lord’s time indeed may not be come, but this does not excuse the indolence of His servants. The commandment is come, which is the only thing with which we are concerned. The Lord will, no doubt, raise up instruments to effect His purpose in the proper time, but this will not make up the loss or excuse the neglect of His slumbering servants.

By the institutions of Christ, His children are to be nourished and advanced in the knowledge of Him. But the nature of *His* kingdom is yet little understood and every one of His ordinances, having been changed in Babylon, still remain incrustated with superstition and human inventions. The children of God, then, are deprived of much of that wholesome nourishment which the pure ordinances of God are calculated to yield. Let allegiance to Jesus and the love of His people influence His disciples, who know His will, to zeal in making it known to others. Let no mistaken complaisance, with respect to the corruptions of divine institutions, prevent them from denouncing everything contrary to the Word of God. Let not the emolument of office, the reproach of the world, or deference to the prejudice of God’s people, induce them to practice what is not taught in Scripture or to decline adopting everything enjoined by the authority of Christ. Has He not Himself said, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Ye are my disciples if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

Let not Christians who know the law and ordinances of Jesus fear to exert themselves in their defense. The corruptions of the ordinances of Christ are sanctioned by so many prejudices and strengthened by so many interests, that Christians in general are irritated when they are called to inquire. The wise virgins have laid themselves down to slumber and they are peevish with those who attempt to awake them. If they do arise for a moment, it is usually to plead for a little more sleep, and to remonstrate against the violence and cruelty of the untimely intruders. He who will revive all the ordinances of Christ and denounce everything human in religion, must be prepared for a kind of martyrdom even from Christians. This is much more painful than the enmity of the world, but even this he is not to fear. If believers, from the apprehension of becoming unpopular even with the churches of Christ, hide their knowledge or decline to employ their talents according to their opportunities, let them learn from the lesson of Mordecai to Esther, that God can do *His* work without them, and that in some way they may expect the divine displeasure. There cannot be a doubt that a Christian consults his good, upon the whole, by boldly and unreservedly doing the will of God. The more he shows himself dead to censure and to praise, the more he disregards gain and loss when they stand in the way of duty—the more he will have reason to rejoice in the end. Let his ambitions always be fired with the hope of ruling over ten cities. Esther, to save the people of God, flung herself at the feet of the despot, at the hazard of her life, but instead of being put to death, Esther met with a most gracious reception. A day will come

at last, when obedience to the most disagreeable of Christ's commandments will appear great gain.

We may also perceive here the good effect of wholesome admonition on a stumbling servant of God. The fear of man had prevailed over the love of her brethren in the mind of Esther. But faithful admonition kept her from falling. How forcible are right words! From the suggestion of Mordecai, it appears that though the royal decree consigned the whole Jewish race to death, yet that she counted on safety in the palace as the wife of the king. But Mordecai undeceives her on this and took away her flattering hopes. By declining to do duty, she put herself from under the divine protection and engaged the displeasure of Providence to seek her out for destruction. Notwithstanding all her confidence in her situation, he denounces death to her and her father's house if she declined the dangerous service. It is always under some false confidence that the children of God decline to obey Him. To expose them is, by the divine blessing, the means of recovering the stumbling individual. Let not the servants of Jesus perceive one another going astray or halting on the Christian race without endeavoring to recover them. By the words of Mordecai, through the divine blessing, Esther was brought back from a state of abject timidity to the confidence and boldness of a martyr. "If I perish, I perish!" Such ought to be the resolution of all God's servants. They should count the cost and be willing to part with property, fame, popularity, friends, relatives, life, for the sake of the Lord Jesus. "If any man come to me," says Christ, "and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Luk 14:26-27). An apostle says, "As Christ laid down his life for us, we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren."

An incidental remark or an illusive application of the words in which Esther expressed her devotedness, may not be useless. People in a certain state of mind are represented as saying, "If I perish, I will perish at the feet of Jesus!" Surely there can be no similarity between the situation of a person approaching a despot, contrary to law, at the hazard of life and that of one approaching the merciful Redeemer, by the command of God, with the assurance of pardon. There is no possibility of perishing at the feet of Jesus. Men perish through unbelief and in refusing to come to Him. "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (Joh 5:40). Whosoever comes to Jesus shall not be cast out.

From the conduct of Mordecai on this occasion, we may see that confidence in God *does not preclude the use of means*. Mordecai had immediate recourse to the influence of Esther, though, it is evident, he ultimately relied on the power and providence of God. It is obvious, from his observations that he expected preservation from God through the use of means, even had Esther declined the intercession. "If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place" (Est 4:14). Let us learn from this that as God has promised to protect us and provide for us, it is *through the means of His appointment*, vigilance, prudence, and industry, that we are to look for these blessings.

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

4. Its Basis

In our last article, we contemplated the *problem* which is presented in the justifying or pronouncing righteous one who is a flagrant violator of the law of God. Some may have been surprised at the introduction of such a term as “problem.” As there are many in the ranks of the ungodly who feel that the world *owes* them a living, so there are not a few Pharisees in Christendom who suppose it is *due* them that at death their Creator should take them to heaven. But different far is it with one who has been enlightened and convicted by the Holy Spirit, so that he sees himself to be a filthy wretch, a vile rebel against God. Such a one will ask, seeing that the Word of God so plainly declares, “There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination” (Rev 21:27), how is it possible that *I* can ever gain admission into the heavenly Jerusalem? How can it be that one so completely devoid of righteousness as I am, and so filled with unrighteousness, should ever be pronounced just by a holy God?

Various attempts have been made by unbelieving minds to solve this problem. Some have reasoned that if they now turn over a new leaf, thoroughly reform their lives and henceforth walk in obedience to God’s law, they shall be approved before the divine Tribunal. This scheme, reduced to simple terms, is salvation by our own works. But such a scheme is utterly untenable and salvation by such means is absolutely impossible. The works of a reformed sinner cannot be the meritorious or efficacious cause of his salvation, and that for the following reasons. First, no provision is made for his previous failures. Suppose that henceforth I never again transgress God’s law, what is to atone for my past sins? Second, a fallen and sinful creature cannot produce that which is perfect, and nothing short of perfection is acceptable to God. Third, were it possible for us to be saved by our own works, then the sufferings and death of Christ were needless. Fourth, salvation by our own merits would entirely eclipse the glory of divine grace.

Others suppose this problem may be solved by an appeal to the bare *mercy* of God. But mercy is not an attribute that overshadows all the other divine perfections—justice, truth, and holiness are also operative in the salvation of God’s elect. The law is not set aside, but honored and magnified. The truth of God in His solemn threats is not sullied, but faithfully carried out. The divine righteousness is not flouted, but vindicated. One of God’s perfections is not exercised to the injury of any of the others, but all of them shine forth with equal clearness in the plan which divine wisdom devised. Mercy at the expense of justice over-ridden would not suit the divine government, and justice enforced to the exclusion of mercy would not befit the divine character. The problem which no finite intelligence could solve was how *both* might be exercised in the sinner’s salvation.

A striking example of *mercy helpless* before the claims of the law occurs in Daniel 6. There we find that Darius, the king of Babylon, was induced by his nobles to sign a decree that any subject within his kingdom who should pray, or “ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days” (verse 7) save the king himself, should be cast into the den of lions. Daniel knowing this, nevertheless, continued to pray before God as hitherto. Whereupon the nobles acquainted Darius

with his violation of the royal edict, which “according to the law of the Medes and Persians *altereth not*,” (verse 8) and demanded his punishment. Now Daniel stood high in the king’s favour and he greatly desired to show clemency unto him, so he “set his heart on Daniel *to* deliver him: and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him” (verse 14). But he found no way out of the difficulty—the law *must* be honored, so Daniel was cast into the lion’s den.

An equally striking example of *law helpless* in the presence of mercy is found in John 8. There we read of a woman taken in the act of adultery. The scribes and Pharisees apprehended her and set her before Christ, charging her with the crime and reminding the Saviour that “Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned” (verse 5). She was unquestionably guilty and her accusers were determined that the penalty of the law should be inflicted upon her. The Lord turned to them and said, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (verse 7), and they, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, leaving the adulteress alone with Christ. Turning to her, He asked, “Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?” She replied, “No man, Lord,” and He answered, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” (verses 10-11)

The two adverse principles are seen *operating in conjunction* in Luke 15. The “father” could not have the (prodigal) son at his table clad in the rags of the far country, but he could go out and meet him in those rags. He could fall on his neck and kiss him in those rags—it was blessedly characteristic of his *grace* so to do. But to seat him at his table in garments suited to the swine-troughs would not be fitting. But the grace which brought the father out to the prodigal “reigned” through that *righteousness* which brought the prodigal in to the father’s house. It had not been “grace” had the father waited till the prodigal decked himself out in suitable garments of his own providing, nor would it have been “righteousness” to bring him to his table in his rags. Both grace and righteousness shone forth in their respective beauty when the father said, “Bring forth *the best robe*, and *put it on him*” (verse 22).

It is through Christ and His atonement that the justice and mercy of God, His righteousness and grace, meet in the justifying of a believing sinner. In Christ is found the solution to every problem which sin has raised. In the cross of Christ, *every* attribute of God shines forth in its meridian splendor. In the satisfaction which the Redeemer offered unto God, every claim of the law, whether preceptive or penal, has been fully met. God has been infinitely more honored by the obedience of the last Adam than He was dishonored by the disobedience of the first Adam. The justice of God was infinitely more magnified when its awful sword smote the beloved Son, than had every member of the human race burned forever and ever in the lake of fire. There is infinitely more efficacy in the blood of Christ to cleanse, than there is in sin to befoul. There is infinitely more merit in Christ’s one perfect righteousness than there is demerit in the combined unrighteousness of all the ungodly. Well may we exclaim, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal 6:14).

But while many are agreed that the atoning death of Christ is the meritorious cause of His peoples’ salvation, there are now few indeed who can give any clear Scriptural *explanation of the way and manner by which* the work of Christ secures the justification of all who believe. Hence the need for a clear and full statement thereon. Hazy ideas at this point are both dishonouring to God and unsettling to our peace. It is of first importance that the Christian should obtain a clear understanding of the *ground on which* God pardons his sins and grants him a title to the heavenly inheritance. Perhaps this may best be set forth under three words—substitution, identification, imputation. As their Surety and Sponsor, Christ entered the place occupied by His people under the law, so identifying Himself with them as to be their Head and Representative, and as such He

assumed and discharged all their legal obligations. Their liabilities being transferred to Him, His merits being transferred to them.

The Lord Jesus has wrought out for His people a perfect righteousness by obeying the law in thought and word and deed, and this righteousness is imputed to them, reckoned to their account. The Lord Jesus has suffered the penalty of the law in their stead and through His atoning death they are cleansed from all guilt. As *creatures*, they were under obligations to obey God's law; as *criminals* (transgressors), they were under the death-sentence of the law. Therefore, to fully meet our liabilities and discharge our debts it was necessary that our Substitute should both obey and die. The shedding of Christ's blood blotted out our sins, but it did not, of itself, provide the "best robe" for us. To silence the accusations of the law against us so that there is now "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" is simply a *negative* blessing—something more was required, namely, a *positive* righteousness, the keeping of the law, so that we might be entitled to its blessing and reward.

In Old Testament times, the name under which the Messiah and Mediator was foretold is, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer 23:6). It was plainly predicted by Daniel that He should come here "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to *bring in everlasting righteousness*" (Dan 9:24). Isaiah announced, "Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" (Isa 45:24-25). And again, he represents each of the redeemed exclaiming, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isa 61:10).

In Romans 4:6-8 we read, "David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Here we are shown the *inseparability* of the two things—God imputing "righteousness" and God not imputing "sins." The two are never divided. Unto whom God imputes not sin, He imputes righteousness and unto whom He imputes righteousness, He imputes not sin. But the particular point which we are most anxious for the reader to grasp is, *whose* "righteousness" is it that God imputes or reckons to the account of the one who believes? The answer is, that righteousness which was wrought out by our Surety, that obedience to the law which was vicariously rendered by our Sponsor, even "the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (2Pe 1:1). This righteousness is not only "unto all" but also "*upon* all them that believe" (Rom 3:22). It is called "the righteousness *of God*" because it was the righteousness of the God-man Mediator, just as in Acts 20:28 His blood is called the *blood of God*.

The "righteousness of God" which is mentioned so frequently in the Roman epistle refers *not* to the essential righteousness of the divine character, for *that* cannot possibly be imputed or legally transferred to any creature. When we are told in Romans 10:3 that the Jews were "ignorant of God's righteousness," it most certainly does not mean they were in the dark concerning the divine rectitude or that they knew nothing about God's justice, but it signifies that they were unenlightened as to the righteousness which the God-man Mediator had vicariously wrought out for His people. This is abundantly clear from the remainder of that verse, "and going about to establish *their own righteousness*"—not their own rectitude or justice, but performing works by which they hoped to merit acceptance with God. So tightly did they cling to this delusion, they

“submitted not themselves unto the righteousness of God,” that is, they refused to turn from their self-righteousness and put their trust in the obedience and sufferings of the incarnate Son of God.

“I would explain what we mean by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. Sometimes the expression is taken by our divines in a larger sense, for the imputation of all that Christ did and suffered for our redemption whereby we are free from guilt, and stand righteous in the sight of God; and so implies the imputation both of Christ’s satisfaction and obedience. But here I intend it in a stricter sense, for the imputation of that righteousness or moral goodness that consists in the obedience of Christ. And by that obedience being imputed to us is meant no other than this, that that righteousness of Christ is accepted for us and admitted instead of that perfect inherent righteousness that ought to be in ourselves: Christ’s perfect obedience shall be reckoned to our account, so that we shall have the benefit of it, as though we had performed it ourselves, and so we suppose, that a title to eternal life is given us as the reward of this righteousness” (Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758).

The one passage which casts the clearest light upon that aspect of justification which we are now considering is 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Here we have the counter imputations—of our sins to Christ, of His righteousness to us. As the teaching of this verse is of such vital moment, let us endeavor to consider its terms the more closely. *How* was Christ “made sin for us”? By *God imputing to Him* our disobedience or our transgressions of the law. In like manner, we are made “the righteousness of God in him” (in Christ, not in ourselves) *by God imputing to us* Christ’s obedience, His fulfilling the precepts of the law for us.

As Christ “knew no sin” by inward defilement or personal commission, so we “knew” or had no righteousness of our own by inward conformity to the law or by personal obedience to it. As Christ was “made sin” by having our sins placed to His account or charged upon Him in a judicial way, and as it was not by any criminal conduct of His own that He was “made sin,” so it is not by any pious activities of our own that we become “righteous.” Christ was not “made sin” by the infusion of depravity, nor are we “made righteous” by the infusion of holiness. Though personally holy, our Sponsor did, by entering our law-place, render Himself officially liable to the wrath of God; and so though personally unholy, we are, by virtue of our legal identification with Christ, entitled to the favor of God. As the consequence of Christ’s being “made sin for us” was that “the LORD laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6), so the consequence of Christ’s obedience being reckoned to our account is that God lays righteousness “*upon* all them that believe” (Rom 3:22). As our sins were the judicial ground of the sufferings of Christ, by which sufferings He satisfied justice, so Christ’s righteousness is the judicial ground of our acceptance with God, by which our pardon is an act of justice.

Notice carefully that in 2 Corinthians 5:21, it is *God* who “made” or legally constituted Christ to be “sin for us,” though as Hebrews 10:7 shows, the Son gladly acquiesced therein. “He was made sin by imputation: the sins of all His people were transferred unto Him, laid upon Him, and placed to His account and having them upon Him He was treated by the justice of God as if He had been not only a sinner, but a mass of sin: for to be made sin is a stronger expression than to be made a sinner” (John Gill, 1697-1771). “That we might be made the righteousness of God in him” signifies to be legally constituted righteous before God—justified. “It is a righteousness ‘in Him,’ in Christ and not in ourselves, and therefore must mean the righteousness of Christ—so called, because it is wrought by Christ, who is God over all, the true God and eternal life” (Ibid.).

The same counter-exchange which has been before us in 2 Corinthians 5:21 is found again in Galatians 3:13-14, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.” As the Surety of His people, Christ was “made under the law” (Gal 4:4), stood in their law-place and stead, and having all their sins imputed to Him and the law finding them all upon Him, condemned Him for them and so the justice of God delivered Him up to the accursed death of the cross. The purpose, as well as the consequence, of this was, “That the blessing of Abraham might come *on* the Gentiles.” The “blessing of Abraham” (as Rom 4 shows) was justification by faith through the righteousness of Christ.

*Upon a Life I did not live,
Upon a Death I did not die;
Another's death, Another's life
I'd rest my soul eternally.*

GOATS

It is our steadily deepening conviction that the “goats” of Matthew 25:32-33, 41-46 refer not to the openly wicked and profane, but to those who pose as the real children of God, that is, to *professing Christians*. We wrote to a Brother in Australia who is engaged in the rearing of goats, and is making a close study of their characteristics and ways. What he says confirms our opinion, for in many respects these animals adumbrate and illustrate the religious goats. We quote the leading points of interest from his letter, adding a few comments thereon.

“From the beginning they were chosen (by a woman!) as being the most suitable instruments *to deceive* a blind and fleshly child of God (Gen 27:9)”—the *first* reference to “goats” in Scripture! “They were taken ‘from the flock’,” intimating they typified those associated with the true people of God. “But why not a lamb! Ah, even one who was blind and could not ‘see afar off’ could not be deceived into believing Jacob was Esau if he had been covered with the skins and wool of a lamb!”

The next reference to “goats” is in Genesis 30:32, where we find Jacob proposing to Laban that he should receive the “brown” cattle and sheep (generally called “black sheep”) and the “spotted and speckled among the goats” as his remuneration, upon which Brother Connerton asks, “Is not this the ‘hire’ chosen by shepherds who are *not right with God*?” Sad to say, it is—typifying those backslidden servants of God who are content to minister unto and receive their salary from a flock of “black sheep” and “speckled goats,” or white-washed worldlings.

Next we read, “They took Joseph’s coat, and killed *a kid of the goats*, and dipped the coat in the blood” (Gen 37:31). “This is parallel in principle with, I may almost say in detail, with Genesis 27:9.” True, for the sons of Jacob did not propose to deceive their father—who was out of communion with God—by dipping Joseph’s coat in the blood of a lamb! Ah, is not God just in permitting *us* to be deceived by the “goats” when we are out of touch with Himself?

“Most solemn is Exodus 36:14.” The tabernacle—type of Christ and His people in union with Him—was covered with the skins of “goats,” *over which* was a covering of rams’ skins (Exo 36:19). “Our true character, and *His also*, is concealed from the world by the ‘goats.’ How awe-inspiring to notice them taking cover under ‘the rams’ skins *dyed red*’.” There is nothing which so hides the true character of Christianity on earth as the worldly and fleshly lives of empty professors who claim to be under the blood of Christ.

“Ezekiel 34:18 (see previous verse) is a perfect picture of what goats do. Pastures become ‘goat sick’—where goats are left in green pastures, they afterward become barren (whereas sheep *improve* them!) and nothing—including the goat himself—will eat there. If you chain him, he will cry all day and trample it down, and sooner starve than eat it. They will mark all trees, especially fruit trees, climbing up and breaking off the branches. Scientists tell us that great deserts in the East owe their existence to the goat, which once fed on them, but not a blade of grass nor tree is now to be seen there.” How like thousands of “churches” today, where the Spirit has been “quenched” by a preponderance of “goats” (unregenerate) in the membership, and now all that is there is spiritual desolation.

“Goats are intolerant and uncharitable in their conduct towards other creatures, and are extremely selfish. I have seen a big basin of bran-mash given to some goats and the strongest stand over it, eat his or her fill and then put a front hoof in the remainder, or top it over in a most brutal manner; you may scold or flog, but it is of no avail. The next strongest one does the same.” So it is with the religious goats; *they* have no relish for the ministry of a true servant of God, and will do all in their power to prejudice *others* against him.

“Goats are fickle and fastidious. To get the best results from goats and obtain from them the most milk, they must be given *a great variety of food*, for they quickly tire of one thing and will refuse to eat it. Starve? Oh no! they will eat just sufficient for their own personal needs, but the little extra which goes to make milk for *you* is left, or rather, is pushed scornfully aside.” Thus it is with the religious goats. They must be entertained with a constantly changing program—it is the opposite with sheep. They never tire of the green pastures! So too the professor is greedy in devouring all he hears, but no fruit is yielded for God or good unto His people.

“Goats will not mix with sheep. There is no record extant of their ever becoming mixed. We have a mule, which is half donkey and half horse; a “jennie” which is half horse and half she-ass; and many other monsters, such as half cat and half rabbit; but half goat and half sheep? No—*that is impossible*.” How striking! God has drawn a line of demarcation between His people and the children of the devil, which no human device can obliterate. God’s “sheep” and Satan’s “goats” may associate together, but there cannot be any real fellowship between them, “What communion hath light with darkness”!

“The coat of the goat is both wool and hair. The wool is very valuable and is used to make expensive shawls for ‘noble’ ladies. His hair is the well-known ‘mohair.’ The poor sheep produces only the common wool. The skin of the sheep is just ‘basil,’ the poorest of leather, used almost exclusively to make aprons for wagon-drivers. But the goat’s, why his skin is the famous ‘chami’ leather and is considered par excellence. Where are the gloves to compare with *kid* gloves?” How this illustrates *man’s* respective estimates of real Christians and showy professors—the one is despised, the other highly esteemed.

“Goats do not like water and to wash one is dangerous. I have done it and even on a hot day they get cramp in the legs. A shower of rain is enough to drive them scampering for shelter, even from the most tempting meal.” How startling is this fact. There is nothing which empty professors

detest more than experimental holiness. Preach to them of the imperative need *for their* fleshly ways to be cleansed, and they are at once offended. It is the last thing they want to hear about. How different with the sheep, who love the water!

“Goats are mostly ‘kept up’ here, chained to blackberry bushes, because they are the only animal which will eat them down. The ‘thorns,’ symbol of the curse, disappear shortly after mister goat has been chained to them, and are never seen again until the goat is removed or dies, then they come up worse than ever. He eats the tops off level with the ground, *but* the roots are still there, and spread, so that when his activities cease, they come up ten times worse.” So it is with most of modern evangelism. Thousands of the unsaved are inclined to make a profession, and are hailed as “converts” (delivered from the curse), but “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2Pe 2:20). How often there is outward reformation (the thorn bush leveled with the ground), but no miracle of grace wrought *within*—the root of evil more active than ever.

“Goats are extremely devout, spending much time upon their knees. They always get down and go under a fence. If on a chain, no matter how long it is, they will get on their knees and strain hard to reach something beyond them.” It is because of their religiousness that empty professors deceive so many—very often themselves included. It is not praying which proves I am a child of God, but the getting of real and miraculous answers to prayer which evidences I have the ear of my heavenly Father. How few can endure *that* test!

“They are fond of company, no matter what sort it is, for they *hate to be alone*.” This is a sure mark of an empty professor—company, excitement, a ceaseless whirl of activity, rushing from one meeting to another, gadding about and visiting all who will gossip with them, fill up all their “spare hours.” Their *consciences* will not allow them to engage in quiet reflection and meditation, still less do they cultivate getting alone with God and communing with Him.

“Nearly all creatures are afraid of *fire*—even lions and tigers may be driven off by a fire-stick. But not so with goats. I have seen them walk into the fire. I have seen the same goat jump into the fire several times and be burned. I believe that is why we are told in Matthew 25:41 that Christ will yet say to the goats, ‘*Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,*’ not as in the case of the guest without a wedding garment ‘*cast him into*’.” How solemnly true is this of the religious goats. The most awful sermon of eternal punishment stirs them not, for they are quite sure that *they* will never experience it. So completely has Satan lulled them to sleep that they have no dread of the awful doom which is most surely awaiting them.

“Yet they are afraid of death! A sheep is very submissive in death. It does not kick or even attempt to run away. But the goat cries loudly for nothing, before he is hurt. In death, he kicks like an infernal machine and must have at least three legs tied if he is to be killed in the same manner as a sheep.” The writer has long been impressed with the fact that the majority of those who seem to be surest of their own salvation are the most *reluctant* to die, yea, they are terrified at the very thought of it. Few of them would acknowledge it and many cloak it under the claim that they are looking for the return of Christ.

“They have a most offensive smell, as bad as swine, especially the *billy goat*”—figure of an unregenerate preacher. Yes, no matter how loud their profession, how fine their words, how devout the demeanor of the religious goats, they are a stench in the nostrils of Him who requireth truth in the *inward* parts. And the more a real Christian is in communion with God, walking closely with Him, the more will the “goats,” the religious hypocrites of the day, disgust and nauseate him—far more so than open worldlings who make no profession at all. The above-

mentioned characteristics of the natural goats ought to make it much easier for the child of God to now *identify* the religious “goats” with whom he comes into contact.

ASSURANCE

There come times when all your past experience seems taken away from you. You can't remember, at least you can't appropriate, you can't realize it. It is as though we had never ate and drank of what Christ gives us. We have no joy with which to rejoice. This is also an experience through which all God's people have come. This is the wonderful thing in the prophets and Psalms. God does not put before us the image of His saints as they *ought* to be, but as they were—all their tears and failings and complaints and feelings of desertion and groanings.

I fear many things are said of assurance that never ought to have been said. It is very difficult to speak of assurance, so as not to distress the truly godly, and not to puff up those who think they are rich and have need of nothing. The Lord will satisfy the hungry. He will raise up those that are bowed down. He will feed them just because they are hungry. He will strengthen them, just because they are weak.

After Jacob had gained the victory over JEHOVAH and been called Israel, how did he go on all his life? Not as a hero triumphant, but he went halting. Many would like always to be singing “Hallelujah!” to have entered already the land of promise and glory, to put aside the weapons of their conflict. So was it not with the old saints. Don't you be discouraged when you are weak, when you cry out of the depths in your helplessness, when you experience that there is another law, within you, striving against the Spirit of life within. The Lord is revealing to you your weakness and nothingness. (Adolph Saphir, 1831-1891)



July

THE HOLY SPIRIT

17. The Spirit Enlightening

By nature, fallen man is in a state of darkness with respect unto God. Be he never so wise, learned and skillful in natural things, unto spiritual things he is blind. Not until we are renewed in the spirit of our minds by the Holy Spirit can we see things in God's light. But this is something which the world cannot endure to hear of and when it be insisted upon, they will hotly deny the same. So did the Pharisees of Christ's day angrily ask, with pride and scorn, "Are we blind also?" (Joh 9:40), to which our Lord replied by affirming that their presumption of spiritual light and knowledge only aggravated their sin and condemnation (Joh 9:41). Unhesitatingly He told the blind leaders of religion that, notwithstanding all their boasting, they had never heard the Father's voice "at any time" (Joh 5:37).

There is a twofold spiritual darkness, outward and inward. The former is the case with those who are without the Gospel, until God sends the external means of grace to them, "The people which sat in darkness saw great light" (Mat 4:16). The latter is the case with all until God the Spirit performs a miracle of grace within the soul and quickens the dead into newness of life, "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness *comprehended it not*" (Joh 1:5). No matter how well we be acquainted with the letter of Scripture, no matter how sound and faithful be the preaching we sit under, and the books we read, until the soul be divinely quickened, it has *no* spiritual discernment or experimental perception of divine things. Until a man be born again, he *cannot* "see" the kingdom of God (Joh 3:3).

This inward darkness which fills the soul of the natural man is something far more dreadful than a mere intellectual ignorance of spiritual things. Ignorance is a negative thing, but this spiritual "darkness" is a positive thing—an energetic principle which is opposed to God. The "darkness" which rests upon the human soul gives the heart a bias toward evil, prejudicing it against holiness, fettering the will so that it never moves Godward. Hence we read of "the *power* of darkness" (Col 1:13). So great is its power that all under it *love* darkness "rather than light" (Joh 3:19). Why is it that men have little difficulty in learning a business and are quick to discover how to make money and gratify their lusts, but are stupid and unteachable in the things of God? Why is it that men are so prone and ready to believe religious lies and so averse to the

truth? None but the Spirit can deliver from this terrible darkness. Unless the Sun of righteousness arises upon us (Mal 4:2), we are shut up in “the blackness of darkness forever” (Jude 13).

Because of the darkness which rests upon and reigns within his entire soul, the natural man can neither know, admire, love, or serve the true God in a spiritual way. How can God appear infinitely lovely to one whose every bias of his heart prompts unto hatred of the divine perfections? How can a corrupt soul be charmed with a character which is the absolute opposite of its own? What fellowship can there be between darkness and light; what concord can there be between sin and holiness; what agreement between a carnal mind and Him against whom it is enmity? *False* notions of God may charm even an unregenerate heart, but none save a divinely-quicken soul can spiritually know and love God. The true God can never appear as an infinitely amiable and lovely Being to one who is dead in trespasses and sins, and completely under the dominion of the devil.

“It is true that many a carnal man is ravished to think that God loves him and will save him, but in this case, it is not the true character of God which charms the heart. It is not *God* that is loved. Strictly speaking, he can only love himself and self-love is the source of all his affections. Or if we call it ‘love’ to God, it is of no other kind than sinners feel to one another, ‘For sinners also love those that love them’ (Luk 6:32). The carnal Israelites gave the fullest proof of their disaffection to the divine character (in the wilderness), as exhibited by God Himself before their eyes, yet were once full of this same kind of ‘love’ at the side of the Red Sea” (Joseph Bellamy, 1719-1790).

My reader, the mere fact that your heart is thrilled with a belief *that God loves you*, is no proof whatever that God’s *true* character would suit your taste had you right notions of it. The Galatians loved Paul while they considered him as the instrument of their conversion, but on further acquaintance with him, they turned his enemies, for his character, rightly understood, was not at all congenial to them. If God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil” and cannot but look upon sin with infinite detestation (Hab 1:13), if all those imaginations, affections, and actions which are so sweet to the taste of a carnal heart are so infinitely odious in the eyes of God as to appear to Him worthy of the eternal pains of hell, then it is utterly impossible for a carnal heart to see any beauty in the divine character until it perceives its *own* character to be infinitely odious.

There is no spiritual love for the true God until self be hated. The one necessarily implies the other. I cannot look upon God as a lovely Being, without looking upon myself as infinitely vile and hateful. When Christ said to the Pharisees, “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Mat 23:33), those words determined *His* character in their eyes and it implies a contradiction to suppose that Christ’s character might appear lovely to them, *without* their own appearing odious, answerable to the import of His words. There was nothing in the Pharisees’ hearts to look upon their *own* character in such a detestable light and therefore all the Saviour’s words and works could only exasperate them. The more they knew of Christ, the more they hated Him, as it was natural to approve of their own character, so it was natural to condemn His.

The Pharisees were completely under the power of “darkness” and so is every human being till the Spirit quickens him into newness of life. If the fault was not in the Pharisees, it must have been in Christ, and for them to own it was *not* in Christ, was to acknowledge they *were* “vipers” and worthy of eternal destruction. They could not look upon Him as *lovely*, until they looked upon themselves as *infinitely odious*, but *that* was diametrically opposite to every bias of their hearts. Their old hearts, therefore, *must* be taken away and a new heart be given them, or they

would never view things in a true light. “Except a man be born again, he *cannot see* the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:3).

“Darkness was upon the face of the deep” (Gen 1:2)—fallen man’s state by nature. “And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Gen 1:2)—adumbrating His initial work of quickening. “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light” (Gen 1:3). Natural light was the first thing produced in the making of the world and spiritual light is the first thing given at the new creation, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). This divine light shining into the mind, occasions *new apprehensions* of what is presented before it. Hitherto the favoured subject of it had heard much about Christ, “By the hearing of the ear,” but *now* his eye *seeth* him (Job 42:5). He clearly apprehends a transcendent excellency in Him, an extreme necessity of Him, a complete sufficiency in Him.

“In thy light shall we see light” (Psa 36:9). This is what spiritual illumination consists of. It is not a mere informing of the mind or communication of intellectual knowledge, but an experimental and efficacious consciousness of the reality and nature of divine and spiritual things. It is capacitating the mind to see sin in its real hideousness and heinousness, and to perceive “the *beauty of holiness*” (Psa 96:9) so as to fall heartily in love with it. It is a spiritual light superadded to all the innate conceptions of the human mind, which is so pure and elevated that it is entirely beyond the power of the natural man to reach unto. It is something which the natural heart cannot even conceive of, but the knowledge of which is communicated by the Spirit’s enlightenment (1Co 2:9-10).

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

79. The Achievements of Faith (11:33-34)

True faith performs a prominent part in all experimental godliness. Where there is a total absence of the grace of faith, a man is without God and without hope in this world. But where that spiritual principle exists, if only in the very small degree, there has taken place a wondrous and miraculous change. The one who is the subject of it may not, for a time, understand its nature, but instead, make the greatest mistakes about it. Nevertheless, that change is no less than one of passing from death unto life. “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed” (Mat 17:20), that little grain has a principle of *life* in it and contains in embryo the future plant. So with the implanting of the principle of grace in the heart—it will yet develop into, or rather be consummated, in glory.

It behooves each one of us to take diligent pains in ascertaining the *origin* of our faith. There are various kinds of faith spoken of in the Scriptures—there is a dead faith, a demon’s faith, a fancied and forced faith, a creature and presumptuous faith—all of which are to be dreaded, for they come not from above. But spiritual faith is *divine* in its origin, “It is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8). True faith is no offspring of nature, but has a celestial birth, “Every good gift and every

perfect gift is *from above*, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (Jam 1:17). Spiritual faith is the heart’s persuasion of the truth of God and is produced in us by the almighty creative power of the Holy Spirit when He applies the Word in life-giving energy to the soul.

Now this faith is not only divinely-communicated, but it is divinely-*sustained*. Spiritual faith is neither self-sustained nor man-sustained. It does not support itself, nor does its possessor support it. It depends entirely upon God. Alas, alas the “faith” of the vast majority of professing Christians, instead of being of this *self-helpless* nature, fills them with a deceiving self-ability. Nothing is so dependent upon God in Christ, nothing so utterly unable to live without the Spirit’s supporting power, as that faith which He Himself produces in the heart. But the “faith” of multitudes today is of a totally different nature, and we might accommodate and apply to them those words of Paul’s, “Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings” (1Co 4:8)—but *without* the Spirit.

This faith is not only divinely-given and divinely-sustained, but it is also divinely-*energized*. It acts only by the quickening power of God. “Without me,” said Christ, “ye can do *nothing*” (Joh 15:5). Then, certainly, without *His* enablement, we cannot act faith upon Himself or His promises. But a spurious faith, springing up out of mere nature, self-made and self-supporting, is also a self-acting one. The possessors of it can believe when they like, as they like, and what they like. There is Christ, *they* can lay hold of Him. There are His promises, *they* can appropriate them. There are His offices, *they* can act faith upon them. Alas, such ability savours nothing of the faith which God gives to His people and which causes them to lie at the footstool of His mercy as humble supplicants.

This faith is also *divinely-increased*, “*Lord*, increase our faith” (Luk 17:5). But let it be pointed out that such an “increase” does not render the Christian less dependent upon the Spirit of God—that would be a miserable increase—like the prodigal son getting his portion of goods and setting up for himself. Nor is it such an increase that now remains at one level, always acting with a certain power, always in the same lively exercise. Far from it. Real Christians know from painful experience how often *their* faith is at a low ebb, and when apparently the most needed, is the worst crippled in its actings. Nor is it such an increase that its possessors should necessarily be conscious of it. Moses knew not that his face shone. Most probably the centurion and the Canaanitish woman little thought that they had “great faith.” Sometimes those who have the most faith feel they have very little, if any at all. While sometimes those who have little, say they are rich and increased with goods.

In what, then, does an increase of faith consist? Is it not the Christian’s growth, *as a believer*, a growth in a true, living, spiritual, experimental knowledge of himself as a sinner, and of God in Christ as the Father of mercies? Faith is fed by knowledge—not by mere notions in the brain, for those only feed a false and presumptuous confidence, but by a spiritual and divine knowledge. As *this* knowledge increases, faith increases. As this knowledge is confirmed in the soul, faith is confirmed and strengthened. “Blessed is the man whom thou *chastenest*, O LORD, and *teachest* him out of thy law” (Psa 94:12). Again, “He *led* him about, he *instructed* him” (Deu 32:10). God leads into a great variety of circumstances and in these circumstances He causes His people to receive instruction. In that way they learn the truth in an *experimental* manner, and what they receive from the Word is confirmed more and more unto them. In that way they learn the vanity of the world, the fickleness of the creature, the depravity of their own hearts.

Now this divinely-given and divinely-supported faith is renewed or stirred into exercise by the operations of the Holy Spirit, and brings forth fruit “after its own kind,” that is, fruit which is

spiritual in its nature and supernatural in its character. In other words, faith is an active principle—it “*worketh* by love” (Gal 5:6). As it is energized by its Giver, it produces that which mere human nature is utterly incapable of producing. An unmistakable proof of this is seen in our present verses, where we read, “Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens” (Heb 11:33-34).

There are two ways in which the remarkable contents of these verses may be considered—according as we look at their letter in a natural way or according as we ponder them with an anointed eye. Water will not rise above its own level. The heart of the natural man, being a stranger to spiritual things, cannot discern them when they are spread before him—that is why the majority of the commentaries are so largely devoted to the historical, grammatical, and geographical details of Scripture. There *is* an historical allusion in each clause of our text, but what the true Christian desires is to know the spiritual purport and the practical application of them unto himself. Only thus do the Scriptures become a *living* Word unto him. This is what we have sought to keep steadily in mind as we have passed from verse to verse of Hebrews 11 and which we will endeavor to be occupied with now.

“Who through faith subdued kingdoms” (Heb 11:33-34). The opening word takes us back to the list of worthies mentioned in the preceding verse, and here we are supplied with an enumeration of some of the wonderful works performed by them. Nine fruits of their faith are mentioned—compare the ninefold “fruit of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22-23. Therein we behold once more the marvelous and miraculous efficacy of a spiritual faith. “These instances are taken from things of all sorts to show that there is nothing of any kind whatever wherein we may be concerned but that faith will be useful and helpful” (John Owen, 1616-1683). No matter what our lot may be—“pleasing or painful,” no matter what station we are called to fill—high or low, no matter how formidable or difficult the obstacles which confront us, “*all* things are possible to him that believeth” (Mar 9:23).

“Through faith subdued kingdoms” (Heb 11:33-34). The word here for “subdue” means “to fight or contend, to enter into a trial of strength, of courage on the field, to prevail in battle.” The historical allusion is to the exploits of Joshua and David. “Joshua subdued the kingdoms in Canaan, and David subdued those which were around that country, such as Moab, Ammon and Syria; and they both subdued these kingdoms through believing” (John Brown, 1784-1858). The important point to recognize is that the “kingdoms” here “subdued” were those which sought to prevent the people of God (Israel) from entering into and enjoying their rightful inheritance. Now let us spiritualize that fact. The Christian has been begotten “to an inheritance” (1Pe 1:3-4), that “inheritance” is to be enjoyed *now*, by faith, for “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). But there are powerful enemies seeking to harass and hinder us, and they must be “subdued.”

There are two principal “kingdoms” which the Christian is called upon to “subdue,” one is within himself, the other without him—the “flesh” and the “world.” It was to the former of these that the apostle had reference when he said, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection” (1Co 9:27). The same task is set before the Christian, “For as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Rom 6:19). The “flesh” or sinful nature within us *must* be “subdued,” or it will certainly slay us—bring about our eternal undoing, “For if ye live after

the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom 8:13).

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that *ruleth his spirit* than he that taketh a city” (Pro 16:32). Does the reader exclaim, Such a task is a hopeless one! Joshua might have said the same when he first set foot in Canaan, and found it occupied with a powerful and hostile people. And, my reader, Joshua did not “subdue” them in a day, nor in a year! No, it was accomplished little by little. It meant fierce fighting, it meant the exercise of much courage and patience, it meant surmounting varied discouragements, but at the end, God crowned his labors with success. And remember that it was *by faith* he “subdued kingdoms.” Ah, faith looks to God and draws vigor and strength from Him. True, I *am* weak and impatient in myself, yet “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phi 4:13).

There is also a “kingdom” without, which the Christian must “subdue,” or else he will be destroyed by it, “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?” (Jam 4:4). And *how* is the “world” to be “subdued?” 1 John 5:4 gives us the answer, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even *our faith*.” Sweetly is this signified in the Song of Solomon, “Who is this that *cometh up from the wilderness*?” (Song 8:5). Here the child of God, though toiling and struggling, worn and weary, is represented as rising above the world. And *how* is this accomplished? How is it that the spouse of Christ is enabled to rise above the immense hindrance of “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”—those things which are “in the world” (1Jo 2:16)? She is seen “*leaning upon her beloved*” (Song 8:5). As He is our object, the world loses its power over us, as He is our strength, we get the victory over it.

“Wrought righteousness” (Heb 11:33). In their narrower sense, these words signify “to execute judgment, to enforce the laws of justice,” the historical reference would then be to such passages as Joshua 11:10-15, 1 Samuel 24:10, 2 Samuel 8:15. But in its wider scope, “wrought righteousness” means the living of a holy life, “LORD, WHO shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart” (Psa 15:1-2). “In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Act 10:35). “Righteousness” signifies up to the required standard, and to work righteousness means walking according to the rule of God’s Word, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Mat 7:12).

Now right actions must spring from right principles and must be performed with right ends, if they are to be acceptable to God. In other words, they must issue from a living faith and have in view the glory of God. It is the absence of *faith* and the substituting of *self-interest*, for the honor of the Lord, which is the cause of all the injustice and oppression in the world today. But let it now be carefully noted that “subdued kingdoms” *precedes* “wrought righteousness.” This order is unchanging—evil must be hated before good can be loved (Amo 5:15), self must be denied before Christ can be followed (Mat 16:24), the old man must be put off before the new man can be put on (Eph 4:22-24). In other words, the “flesh” must be mortified before the “spirit” can be manifested.

“Obtained promises” (Heb 11:33), or secured the blessings promised. God assured Joshua that he should conquer Canaan, Gideon that he should defeat the Midianites, David that he should be king over all Israel. But outwardly, tremendous difficulties stood in the way of the accomplishment of those things, yea, apparent impossibilities prevented them. Gideon was put upon a great improbability when he was commanded to take but three hundred men, fall upon and

destroy an immense host. David and his little company seemed to be no match for the armed forces of Saul, and after his death, for years the throne seemed as far away as ever. But where there is a real trust in the living God, the most formidable difficulties may be overcome.

“Obtained promises” (Heb 11:33). Ah, it is one thing to hear and read about the wonderful things which the faith of *others* secures, but what about your *own* experience, dear reader? You may sincerely think that you believe in and are resting upon the sure promises of God, but are you obtaining a *fulfillment* of them in your own daily life? Are the blessings set forth in the promises actually in your possession? Are you securing the things promised? If not, is the reason to be found in your failure to heed what here precedes? *Before* “obtained promises” comes “subdued kingdoms” and then “wrought righteousness.” We must not expect to “obtain” the precious things set before us in the promises until we definitely and diligently set about the subjugation of the flesh, and *walk* according to the rules of God’s Word—regulating our conduct by its precepts and commands.

“Stopped the mouths of lions” (Heb 11:33). The historical reference is, of course, to Daniel in the den. It shows again the marvelous power of faith. This comes out clearly in Daniel 6:23, “So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, *because he believed* in his God.” But how far may this be of help to us? Is the answer far to seek, there are ferocious people, as well as fierce animals! There are savage oppressors and persecutors who seek to intimidate, if not destroy, the mild and harmless Christian. True, yet they should not terrify us, still less spoil our testimony, by causing us to hide our light under a bushel. Daniel would not be forced into compromising by the threat of the lions of Babylon, nor should we be by the menacing looks, words, and actions of the world’s lions today. Say with one of old, “I will trust, and not be afraid” (Isa 12:2).

“Stopped the mouths of lions” (Heb 11:33). Why it almost looks as though faith were omnipotent? What cannot real faith do! We dare not set any limitations to it, for faith has to do with the living God, and nothings is too hard for Him. Ah, dear reader, faith lays hold of *the Almighty* and not until your faith learns to do that is it of much worth. Is the Lord God a living reality to you or do you have but a theological knowledge of Him? The ultimate reference in our text is to him of whom it is said, “The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1Pe 5:8). His mouth is opened against many a child of God, uttering lies, telling him that his profession is an empty one. Have you learned to “stop his mouth?” Do his false accusations no longer terrify you? Does he now find it useless to thus harass you any longer? It all depends, “stopped the mouths of lions” (Heb 11:33), is preceded by “obtained *promises*”!

“Quenched the violence of fire” (Heb 11:34). The historical allusion is to the three Hebrews in Babylon’s furnace. It shows the efficacy of faith to rest upon the power of God in the face of great danger, yea, before what seemed to be certain death. Those three Hebrews resolved to perform their duty, no matter what the event, committing themselves unto the disposition of a sovereign God. With full persuasion of His power to do whatever He pleased and which would be most for his glory. Such an exercise of faith appears very, very marvelous to us. Ah, let it be fully borne in mind that Daniel and his fellows trusted God in times of peace and prosperity, as well as in seasons of peril and adversity. If we live by faith, it will not be difficult to die by faith.

“Quenched the violence of fire” (Heb 11:34). A twofold spiritual application may be made of these words. First, we read of “the fiery darts of the wicked” (Eph 6:16), and these are to be “quenched” by “taking the shield of faith.” If we are subduing kingdoms, working righteousness, and obtaining promises, neither the mouth of the lion will be able to intimidate us, nor *the*

temptations of the devil overcome us. Second, we read of faith which is “tried with fire” (1Pe 1:7) or fierce afflictions—this fire (like Babylon’s) is *not* “put out,” but its “violence” or *power to injure* is “quenched.” If the soul cleaves to God, naught can harm it. It is faith, and not water, which quenches the fire—behold the martyrs *singing* amid the flames!

“Escaped the edge of the sword” (Heb 11:34). The historical reference is to such passages as 1 Samuel 18:4, 1 Kings 18:10; 19:1-3, Jeremiah 39:15-18, in several of which it seems as though those eminent servants of God escaped from danger more by fear than by faith—by *fleeing* from those who threatened their lives. The life of faith is many-sided and care needs to be taken to preserve the balance—to keep from mere passivity on the one hand and from fanatical presumption on the other. While the Christian is to walk by faith, yet there is wrestling (Eph 6:12) and fighting to be done (1Ti 6:12). We are to seek grace and develop all heroic virtues, such as courage, valor, hardness (2Ti 2:3), and endeavor by divine aid to overcome everything which hinders us entering into God’s best. On the other side, the Christian must not refuse the use and aid of all lawful means in times of danger, “When they persecute you in this city, *flee ye* into another” (Mat 10:23)—to refuse to do so is not faith, but presumption.

“Escaped the edge of the sword” (Heb 11:34). What is the deeper meaning of this? Our minds at once turn to Hebrews 4:12, “The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword.” Confirmation of this is found in the fact that the Greek of our text reads “Escaped the *edges* of the sword” (Heb 11:34). But *how* is the Christian to “escape” the edges of the Spirit’s Sword? By being in practical subjection to the precepts of Scripture, walking in communion with God. It is when we get into a backslidden state and give way to the lusts of the flesh that the Word condemns our ways, pierces our conscience, and strikes terror to our hearts. God does not wound or afflict “willingly” (Lam 3:33), but only when our conduct is displeasing to Him. If our hearts be right with God, His Word will strengthen and comfort, rather than cut and wound us. If we *judge* ourselves for all that is wrong, the Sword will not smite us—when we fail to, the Word searches and convicts us. Note Revelation 19:15, where the same figure of the “sharp sword” is seen in Christ’s mouth as He comes forth to destroy His enemies!

“Out of weakness were made strong” (Heb 11:34). In those words, there may be a latent reference to Samson in the closing scene of his life, but most probably the historical allusion is unto Hezekiah. In 2 Kings 20:1, we are told that Hezekiah was “sick unto death,” and then he prayed unto the Lord, which was in marked contrast from Ahaziah (2Ki 1:2), and Asa (2Ch 16:12). 2 Kings 20:3, “I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore” is much misunderstood. The key to it is found in 1 Kings 2:4, “If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) *a man on the throne of Israel.*” Hezekiah was conscious of his integrity and sincere desire to please God, but he had no son to succeed him to the throne, and therefore did he here call to mind His promise. The Lord responded to his faith, restored him to health, added fifteen years to his life and gave him a son.

“Out of weakness were made strong” (Heb 11:34). It is not simply that “the weak were strengthened,” but “out of *weakness* were made strong,” the emphasis being upon an extremity of feebleness. It shows us that the vigor of faith is not dependent upon health of the body! It is written “The prayer of faith shall [not the “anointing” of the “elders”] save the sick” (Jam 5:15 and cf. Phi 2:27). But our text is not to be restricted to physical “weakness.” God is able to make the doctrinally and spiritually weak to stand, Romans 14:4. The secret of the Christian’s strength lies in maintaining a consciousness of his weakness (2Co 12:10). The trouble is that as we grow

older, most of us grow more independent and self-sufficient. The fact is that the oldest Christian has no more strength *in himself* than he had when he was but a “babe in Christ.” Just so soon as we fail to feel and acknowledge before God our personal weakness, do we fail to prove the sufficiency of God’s grace! Seek strength from Him daily.

“Waxed valiant in fight” (Heb 11:34). Probably the reference is to Samson (Jdg 15:15) and David. The phrase signifies that these heroes of faith refused to be intimidated by the might and number of their enemies. Undaunted by the great odds against them, they refused to give way to a spirit of cowardice and entered into a pitched battle against their foes, compare Deuteronomy 31:23, Joshua 1:7, Psalms 3:6, Acts 4:29. Once again we would stress the importance of the *order* here, “waxed valiant in fight” is preceded by “out of weakness were made strong”! and that in turn by “escaped the *edge* of the sword”! May we not easily perceive here why it is that we are so quickly and so frequently overcome by our spiritual foes?

“Turned to flight the armies of the aliens” (Heb 11:34). Such passages as Joshua 10:1-10 and 2 Samuel 5:17-25 may be consulted for typical illustrations of what is here in view, carefully bearing in mind that while the power of God giving success to the efforts of Joshua and David was the efficient cause of their victories, yet instrumentally, it was “through faith” they were wrought. The path of faith is one of conflict because the adversary contests every step of the way. The chief reason why the individual Christian experiences so little victory in his spiritual warfare is because his *faith* is so little in exercise. And we may add, the chief reason why the Church collectively is failing so lamentably to “turn to fight the armies of the aliens” is because there is so much jealousy and strife among its own members!

THE LIFE OF DAVID

31. His Testing

It is a wonderful thing when a wayward believer is brought back to the place of fellowship with God, as David had been, though it necessarily involves added obligations. It is *sin* which causes us to leave that place, and though at first sin be a sweet morsel unto the flesh, yet it soon turns bitter, and ultimately becomes as wormwood and gall unto him who has yielded to it. “The way of transgressors is hard” (Pro 13:15). The wicked prove the full truth of that fact in the next world, where they discover that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23)—a death agonizing in its nature and eternal in its duration. But even in this life the transgressor is usually made to feel the hardness of that way which his own mad self-will has chosen, and especially is this the case with the believer, for the harvest of *his* ill sowings is reaped—mainly, at least—in this world. The Christian, equally with the non-Christian, is a subject under the government of God, and *doubly* is *he* made to realize that God cannot be mocked with impunity.

Strikingly and solemnly was this fact exemplified in the history of Israel during Old Testament times. *This* principle supplies the key to all God’s governmental dealings with them.

The history of no nation has been nearly so checkered as *theirs*. No people was ever so sorely and so frequently afflicted as the favoured descendants of Jacob. From the death of Joshua unto the days of Malachi, we find one judgment after another sent from God upon them. Famines, pestilence, earthquakes, internal dissensions, and external assaults from the surrounding nations followed each other in rapid succession, and were *repeated* again and again. There were brief respites, short seasons of peace and prosperity, but for the most part, it was one sore trouble after another. God did not deal *thus* with any other nation during the Mosaic economy. It is true that heathen empires suffered, and ultimately collapsed under the weight of their lasciviousness, but in the main God “suffered all nations to walk in their own ways” (Act 14:16), and “the times of this ignorance God winked at” (Act 17:30).

Far otherwise was it with His own covenant people. This has surprised many, yet it should not. Unto Israel God said, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” Yes, and that has been commonly recognized by readers of the Old Testament, but what immediately follows has very largely been lost sight of—“*therefore* I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amo 3:2). Ah, it was *not*, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: *therefore* will I *wink at* your sins, excuse *your* faults, and pass over your transgressions.” No, no, far from it. It was unto Israel that God had revealed Himself, it was “in Judah he was known,” and therefore would He manifest before their hearts and eyes His ineffable holiness and inflexible justice. Where they were loose and lax, despising God’s authority, and recklessly and brazenly breaking His laws, he would *vindicate His honour* by making it appear how much He hated sin, and hates it most of all in those who are *nearest* to Him! See Ezekiel 9:6!

That is why another of Israel’s prophets announced unto those who had, under a temporal covenant, been taken into a bridal relation to Jehovah, “she hath received of the LORD’S hand *double* for all *her* sins” (Isa 40:2). Does that strike the reader as strange? But why should it? Are not the sins of the professing people of God *doubly heinous* to those committed by them who make no profession at all? What comparison was there between the sins of the nation of Israel and the sins of the heathen who were without the knowledge of the true God? The sins of the former were sins *against light*, against an open and written revelation from heaven, against the abounding goodness and amazing grace of God toward them, and therefore must He, in His holiness and righteousness, make the severest example *of them*. Make no mistake upon that point, God will either be sanctified *by* or *upon* those who have been taken unto a place of (even outward) nearness to Himself, see Leviticus 10:3.

Thus, Amos 3:3 becomes *a prophecy* of God’s dealings with Christendom. The great difference which existed between the nation of Israel and the Gentiles finds its parallel in this era between Christendom (the sphere where Christianity is professedly acknowledged) and the heathen world. But with this additional most solemn consideration, increased privileges necessarily entail increased responsibilities. Under this Christian era a far higher and grander revelation of God has been made in and through and by the Lord Jesus Christ, than ever the *nation* of Israel had in Old Testament times. If then Israel’s *despising* of God in His inferior revelation was followed by such awful consequences to the temporal welfare of their people under the old covenant, what *must be* the consequences of the *despising* of God in His highest revelation under the new covenant? “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, *much more* shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven” (Heb 12:25).

But what has all the above to do with the life of David? Much every way. God dealt with individual saints who had been taken into spiritual nearness to Himself on the same principles,

governmentally, (that is, in the ordering of their temporal affairs), as He treated with the nation as a whole, which enjoined only outward nearness to Himself. Hence, *as* David sowed in his conduct, *so* he reaped in his circumstances. As we have seen in the last few articles, God had acted in marvelous grace with the son of Jesse, and following his repentance and putting things right with the Lord, had unmistakably shown Himself strong on his behalf, ending by bringing him to “Hebron” which speaks of fellowship. Thus David has now reached the point where God said to him, as it were, “Sin no more, *lest a worse thing come unto thee*” (Joh 5:14).

Should it be asked, “But what has all of this to do with us? *we* are living in the ‘Dispensation of grace,’ and God deals with people now—both nations collectively, and saints individually—very differently from what He did in Old Testament times.” That is a great mistake—a glaring, and a horrible one. Glaring it certainly is, for Romans 15:4 expressly states, “Whatsoever things were written *aforetime* were written for our learning,” but what *could* we “learn” from the ways of God with His people of old if He is now acting from entirely different principles? Nothing whatever, in fact, in that case, the less we read the Old Testament, the less we are likely to be confused. Ah, my reader, in the New Testament also we read that “judgment must begin *at the house of God*” (1Pe 4:17). *Christians* are also warned, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal 6:7). Horrible too is such a mistake, for it represents the immutable God *changing* the principles of His government.

What has been pointed out in the above paragraphs is something more than an interesting and instructive item of historical information, explaining much that is to be met with in the Old Testament Scriptures, throwing light upon God’s dealings with the nation of Israel collectively and with its prominent men individually. It is also of vital moment *for Christians today*. “Righteousness and judgment are the habitation” of God’s “throne” (Psa 97:2), and *our* temporal affairs are regulated and determined according to the same principles of God’s moral government as were those of His people in bygone ages. If the distinguishing favours of God do not restrain from sin, they most certainly will not exempt us from divine chastisement. Nay, the greater the divine privileges enjoyed by us, the nearer we are brought unto God in a way of profession and favour, the more quickly will He notice our inconsistencies and the more severely will He deal with our sins.

“He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much *sorer punishment*, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Heb 10:28-29). Here is a statement of the broad principle which we have been seeking to explicate and illustrate. True, in this particular passage the application of it is made unto apostates, but the fact is plainly enough revealed that the greater the privileges enjoyed, the greater the obligations entailed, and the greater the guilt incurred when those obligations are ignored. The same principle applies (though the consequences are different) in the contrast between the sins of the Christian and the non-Christian. The sins of the former are more heinous than those of the latter. How so? Because God is far more dishonoured by the sins of those who bear His name than by those who make no profession at all.

The same principle, as it applies to gradation by contrast, holds good of the individual Christian in different stages of his own life. The more light God gives him, the more practical godliness He requires from him. The more favours he receives and privileges he enjoys, the more responsible is he to bear increased fruit. So too a sin committed by him may receive comparatively light chastisement, but let it be repeated and he may expect the rod to fall more heavily upon him. In like manner, God may bear long with one of His backslidden children, and

though the path of recovery be a thorny one, yet will he exclaim, “I richly deserved far severer treatment.” But when the backslider has been restored and brought back into communion with God, another departure from Him is likely to be attended with far worse consequences than the former one was.

“But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be *feared*” (Psa 130:4). Yes, “feared,” not trifled with, not that we may the more confidently give free rein to our lusts. A true apprehension of the divine mercy will not embolden unto sin, but will deepen our hatred of it and make us more earnest in striving to abstain from it. A spiritual apprehension of God’s abounding grace toward us, so far from begetting carelessness, produces increased carefulness, lest we displease One so kind and good. It is just because the Christian has been sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption, that he is exhorted to watchfulness lest he “grieve” Him. The more the heart truly appreciates the infinitude of God’s wondrous love unto us, the more will its language be, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God!” (Gen 39:9).

“But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared” (Psa 130:4). Not a slavish and servile fear, but the fear of the Lord which is “the beginning of wisdom,” that fear which reverences, loves, worships, serves and obeys Him. Genuine gratitude of God’s pardoning grace will move the soul unto suitable filial conduct. It works a fear of being carried away from the heavens of His conscious presence by the insidious current of worldliness. It is jealous lest anything be allowed that would mar our communion with the Lover of our souls. Where the pardoning mercy of God is thankfully esteemed by the soul, it calls to mind the fearful price which was paid by Christ so that God could righteously forgive His erring people, and *that* consideration melts the heart and moves to loving obedience.

“But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared” (Psa 130:4). Yes, once more we say “feared,” and not “trifled with.” The word unto backsliders, who have been pardoned and graciously restored to fellowship with God, is, “Let them not *turn again* to folly” (Psa 85:8), that is, let them beware of any cooling of their affections, and slipping back into their old ways. Let them pray earnestly and strive resolutely against a sinful trading with God’s mercy and a turning of His grace into lasciviousness. We serve a jealous God, and must needs therefore be incessantly vigilant against sin. If we are not, if we do “return again to folly,” then most surely will His rod fall more heavily upon us, and not only will our inward peace be disturbed, but our outward circumstances will be made to sorely trouble us.

That principle was plainly enunciated in the threats which the Lord made unto Israel of old, “And if ye will not be reformed by me by *these* things, but will walk contrary unto me; Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you *yet seven times* for your sins” (Lev 26:23-24). If the first sensible tokens of God’s displeasure do not attain their end in the humbling of ourselves beneath His mighty hand and the reforming of our ways, if His lesser judgments do not lead to this, then He will surely send sorer judgments upon us. Ezra recognized this principle when, after the remnant had come out of Babylon, he said, “And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this; Should we *again* break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?” (Ezr 9:13-14). Then let *us* beware of trifling with God, particularly so after He has recovered us from a season of backsliding.

Instead of taking up the details of 2 Samuel 2:9-32 (the passage which immediately follows the verses considered in the preceding article), we felt this topical one would prove much more helpful in paving the way for those which are (D.V.) to follow. Those verses record an encounter between the rival factions. The gauntlet was thrown down by Abner, the general of the followers of Ishbosheth (Saul's son), and the challenge was accepted by Joab, who headed the military forces of David. Neither side brought their full army into the field and the slaughter was but small (v. 30). The men of Abner, the aggressor, were routed, and at the close of the day their captain begged for peace (v. 26). Knowing the pacific intentions of David, and his loathness to make war upon the house of Saul, Joab generously called a halt (v. 28) and each side made their way homeward (vv. 29-32).

And now a word upon the title we have given to this article, and we must close. David was now located at Hebron, which signifies communion or fellowship. The men of Judah had made him their king (2Sa 2:4), which though a step toward it, was by no means the complete fulfillment of the promise that he should be king "over *Israel*" (1Sa 16:1, 3). David made kindly overtures unto "the men of Jabesh-gilead," the followers of the late Saul (2Sa 2:5), expressing the hope they would now show fealty to him (v. 7). Would the Lord continue showing Himself strong on his behalf by turning the hearts of the rival faction toward him? The need for this was evident (vv. 7-10), yet it was easy for God to heal that breach and give David favour in the eyes of all. Would He do so? How far will the present conduct of David warrant this? for God will not place a premium on sin. David is now *put to the test*: how he acquitted himself we must leave for the next article.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

1. Introduction

The Covenants occupy no subordinate place on the pages of divine revelation as even a superficial perusal of the Scriptures will serve to show. The word "covenant" is found no fewer than twenty-five times in the very first book of the Bible, and occurs again scores of times in the remaining books of the Pentateuch, in the Psalms, and in the Prophets. Nor is it inconspicuous in the New Testament. When instituting the great memorial of His death, the Saviour said, "This cup is the *new testament* in my blood" (Luk 22:20). When enumerating the special blessings which God had conferred upon the Israelites, Paul declared that unto them belonged "the covenants" (Rom 9:4). To the Galatians he expounded "the two covenants" (Gal 4:24-31). The Ephesian saints were reminded that in their unregenerate days they were "strangers from the covenants of promise" (Eph 2:12). The entire epistle to the Hebrews is an exposition of the "better covenant" of which Christ is the Mediator (Heb 8:6).

Salvation through Jesus Christ is according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Act 2:23), and He was pleased to make known His eternal purpose of mercy, unto the fathers, in the form of a series of *covenants*, which were of different characters and revealed at

various times. These covenants enter into the very nature, and pervade with their peculiar qualities the whole system of divine truth. They have an intimate connection with each other and a common relation to a single purpose, being, in fact, so many successive stages in the unfolding of the scheme of divine grace. They treat of the *divine* side of things, disclosing the source from which all blessings come to men, and making known the channel (Christ) through which they flow to them. Each one reveals some new and fundamental aspect of truth, and in considering them in their scriptural order we may clearly perceive the progress of revelation which they respectively indicated. They set forth the great design of God which was to be accomplished by the Redeemer of His people.

It has been well-pointed out that, “It is very obvious that because God is an intelligence He must have a plan. If He be an absolutely perfect intelligence, desiring and designing nothing but good, if He be an eternal and immutable intelligence, His plan must be one, eternal all-comprehensive, immutable—that is, all things from His point of view must constitute one system and sustain a perfect logical relation in all its parts. Nevertheless, like all other comprehensive systems, it must itself be composed of an infinite number of subordinate systems. In this respect, it is like these heavens which He has made, and which He has hung before our eyes, as a type and pattern of His mode of thinking and planning in all providence.

“We know that in the solar system our earth is a satellite of one of the great suns, and of this particular system we have a knowledge because of our position, but we know that this system is only one of myriads, with variations, that have been launched in the great abyss of space. So we know that this great, all-comprehensive plan of God, considered as one system, must contain a great many subordinate systems which might be studied profitably if we were in the position to do so, as self-contained whole, separate from the rest” (Lectures by A.A. Hodge, 1823-1886). That “one system” or the eternal “plan” of God was comprised in “the everlasting covenant,” the many “subordinate systems” are the various “covenants” which God made with different ones from time to time.

The everlasting covenant, with its shadowings forth in His temporal covenants, forms the basis of all His dealings with His people. Many proofs of this are to be met with in Holy Writ. For example, when God heard the groanings of the Hebrews in Egypt, we are told that He “*remembered his covenant* with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob” (Exo 2:24 and cf. 6:2-8). When Israel was oppressed by the Syrians in the days of Jehoahaz, we read, “And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, *because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*” (2Ki 13:23 and cf. Psa 106:43-45). At a later period, when God determined to show mercy unto Israel, after He had sorely afflicted them for their sins, He expressed it thus, “Nevertheless I will *remember my covenant with thee* in the days of thy youth” (Eze 16:60). As the Psalmist declared, “He hath given meat unto them that fear him: *He will ever be mindful of his covenant*” (Psa 111:5).

The same blessed truth is set forth in the New Testament that the covenant is the foundation from which proceed all the gracious works of God. This is rendered as the reason *for sending Christ* into the world, “To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to *remember his holy covenant*” (Luk 1:72). Remarkable too is that word in Hebrews 13:20, “Now the God of peace, that *brought again from the dead* our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, *through the blood of the everlasting covenant.*” Another illustration of the same principle is found in Hebrews 10:15-16, “Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: *for after that he had said before*, 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”—the words we have placed in italics supply

proof that the good which God does unto His people is grounded on His covenant. Anything which in Scripture is said to be done unto us “for Christ’s sake” signifies it is done by virtue of that covenant which God made with Christ as the Head of His mystical body.

In like manner, when God is said to bind Himself by oath to the heirs of promise—“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath” (Heb 6:17)—it is upon the ground of His covenant-engagement that He does so. In fact, the one merges into the other, *for* in Scripture covenanting is often called by the name of swearing, and a covenant is called an oath. “That thou shouldest enter into *covenant* with the LORD thy God, and into his *oath*, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day...Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath” (Deu 29:12, 14). “Be ye mindful always of his covenant; the word which he commanded to a thousand generations; Even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his *oath* unto Isaac” (1Ch 16:15-16). “And they entered into *a covenant* to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul...And they *sware* unto the LORD with a loud voice...And all Judah rejoiced at *the oath*” (2Ch 15:12, 14-15).

Sufficient should have already been said to impress us with the weightiness of our present theme, and the great importance of arriving at a right understanding of the divine covenants. A true knowledge of the covenants is indispensable to a correct presentation of the Gospel, for he who is ignorant of the fundamental difference which obtains between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace is utterly incompetent for evangelism. But by whom among us are the different covenants clearly understood? Refer unto them to the average preacher, and you at once perceive you are speaking to him in an unknown tongue. Few today discern what the covenants are in themselves, their relations to each other, and their consequent bearings upon the design of God in the Redeemer. Since the covenants pertain unto the very “rudiments of the doctrine of Christ,” ignorance of them must cause obscurity to rest upon the whole Gospel system.

During the palmy days of the Puritans considerable attention was given to the subject of the covenants, as their writings evince, particularly the works of Usher, Witsius, Blake, and Boston. But alas, with the exception of a few high Calvinists, their massive volumes fell into general neglect, until a generation arose who had no light thereon. This made it easier for certain men to impose upon them their crudities and vagaries, and make their poor dupes believe a wonderful discovery had been made in the “rightly dividing of the word of truth.” These men shuffled the Scriptures until they arranged the passages treating of the “covenants” to arbitrarily divide time into “seven dispensations” and partitioned off the Bible accordingly. How dreadfully superficial and faulty their “findings” are appear from the popular (far too “popular” to be of much value—Luke 16:15!) “Scofield Bible,” where no less than “eight covenants” are noticed, and yet *nothing* is said about the “Everlasting Covenant”!

If some think we have exaggerated the ignorance which now obtains upon this subject, let them put the following questions to their best-informed Christian friends, and see how many can give satisfactory answers. What did David mean when he said, “Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: *for this is all my salvation*” (2Sa 23:5)? What is meant by, “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will *show them his covenant*” (Psa 25:14)? What does the Lord mean when He speaks of those who “*taketh hold of my covenant*” (Isa 56:6)? What does God intend when He says to the Mediator, “As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water” (Zec 9:11)? To what does the apostle refer when he says, “That the covenant, that was confirmed before of *God in* [or “to”] *Christ*” (Gal 3:17)?

Before attempting to furnish any answers to these questions, let us point out the *nature* of a “covenant,” in what it consists. “An absolute complete covenant is a voluntary convention, pact, or agreement between distinct persons, about the ordering and dispensing of things in their power, unto their mutual concern and advantage” (John Owen). Blackstone (Blackstone, Sir William, 1723-1780), the great commentator upon English law, speaking of the parts of a deed, says, “After warrants, usually follow *covenants*, or conventions, which are clauses of agreement contained in a deed, whereby either party may stipulate for the truth of certain facts, or may bind himself to perform, or give something to the other” (Vol. 2, p. 20), so that he includes three things: the parties, the terms, the binding agreement. Reducing it to still simpler language, we may say that a covenant is the entering into of a mutual agreement, a benefit being assured on the fulfillment of certain conditions.

We read of Jonathan and David making a covenant (1Sa 18:3), which, in view of 1 Samuel 20:11-17, 42 evidently signified that they entered into a solemn compact (ratified by an oath, 1Sa 20:17) that in return for Jonathan’s kindness in informing him of his father’s plans—making possible his escape—David, when he ascended the throne, would show mercy to his descendants, cf. 2 Samuel 9:1. Again, in 1 Chronicles 11:3, we are told that all the elders of Israel (who had previously been opposed to him) came to David and he “made a covenant with them,” which, in the light of 2 Samuel 5:1-3, evidently means that, on the consideration of his capturing their armies against the common foe, they were willing to submit unto him as their king. Once more, in 2 Chronicles 23:16, we read of Jehoiada the priest making a covenant with the people and the king that they should be the Lord’s people, which, in the light of what immediately follows obviously denotes that he agreed to grant them certain religious privileges in return for their undertaking to destroy the system of Baal-worship. A careful consideration of these *human* examples will enable us to understand the better the covenants which *God* has been pleased to enter into.

Now as we pointed out in previous paragraphs, God’s dealings with men are all based upon His covenant-engagements with them—He promising certain blessings upon their fulfillment of certain conditions. This being so, as George Sayles Bishop (1836-1914) pointed out, “It is clear that there can be but two and only two covenants possible between God and men—a covenant founded upon what *man shall do* for salvation, a covenant founded upon what *God shall do for him* to save him. In other words, a Covenant of Works and a Covenant of Grace” (Grace in Galatians, p. 72). Just as all the divine promises in the Old Testament are summed up in two chief ones—the sending of Christ and the pouring out of the Spirit—so all the divine covenants may be reduced unto two, the other subordinate ones being only confirmations or adumbrations of them, or having to do with their economical administration.

We shall then, as the Lord enables, take up in the articles which follow, first, the Everlasting Covenant or Covenant of Grace, which God made with His elect in the person of their Head, and show how that is the sure foundation from which proceed all blessings unto them. Next, we shall consider the Covenant of Works, that compact into which the Creator entered with the whole race in the person of their human and federal head, and show how *that* had to be broken before the blessings agreed upon in the Covenant of Grace could be bestowed. Then we shall look briefly at the covenant God made with Noah, and more fully at the one with Abraham, in which the Everlasting Covenant was shadowed forth.

Then we shall ponder the more difficult Siniatic covenant, viewing it both as a confirmation of the Covenant of Works and in its peculiar relation to the national polity of Israel. Some consideration will also have to be given to the Davidic covenant, concerning which we feel

greatly in need of more light. Finally, we shall point out how the Everlasting Covenant has been *administered* under the “old” and “new” covenants or economies. May the Holy Spirit graciously preserve us from all serious error, and enable us to write that which shall be to the glory of our covenant-God and the blessing of His covenant-people.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Carson on Esther (Part Seven)

We shall now view the providence of God in the reception of Esther. Life and death are on the countenance of the despot, and according to the will of God he frowns or smiles. Had God designed her death, she would have found the king in another temper. But is not the king’s heart in the hand of the Lord? Does He not turn it as He pleases? Esther is received most graciously and accosted in the most affectionate manner. The coldness that had overlooked her for thirty days gives place to the utmost warmth of affection, and, instead of the denunciation of death that she at first feared, she now hears the expressions of the most extravagant bounty. “Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king’s house, over against the king’s house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, *that she obtained favour in his sight*: and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the scepter. Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom” (Est 5:1-3). This favour was the spontaneous affection of the king’s own heart, but in another point of view, it was God who gave her that favour. Who is so blind as not to see the hand of God in this? Who is so stupid as not to ascribe the glory to the Almighty in this matter? Who does not here recognize Joseph’s God? “But the LORD was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, *and gave him favour* in the sight of the keeper of the prison” (Gen 39:21). Who does not see the Lord that always interfered for Israel and will always interfere for the deliverance of the true Israel of God? Who gave favour to the Israelites in the sight of the Egyptians on their leaving of Egypt? “And I will give this people favour,” says God, “in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty” (Exo 3:21).

Christian, see here the security of God’s people in doing duty. See the encouragement to confidence in His protection. From this learn the importance of humbling thyself before thy God in the hour of trial. See the duty of fasting and prayer in the time of trouble and danger. See the resource of God’s people in the time of their calamity. If we need the protection of men, let us first ask it from God. If we prevail with Him, the power of the most mighty and of the most wicked must minister to our relief. Esther and her friends first cried unto the Lord, and humbled themselves before Him, and then she went to the king. “Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so

will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish” (4:15-16). How often do Christians look first to the means of deliverance! How often do they try every resource before they go to God with a simple and confident reliance on Him! How is their unbelief rebuked here! What encouragement does this hold out to confidence in God in the utmost danger! Only let us believe and all things are possible.

Esther’s delay in preferring her request is another providential circumstance. It is strange that she did not hastily take advantage of the good-humor of the monarch, before she gave him time for reflecting and bad counsel. She might not find him again so complaisant. Her impatience to be delivered from a state of suspense must have favoured an immediate application. Yet without any assigned reason, she declined an explanation, not only at that time, but also at the first banquet. Whatever may have been Esther’s design, the design of Providence is obvious. Had she at that time declared her request, Haman would not have had an opportunity of performing his part in the drama. This man of glory and of guilt must be allowed another scene on the stage of time to exhibit his character in all its bearings, and to show the disappointment and misery of the enemies of God. His vanity is not yet at the highest pitch. He must be brought to the pinnacle of vainglory.

When he arrives on the summit of earthly magnificence next to majesty itself, he must grasp at the shadow of royal splendour. But in the grasp, he must begin to totter to his fall. The crown he had devised to wear for a day, he must fix on the head of his greatest enemy. He must be made to minister to the man of God, whom he thought to destroy. Then shall he fall, never more to rise at all. He must prepare a gallows for Mordecai, but he must himself be hanged thereon.

Thus it shall be with the proud and prosperous wicked. Though they may not, like Haman, meet a retribution in this world, their honour will be succeeded with everlasting shame and misery. From the pinnacle of earthly glory, they shall be hurled into the depths of hell. This prosperity is not to be envied by the poorest Christian, “Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb” (Psa 37:1-2).

How vain is earthly glory! How irrational are the struggles of statesmen and courtiers for the giddy height of power! This moment their counsels may direct the destinies of nations, the next they may be hurled into the abyss of eternal misery. This day they may sit at the helm of empires, tomorrow they may appear before the dread tribunal of God. Now they are at the head of nobles and princes, and attract the notice of admiring millions, in an instant their souls may be required of them, and they may be covered with shame and everlasting contempt. Look at Haman. Was ever statesman or courtier more highly honoured and advanced? He is drunk with worldly glory, but his soul is still thirsty. To what purpose is he mounting yon dangerous height? It is that he may tumble into the abyss below. While his happiness appears to the beholder to be complete, his own bad passions make him miserable. Infamy and ruin hover over him while he ascends, and he falls a monument of the vanity of earthly-glory. What a sudden and dreadful reverse! What a lesson to all the children of pride! What an example to statesmen and courtiers!

We may here see also, that even in this world the most successful ambition is always disappointed in the hope of happiness from the enjoyment of its object. The scholar, the man of science, the senator, the warrior, having gained the utmost eminence to which their throbbing hearts aspired, are not only unsatisfied with glory, but perhaps more miserable than the lowest of the class to which they belong. There is still something that makes disappointment prey on their souls. In all his glory, Haman confessed himself miserable, on account of the disrespect of an insolent Jew, “And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children,

and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and tomorrow am I invited unto her also with the king. Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate" (Est 5:11-13).

All men are in pursuit of happiness, and all, by nature, seek it in the things of this world, but in them it never can be found. Even the acquisition of the things in which they suppose happiness to consist will disappoint them in the enjoyment. Man, at enmity with God, cannot be happy. The curse denounced against sin has entwined itself with all human enjoyments. It is seen not only in the thorns and briars, but also in the most voluptuous enjoyments of that royal luxury that crops the sweet buds of a terrestrial paradise. It lodges not only in the cottages of the poor, but seats itself on the thrones of princes. Solomon has found that all earthly enjoyments are but vanity of vanities. Sinner, return to God through Jesus Christ. There is no real happiness either in this world or the next, but in the favour of Him from whom you fly. Ye children of pride, see in Haman the disappointment of your hopes! How unsatisfactory are your present enjoyments! How soon must you exchange your earthly splendour for the abodes of endless and unmixed misery! The basest of your menials, if he knows the Saviour of sinners, is a happier man than you. Seek happiness, then, where it is to be found—in the knowledge of God. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Until you are delivered from your sins, the curse of God rests on you, and divine wrath must pursue you both in this world and the next. Lay them on the head of the Lamb of God, and be free from guilt, pollution, and misery. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1Jo 1:7).

Mordecai, with the threat of death against himself and his whole nation before his eyes, was evidently a happier man, from confidence in the divine protection, than Haman in the midst of the unbounded profusion of royal power. The children of God are, indeed, frequently sorrowful, but, paradoxical as the assertion may appear, if they enjoy their privileges, *they are always rejoicing*. "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations" (1Pe 1:6), yet even now they rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. They endure as seeing Him who is invisible. Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect to the recompense of reward. Even in the midst of all the afflictions to which he may be called for Christ's sake, the Christian has peace and joy. He is given strength for his day—faith in proportion to his trials. "Beloved," say the apostle Peter, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you" (1Pe 4:12-14).

In this history of providential interposition, there is nothing more wonderful than the process that leads to the exaltation of Mordecai. We already noticed the circumstances that put him in the way of royal notice. He had discovered a conspiracy against the life of the king. But why was he not rewarded immediately on the discovery? Why was he so long neglected or forgotten by the king? The smallest services to majesty usually meet an immediate and a magnificent retribution. Why was the greatest service that could be rendered to man overlooked till it was entirely forgotten? Is the saving of the life of a sovereign of so little estimation? Are absolute monarchs wont to disregard the saviours of their lives? Shall such profusion of royal bounty be showered on the head of Haman, while Mordecai remains unrewarded? What can account for this strange

conduct? One thing can account for it, and nothing but this can be alleged as sufficient cause. The thing was overruled by Providence, for the fulfillment of the divine purposes. God not only works His will through the actions of all men, *but their very abstaining from action* is employed by Him for the same purpose. Had Mordecai been suitably rewarded at the time of his service, there would have been no opportunity for the wickedness of Haman, and the danger of Mordecai, to be so wonderfully manifested. Had Mordecai been already advanced, Haman would not have sought his ruin. But by the delay, Haman was insulted. Mordecai is brought to the brink of ruin from the wrath of the haughty favourite. Who is so blind as not to see the hand of God in this?

But if the reward of Mordecai at the time of his service would have been unsuitable to God's design in manifesting the wickedness of Haman, and His own power in the defense of His people, to have delayed it for a single day longer would have been ruin to the unbending Jew. His immediate death is planned by his enemies, and the next day would have seen him hanged on a gallows fifty cubits high. Haman was to ask the life of his enemy from the king, and to ask it was to obtain it. "Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and tomorrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made" (Est 5:14).

Mordecai, what miracle shall deliver thee now? Shall God speak from heaven or destroy thine enemies with His thunder? Shall the earth open and swallow them up that seek thy life? Shall the angels of the Lord carry thee away and hide thee from thy pursuers? No! thy God will save thee by His providence, in a way suitable to the rest of His conduct manifested in this book. Death hovers over thy head, but he shall not strike thee. The wings of Providence shall overshadow thee and turn aside the dart. Thou shalt have both life and glory without a miracle. But if thou was neglected at the time of so eminent service, what probability is there that thou shalt now be thought of? What friend of thine shall thy God send to the king, to remind him that he owes thee his life? Who shall put him in mind of his obligation at this critical moment?

Another day, and thou art a dead man! But thy God is not asleep, nor unmindful of thee in the time of danger. What is it that He cannot make the minister of His mercy to His servants? A remarkable interposition of His Providence shall bring thee into notice this very night. Though thou hast no friend to speak for thee, thy God shall cause the thoughts of the king to roam in the paths where he shall find thy claims displayed. Even in the unseasonable hour of night, the memorial of thy good deed shall come before him. The king lies down, but he cannot sleep—nor shall he sleep till he hears of Mordecai. "On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bighthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him" (Est 6:1-3).

Astonishing! "On that night!" O gentle sleep, why didst thou forsake the king's couch on that critical night? There is indeed nothing strange to find thee leaving the bed of state, and fluttering with thy downy wings over the sooty cribs in the cottages of hard industry. But why did thy caprice choose to leave the couch of majesty in the critical moment? Didst thou not act as the minister of heaven? Sleep, it was *God* drove thee on that night from the bed of Ahasuerus.

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

5. Its Nature

Justification, strictly speaking, consists in God's imputing to His elect the righteousness of Christ, *that* alone being the meritorious cause or formal ground on which He pronounces them righteous—the righteousness of Christ is that to which God has respect when He pardons and accepts the sinner. By the *nature* of justification, we have reference to *the constituent elements* of the same, which are enjoyed by the believer. These are, the non-imputation of guilt or the remission of sins, and second, of the investing of the believer with a legal title to heaven. The alone ground on which God forgives any man's sins and admits him into His judicial favour, is the vicarious work of his Surety—that perfect satisfaction which Christ offered to the law on his behalf. It is of great importance to be clear on the fact that Christ was “made under the law” not only that He might redeem His people “from the curse of the law” (Gal 3:13), *but also* that they might “receive the adoption of sons” (Gal 4:4-5), that is, be invested with the privileges of sons.

This grand doctrine of justification was proclaimed in its purity and clarity by the Reformers—Luther, Calvin, Zanchius, Peter Martyr, etc., but it began to be corrupted in the seventeenth century by men who had only a very superficial knowledge of it, who taught that justification consisted merely in the removal of guilt or forgiveness of sins, excluding the positive admittance of man into God's judicial favour. In other words, they restricted justification unto deliverance from hell, failing to declare that it also conveys a title unto heaven. This error was perpetuated by John Wesley, and then by the Plymouth Brethren, who, denying that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer, seek to find their title to eternal life in a union with Christ in His resurrection. Few today are clear upon the *twofold* content of justification, because few today understand the nature of that righteousness which is imputed to all who believe.

To show that we have not misrepresented the standard teachings of the Plymouth Brethren on this subject, we quote from Mr. William Kelly's (1821-1906) “Notes on Romans.” In his “Introduction,” he states, “There is nothing to hinder our understanding ‘the righteousness of God’ in its usual sense of an attribute or quality of God” (p. 35). But how could an “attribute” or “quality” of God be “*upon* all them that believe” (Rom 3:22)? Mr. K. will not at all allow that the “righteousness of God” and “the righteousness of Christ” are one and the same, and hence, when he comes to Romans 4 (where so much is said about “righteousness” being *imputed* to the believer) he evacuates the whole of its blessed teaching by trying to make out that this is nothing more than our own faith, saying of Abraham, “his faith in God's word as that which he exercised, and which was accounted as righteousness” (p. 47).

The “righteousness of Christ” which is imputed to the believer consists of that perfect obedience which He rendered unto the precepts of God's law and that death which He died under the penalty of the law. It has been rightly said that, “There is the very same need of Christ's obeying the law in our stead, in order to the reward, as of His suffering the penalty of the law in our stead in order to our escaping the penalty; and the same reason why one should be accepted on our account as the other....To suppose that all Christ does in order to make atonement for us

by suffering is to make Him our Saviour but in part. It is to rob Him of half His glory as a Saviour. For if so, all that He does is to deliver us from hell, He does not purchase heaven for us” (Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758). Should any one object to the idea of Christ “purchasing” heaven for His people, he may at once be referred to Ephesians 1:14, where heaven is expressly designated “the *purchased* possession.”

The imputation to the believer’s account of that perfect obedience which his Surety rendered unto the law for him is plainly taught in Romans 5:18-19, “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Here the “offence” or “disobedience” of the first Adam is set over against the “righteousness” or “obedience” of the last Adam, and inasmuch as the disobedience of the former was an actual transgression of the law, therefore the obedience of the latter *must be* His active obedience unto the law, otherwise the force of the apostle’s antithesis would fail entirely. As this vital point (the chief glory of the Gospel) is now so little understood, and in some quarters disputed, we must enter into some detail.

The one who was justified upon his believing sustained a twofold relation unto God: first, he was a responsible creature, born under the law; second, he was a criminal, having transgressed that law—though his criminality has not canceled his obligation *to* obey the law any more than a man who recklessly squanders his money is no longer due to pay his debts. Consequently, justification consists of two parts, namely, an acquittal from guilt, or the condemnation of the law (deliverance from hell), and the receiving him into God’s favour, on the sentence of the law’s approval (a legal title to heaven). And therefore, the ground upon which God pronounces him just is also a double one, as the one complete satisfaction of Christ is viewed in its two distinct parts—namely, His vicarious obedience unto the precepts of the law, and His substitutionary death under the penalty of the law, the merits of both being equally imputed or reckoned to the account of him who believes.

Against this it has been objected, “The law requires no man to obey and die too.” To which we reply in the language of J. Hervey (1750), “But did it not require a *transgressor* to obey and die? If not, then transgression robs the law of its right, and vacates all obligation to obedience. Did it not require the *Surety* for sinful men to obey and die? If the Surety dies only, He only delivers from penalty. But this affords no claim to *life*, no title to a *reward*—unless you can produce some such edict from the Court of heaven, Suffer this, and thou shalt live. I find it written ‘In keeping of them (thy commandments) there is great reward’ (Psa 19:11), but nowhere do I read, In undergoing Thy curse, there is the same reward. Whereas, when we join the active and passive obedience of our Lord—the peace-speaking blood with the life-giving righteousness—both made infinitely meritorious and infinitely efficacious by the divine glory of His person, how full does our justification appear! How firm does it stand!”

It is not sufficient that the believer stand before God with no sins upon him—that is merely *negative*. The holiness of God requires a *positive* righteousness to our account—that His law be perfectly kept. But we are unable to keep it, therefore our Sponsor fulfilled it for us. By the blood-shedding of our blessed Substitute, the gates of hell have been forever shut against all those for whom He died. By the perfect obedience of our blessed Surety, the gates of heaven are opened wide unto all who believe. My title for standing before God, not only without fear, but in the conscious sunshine of His full favour, is because Christ has been made “righteousness” unto me (1Co 1:30). Christ not only paid all my debts, but fully discharged all my responsibilities. The

law-Giver is my law-Fulfiller. Every holy aspiration of Christ, every godly thought, every gracious word, every righteous act of the Lord Jesus, from Bethlehem to Calvary, unite in forming that “best robe” in which the seed royal stand arrayed before God.

Yet sad to say, even so widely-read and generally-respected a writer as the late Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918), said in his book, “The Gospel and Its Ministry” (chapter on Justification by Blood), “Vicarious obedience is an idea wholly beyond reason—how could a God of righteousness and truth reckon a man who has broken law to have kept law, because someone else has kept it? The thief is not declared to be honest because his neighbour or his kinsman is a good citizen.” What a pitiable dragging down to the bar of sin-polluted human reason, and a measuring by worldly relations, of that divine transaction wherein the “manifold wisdom of God” was exercised! What is impossible with men *is* possible with God. Did Sir Robert never read that Old Testament prediction wherein the Most High God declared, “Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do *a marvelous work* among this people, even a marvelous work and a *wonder*: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid” (Isa 29:14).

It is pointed out that, “In the human realm, both innocence and righteousness are transferable in their effects, but that *in themselves* they are untransferable.” From this it is argued that neither sin nor righteousness are in themselves *capable of* being transferred, and that though God treated Christ *as if He were* the sinner, and deals with the believer *as though he were* righteous, nevertheless, we must not suppose that either is actually the case, still less ought we to affirm that Christ *deserved* to suffer the curse, or that His people are *entitled* to be taken to heaven. Such is a fair sample of the theological ignorance of these degenerate times, such is a representative example of how divine things are being measured by human standards, by such sophistries is the fundamental truth of *imputation* now being repudiated.

Rightly did William Rushton (1831), in his “Particular Redemption,” affirm, “In the great affair of our salvation, our God stands single and alone. In this most glorious work, there is such a display of justice, mercy, wisdom and power, as never entered into the heart of man to conceive, and consequently, *can have no parallel* in the actions of mortals. ‘Who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me’ Isa 45:21.” No, in the very nature of the case, no analogy whatever is to be found in any human transactions with God’s transferring our sins to Christ or Christ’s obedience to us, for the simple but sufficient reason that *no such union exists* between worldlings as obtains between Christ and His people. But let us further amplify this counter-imputation.

The afflictions which the Lord Jesus experienced were not only sufferings at the hands of men, but also enduring punishment at the hand of God, “It pleased the LORD to bruise him” (Isa 53:10). “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: *smite the shepherd*” (Zec 13:7) was His edict. But lawful “punishment” presupposes *criminality*. A righteous God had never inflicted the curse of the law upon Christ unless He had *deserved* it. That is strong language we are well aware, yet not stronger than what Holy Writ fully warrants, and things need to be stated forcibly and plainly today if an apathetic people is to be aroused. It was because God had transferred to their Substitute all the sins of His people that, *officially*, Christ deserved to be paid sin’s wages.

The translation of our sins to Christ was clearly typed out under the law, “And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, [expressing *identification with* the substitute], and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their

sins, putting them upon the head of the goat [denoting *transference*], and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall *bear upon him* all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited” (Lev 16:21-22). So too it was expressly announced by the prophets, “The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all...he shall bear their iniquities” (Isa 53:6, 11). In that great Messianic Psalm, the sixty-ninth, we hear the Surety saying, “O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and *my sins* are not hid from thee” (Psa 69:5)—how could the spotless Redeemer speak thus, unless the sins of His people had been *laid upon Him*?

When God imputed sin to Christ as the sinner’s Surety, *He charged Him with the same*, and dealt with Him accordingly. Christ could not have suffered in the stead of the guilty unless their guilt had been first transferred to Him. The sufferings of Christ were penal. God by act of transcendent grace (to us) laid the iniquities of all that are saved upon Christ, and in consequence, divine justice finding sin upon Him, *punished Him*. He who will by no means clear the guilty must strike through sin and smite its bearer, no matter whether it be the sinner himself or one who vicariously takes his place. But as G. S. Bishop well said, “When justice once strikes the Son of God, justice exhausts itself. Sin is amerced in an Infinite Object.” The atonement of Christ was contrary to *our* processes of law because it rose above *their* finite limitations!

Now as the sins of him who believes were, by God, transferred and imputed to Christ so that God regarded and treated Him accordingly—visiting upon Him the *curse* of the law, which is death, even so the obedience or righteousness of Christ is, by God, transferred and imputed to the believer so that God now regards and deals with him accordingly—bestowing upon him the *blessing* of the law, which is life. And any denial of that fact, no matter by whomsoever made, is a repudiation of the cardinal principle of the Gospel. “The moment the believing sinner accepts Christ as his Substitute, he finds himself not only freed from his sins, but *rewarded*, he gets all heaven because of the glory and merits of Christ (Rom 5:17). The atonement, then, which we preach is one of absolute exchange (1Pe 3:18). It is that Christ took our place literally, in order that we might take His place literally—that God regarded and treated Christ as the sinner, and that He regards and treats the believing sinner as Christ.

“It is not enough for a man to be pardoned. He, of course, is then innocent—washed from his sin—put back again, like Adam in Eden, just where he was. But that is not enough. It was required of Adam in Eden that he should actually *keep* the command. It was not enough that he did not break it, or that he is regarded, through the blood, as though he did not break it. *He must keep it*: he must continue in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them. *How is this necessity supplied?* Man must have a righteousness, or God cannot accept him. Man must have a *perfect* obedience, or else God cannot reward him” (G. S. Bishop). That necessary and perfect obedience is to be found alone in that perfect *life*, lived by Christ in obedience to the law, *before* He went to the cross, which is reckoned to the believer’s account.

It is not that God treats *as* righteous one who is not actually so (that would be a fiction), but that He actually constitutes the believer so, not by infusing a holy nature in his heart, but by reckoning the obedience of Christ to his account. Christ’s obedience is legally transferred to him so that he is now rightly and justly regarded as righteous by the divine law. It is very far more than a naked *pronouncement* of righteousness upon one who is *without* any sufficient foundation for the judgment of God to declare him righteous. No, it is a positive and judicial act of God “whereby, on the consideration of the mediation of Christ, He makes an effectual grant and donation of a true, real, perfect righteousness, even that *of Christ Himself* unto all that do believe, and accounting it as theirs, on His own gracious act, both absolves them from sin, and granteth them right and title unto eternal life” (John Owen).

It now remains for us to point out *the ground on which* God acts in this counter-imputation of sin to Christ and righteousness to His people. That ground was *the Everlasting Covenant*. The objection that it is unjust the innocent should suffer in order that the guilty may escape loses all its force once the Covenant-Headship and responsibility of Christ is seen, and the *covenant-oneness with Him* of those whose sins He bore. There could have been no such thing as a *vicarious* sacrifice unless there had been some *union* between Christ and those for whom He died, and that relation of union must have subsisted *before* He died, yea, before our sins were imputed to Him. Christ undertook to make full satisfaction to the law for His people because He sustained to them the relation of a *Surety*. But *what* justified His acting as their Surety? He stood as their Surety because He was their *Substitute*. He acted *on their behalf*, because He stood *in their room*. But *what* justified the substitution?

No satisfactory answer can be given to the last question until the grand doctrine of everlasting covenant-oneness comes into view, *that* is the great underlying relation. The federal oneness between the Redeemer and the redeemed, the choosing of them *in* Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4), by which a legal union was established between Him and them, is that which alone accounts for and justifies all else. “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are *all of one*: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb 2:11). As the Covenant-Head of His people, Christ was so related to them that their responsibilities necessarily became His, and we are so related to Him that His merits necessarily become ours. Thus, as we said in an earlier article, three words give us the key to and sum up the whole transaction—substitution, identification, imputation—all of which rest upon covenant-oneness. Christ was substituted *for* us, because He is one *with* us—identified with us, and we with Him. Thus God dealt with us as occupying *Christ’s* place of worthiness and acceptance. May the Holy Spirit grant both writer and reader such an heart-apprehension of this wondrous and blessed truth, that overflowing gratitude may move us unto fuller devotedness unto Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

WELCOME TIDINGS

Following our annual custom, the time has again arrived for us to indicate to our loyal supporters before the throne of grace something of the manner and extent to which the Hearer of prayer has been pleased to grant their requests. As we turn to this happy task, once more our favourite passage comes to mind, “His compassions fail not. They are new *every* morning: great is thy faithfulness” (Lam 3:22-23). So we have found it through another year. Hardly a single day has passed but what the mails have brought us some ‘welcome tidings’ that the God of all grace is condescending to bless unto one and another the labours of our pen. Some of our more intimate friends may like to know that the editor and his wife usually spend from 11 to 11:30 each morning in going over the mail together, and O what cause for thanksgiving and praise are we provided with.

Letters to hand during the past twelve months have been more numerous than ever, which makes it difficult now to give some selections from their contents. To convey anything like an

adequate concept of what the Holy Spirit has wrought in some lives would require us to publish their letters at length, but this would consume far more space than is here available. Thank God, one day all the redeemed will learn the complete story of the wondrous works of God in providence and grace, not only by means of the instrumentality of this little magazine, but of all the varied agencies which our sovereign God has seen fit to employ. What a soul-stirring, heart-melting, praise-provoking record that will be! How each and all of the redeemed will marvel and adore when they learn of the feeble instruments which divine grace has used to produce works which will last for all eternity!

“I have been reading your Studies for two years, and it was not long before I began to realize the difference between *saying* I am a Christian and really *being* one. From that time on, God has led me wondrously. First of all, He made me realize I must leave—for a *smaller* house” (Brother in Wales). O that it might please the Lord to move others of His dear children to do likewise: to so work in them a spirit of self-denial that they would live more like strangers and pilgrims in this scene. “The series on Heart Work did me much good. They truly stirred me up to my Christian duty of keeping the heart as of supreme importance. And now I watch and pray going to my work and coming back at night, more than ever before. I talk with my Lord going through the dark and torturous lane that leads to my home, singing psalms and making melody in my heart, and the way seems much shorter” (Brother in New Jersey).

“The Lord has dealt wonderfully with me this past year, keeping me in closer touch with Himself than ever before, and I do not hesitate to say that He used your ministry to bring this about. So once again I am rejoicing that in all my unworthiness He has granted me the privilege of receiving the Studies. What food for meditation there is in that little magazine!” (Sister in Washington). “Many of the articles are very searching especially on Salvation and Assurance, and I have been led into deep searching of my heart to see if it could be possible I had been deceived. I seem to come so far short of God’s requirements...and I am led to cry to Him for more love. I do thank Him for the precious Word that is opened up in the Studies—it is about all the spiritual help we receive. Practically all the professing Christians here are taken up with the radio” (Sister in California).

“On the whole, Studies have given me much occasion during the past year for praising God, but as I suppose it is with others, so it is with me—some portions call for special mention. In my case it is what you have written on Dispensationalism. If God were pleased to make it possible for those articles to be printed in pamphlet form, I feel it would be a work attended with much blessing” (Brother in New York). “Your articles on Dispensationalism still appeal to me personally, and rightly upset the prevalent and erroneous ideas of our ‘spiritual leaders.’ As you have expressed it, the ‘rightly dividers’ have wrongly divided the family of God” (Brother in Australia). “I am gratified to see that you are devoting a column to the refutation of what is called Dispensationalism. It is very distressing to find how much this virus has distorted the thought and corrupted the faith of so many Christians in this Country” (Professor of Theology in U.S. Seminary).

“As I sit down to write a few words of appreciation, I find myself unable to express or convey in any measure the experiences I have had while reading your ministry. The heart-searchings and questionings, the doubts and fears of one’s faith—whether real or false after all. How conscience has been pricked time and time again. But on the other hand, what sweet seasons of communion and fellowship, times of refreshing, while reading such articles as Hebrews and those on the Spirit” (Brother in England). “Your recent articles on Heart Work and the Christian’s Armour are proving a great help to me. I believe the Holy Spirit is showing me more plainly just what sin is in

God's sight, and the necessity for confessing *every* sin. May He give me grace to come into subjection to all His righteous and holy claims upon me" (Sister in Nebraska).

"I desire to herewith thank you most sincerely for not being 'weary in well doing,' because you have been sending me the Studies so regularly which I cannot help but appreciate as *the gem* of present-day Christian literature. I find it to be a faithful dissemination of God's truth, more than ever needed today" (Bible Teacher in Australia). "Your writings are of a very searching character, but unless we are willing to be searched and emptied of all self, God will not fill us and use us for His glory. O that we all may desire to walk closer to Him who alone is good and holy, having our eyes fixed on things above. Thank you ever so much for all the good things you have been enabled to bring us from the Word of God, and for all the kind exhortations you have given us" (Preacher in Brooklyn).

"I am greatly blest by reading your articles, and my prayer is that many more may read them" (Preacher in Arizona). "I cannot express in words the spiritual value of the Studies. They have been helpful and rich in suggestion for a spiritual, Scriptural ministry" (Preacher in Michigan). "Your Studies have brought both 'meat for the eater and seed for the sower' through another year" (Preacher in Alabama). "Praise God for Studies. Your pen is God-anointed, the Truth is searching, but blessed to those who wish to go all the way with God" (Preacher in Minnesota). "I am very glad to say that I find your Studies increasingly helpful. They do indeed meet a long and deeply felt need" (Preacher in England). "I am sending this gift with deep appreciation for the Studies you have so kindly sent me. They have been of much help and blessing to me" (Native Evangelist in China).

"The main thing I read the Studies for is to find therein that which *condemns* my sinful self, and put that right with God, and I have been tasting more of the joy of obedience" (Sister in Australia). "I have been helped very much by Studies, especially the practical side of Christianity—unless we know how to *live* the Word, our mouth does little good" (Sister in Connecticut). "We, as many others, have been blessed through your labour of love in sending forth the Studies. There have been many things helpful, as well as edifying, and there have been things which call us to heart searching, yet through them all, we are greatly benefited" (Brother in California). "I have been helped by reading Studies—although they show us what we are, they keep us from being self-satisfied" (Sister in Australia). "Just now my heart was melted by reading that blessed article on David. It was written just for me, for truly I have been passing through the same ways and the same temptations" (Brother in France).

"I want to express my gratitude to you for so kindly sending me Studies when I was unable to contribute. I cannot express adequately the great benefit they have been to me. Through my constant striving after a compliance with *all* God's commands, I have been isolated from many 'professors,' but your magazine has brought me into such sweet communion with its author and God, that I have great peace. I pray that God will long spare you to continue them" (Brother in Canada). "The Christian's Armour, Furnace Conduct, Hearing the Rod, are precious, and I pray much for power to retain and *put into practice* in daily life to His glory, for I realize in some measure the responsibility of receiving such deep teaching, and I know that it is only His Spirit within who can produce the life pleasing to God" (Sister in England).

"I want to take this opportunity of thanking you for the Studies which I have been receiving, to encourage you in your labour of love, by telling you that the Lord has indeed blessed them to me—both in my spiritual life, private study of Scripture, and in public exposition of the Word. What has been of particular help is the practical application of Doctrine to daily living, a subject

sadly neglected, but greatly needed today” (Preacher in London). “While I know you are not asking for any compensation from man for the work you are doing, yet I am the beneficiary, and it is as little as I can do to let you know it. Experimental religion, if not rare, at least is seldom heard of these days, which makes your writings all the more precious and valuable to me. So many seem to have a creedal idea of religion without a heart-knowledge of its verities. I thank the Lord for bringing me into acquaintance with you” (Preacher in Virginia).

“Thank you for the Studies which have brought a great blessing to me, and, as you mention in your letter of December, no heaven-sent revival will come till there is a faithful preaching of *the law*. I believe that the truths you have emphasized so strongly are the *very* thing we need, for how can, or will, sinner or saint seek God’s grace, unless we see self in its true light!” (Brother in California). “I cannot tell you what a help and encouragement Studies have been to me. It is very rarely I am able to hear any preaching, as I am constantly preaching myself, so your magazine has supplied what I so much need” (Preacher in England). “Your letters and the Studies, next to the Word itself, are to us still the most valued of all writings. They cause us to examine ourselves in the light of God’s truth. They give comfort in time of need. They make us realize deep down in our souls that the truths enunciated by you are the only solid foundation on which a poor, needy soul may rest his hopes for this life and for eternity” (Brother in Australia).

“Sometimes I *translate* your articles so that they may be a blessing to many believers” (Brother in France). “Many of your thoughts are translated to the Chinese brethren. It gives me pleasure to break the Bread of Life to them” (Brother in China). “I wish to ask for your kind permission to translate some of your articles into our Czechoslovakian language. I am sure our Christian friends would enjoy them” (Brother in Czechoslovakia). Similar quotations might be made from others, showing how the Lord is so ordering things that numbers of His people in foreign lands may share with us some of the wondrous riches of His grace. Only the day to come will reveal the full fruitage.

Our purpose in inserting so many excerpts is to encourage our prayer-helpers, that they may thank and praise the Lord for His infinite grace in blessing this monthly messenger to so many of His dear people, and to stir them up unto yet more earnest and definite supplication, that hundreds more of the household of faith may be reached and blest too. Also we desired to give proof that *God is still working*—not only is His ear not heavy that it cannot hear, but His arm is not shortened. We have less and less patience with those ‘signs of the times’ men who seem to delight in raking amid the filth of the world, and occupying the minds of professing Christians with little else than evil. Let us be more engaged with the wondrous works of *God*—in creation, providence, and grace. Let the reader ponder Philippians 4:8 and turn it into prayer!

For several years past, the number of names on our mailing-list has been slightly but steadily decreasing. In the middle of November, when making out our list for 1934, we felt obliged to drop three hundred and fifty to whom we sent the magazine in 1933, seeing they had made no sign that it was appreciated. For the next six weeks we were much in prayer that God would stir up many of them to write us and also send us in many new names, but by the end of December our list was twenty-five *behind* the number we had twelve months previously. It then occurred to us that here was a golden opportunity for the exercise of *faith*. From then on we have daily sought God to “*enlarge my coast*” (1Ch 4:10) and give us a twenty per-cent *increase* in the circulation of “Studies” this year! We hope that scores will co-operate in prayer with us to this end. “All things are possible to him that believeth” (Mar 9:23)! We are thankful to report that gifts have come in *very* freely during the last six months, and that we both continue to be preserved in excellent health. The joy of the Lord is our strength. With Christian greetings, A. W. and V. E. Pink.

A PRAYER

“Reveal, blessed Jesus! reveal Thy glory to mine eye, and shed abroad Thy love in my heart. Cause me to rest completely satisfied in Thy undertaking, and the fulfilling end of the law and enable me to live upon Thy inexhaustible fullness. Empty me of all self-dependence and make me truly humble. Show me the beauty of holiness, as delineated in Thy most perfect pattern and help me to copy it in my own conduct. Raise my affections to heavenly things, and grant me the abiding earnest of my eternal inheritance. Then, though in a sinful world and a militant state, though harassed with bodily pain, or pinched with worldly poverty, I shall not only be safe but happy. The slavish fears of damnation shall be far distant, and the beams of celestial joy shall shine into my soul. Then, ye sons of sensuality and children of pride, ye may take your sordid pleasures, and boast of your tinsel honours. I shall neither covet your lawless mirth, nor envy your sounding titles. Being dead to the law, and alive to my God, being safe in the hands of my Saviour, and blest with a sense of His love, having death in remembrance, and heaven in view, I shall despise your mean pursuits, and abhor your illicit enjoyments. While the world is satisfied with the feather of fading honours, and the froth of perishing pleasures, be it thy concern, O my soul! to glorify Him who died for thee and rose again. Then shall substantial pleasures be thy present enjoyment, and unfading honours thy eternal crown” (Abraham Booth, 1780).



August

THE HOLY SPIRIT

20. The Spirit Enlightening (Part 2)

A dead man can neither see nor hear—true alike naturally and spiritually. There must be *life* before there can be perception. The Spirit must quicken the soul before it be capable of discerning and being affected by divine things in a spiritual way. We say “in a *spiritual* way,” because even a blind man may obtain an accurate idea of objects which his eye has never beheld. Even so the unregenerate may acquire a natural knowledge of divine things. But there is a far greater difference between an unregenerate man’s knowledge of divine things—no matter how orthodox and scriptural be his views—and the knowledge possessed by the regenerate, than there is between a blind man’s conception of a gorgeous sunset and what it would appear to him were sight communicated and he was permitted to gaze upon one himself. It is not merely that the once-blind man would have a more correct conception of the Creator’s handiwork, but the *effect produced upon him* would be such as words could not describe.

The Spirit’s quickening of the dead soul into newness of life lays the foundation for all His consequent operations. Once the soul is made the recipient of spiritual life, all its faculties are capacitated unto spiritual exercises—the understanding to perceive spiritually, the conscience to feel spiritually, the affections to move spiritually, and the will to act spiritually. Originally, God formed man’s body out of the dust of the ground, and it then existed as a complete organism, being endowed with a full set of organs and members, but it was not until God “breathed into” him the “breath of *life*” (Gen 2:7) that Adam was able to move and act. In like manner, the soul of the natural man is vested with all these faculties which distinguish him from the beasts, but it is not until the Spirit *quickens* him that he is capable of discerning and being affected by divine things in a spiritual way.

Once the Spirit has brought one of God’s dead elect on to resurrection ground, He proceeds to illumine him. The light of God now shines upon him, and the previously-blind soul having been divinely empowered to see, is able to *receive* that light. The Spirit’s enlightenment commences immediately after quickening, continues throughout the Christian’s life, and is consummated in glory, “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth *more and more* unto the perfect day” (Pro 4:18). As we stated in a previous article, the spiritual enlightenment is not a mere informing of the mind or communication of spiritual knowledge, but is an experimental and

efficacious consciousness of the truth. It is that which is spoken of in 1 John 2:20, 27, “But ye have *an unction* from the Holy One, and ye *know* all things....But *the anointing* which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you.”

By this “anointing” or enlightenment the quickened soul is enabled to perceive the true nature of sin—opposition against God expressed in self-pleasing. By it he discerns the plague of his own heart, and finds that he is a moral leper, totally depraved, corrupt at the very center of his being. By it he detects the deceptions of Satan, which formerly made him believe that bitter was sweet, and sweet bitter. By it he apprehends the claims of God—that He is absolutely worthy of and infinitely entitled to be loved with *all* the heart, soul, and strength. By it he learns God’s *way of* salvation—that the path of practical holiness is the only one which leads to heaven. By it he beholds the perfect suitability and sufficiency of Christ—that He is the only One who could meet all God’s claims upon him. By it he feels his own impotency unto all that is good and presents himself as an empty vessel to be filled out of Christ’s fulness.

A divine light now shines into the quickened soul. Before, he was “darkness,” but now is he “light in the Lord” (Eph 5:8). He now perceives that those things in which he once found pleasure are loathsome and damnable. His former conceits of the world and its enjoyments, he now sees to be erroneous and ensnaring, and apprehends that no real happiness or contentment is to be found in any of them. That holiness of heart and strictness of life which before he criticized as needless preciseness or puritanic extremeness, is now looked upon not only as absolutely necessary, but as most beautiful and blessed. Those moral and religious performances he once prided himself in, and which he supposed merited the approval of God, he now regards as filthy rags. Those whom he once envied, he now pities. The company he once delighted in, now sickens and saddens him. His whole outlook is completely changed.

Divine illumination, then, is the Holy Spirit imparting to the quickened soul accurate and spiritual views of divine things. To hear and *understand* is peculiar to the “good-ground” hearer (Mat 13:23). None but the *real* “disciple” *knows* the truth (Joh 8:31-32). Even the Gospel is “hid” from the lost (See 2Co 4:4). But when a quickened soul is enlightened by the Spirit, he has a feeling realization of the excellency of the divine character, the spirituality of God’s law, the exceeding sinfulness of sin in general and of his own vileness in particular. It is a divine work which capacitates the soul to have real communion with God to receive or take in spiritual objects, enjoy them, and live upon them. It is in this way that Christ is “formed *in you*” (Gal 4:19). Thus, at times, the Christian is able to say:

*Thy shining grace can cheer
This dungeon where I dwell.
'Tis paradise when Thou are here,
If Thou depart, 'tis hell.*

In closing, let us seek to define a little more definitely some of the characteristics of this divine enlightenment. First, it is one which gives *certainty* to the soul. It enables its favoured possessor to say, “One thing I *know*, that, whereas I was blind, now I see” (Joh 9:25), and again, “I *know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2Ti 1:12). Later, Satan may be permitted to inject unbelieving and atheistical thoughts into his mind, but it is utterly impossible for him to *persuade* any quickened and enlightened soul that God has no existence, that Christ is a myth, that the Scriptures are a human invention. God in Christ has become a living reality to him, and the more He appears to the soul the sum of all excellency, the more He is loved.

Second, this divine enlightenment is *transforming*. Herein it differs radically from a natural knowledge of divine things, such as the unregenerate may acquire intellectually, but which produces no real and lasting impression upon the soul. A spiritual apprehension of divine things is an efficacious one, stamping the image thereof upon the heart, and moulding it into their likeness. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are *changed into the same image* from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:18). Thus this spiritual illumination is vastly different from a mere notional and inoperative knowledge of divine things. The Spirit’s enlightenment enables the Christian to “*show forth* the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1Pe 2:9).

Third, this divine enlightenment is a spiritual *preservative*. This is evident from 1 John 2:20, though to make it fully clear unto the reader an exposition of that verse in the light of its context is required. In 1 John 2:18, the apostle had mentioned the “many antichrists” (to be headed up in *the* antichrist), which were to characterize this final dispensation—seducers from the faith were numerous, even before the close of the first century A.D. In 1 John 2:19, reference is made unto those who had fallen under the spell of these deceivers, and who had in consequence, apostatized from Christianity. In sharp contrast therefrom, the apostle affirms, “*But ye* have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things” (1Jo 2:20). Here was the divine preservative—the Spirit’s enlightenment ensured the saints from being captured by Satan’s emissaries. apostates had never been anointed by the Spirit, renewed souls are, and this safeguards them. The voice of a stranger “will they not follow” (Joh 10:5). It is not possible to fatally “deceive” one of God’s elect (Mat 24:24). The same precious truth is found again in 1 John 2:27, the Spirit indwells the Christian “for ever” (Joh 14:16), hence the “anointing” he has received “*abideth* in him” and thus guarantees that he shall “abide in Christ.”

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

80. The Pinnacle of Faith (11:35-36)

In his lengthy, but most blessed description of the life of faith, the Spirit of God has, in Hebrews 11, passed from one phase of it to another, exhibiting to our view its many-sidedness. But there was one other aspect thereof which required to be delineated in order to give completeness to the whole, and that we have designated the “pinnacle” of faith, for to *suffer* for God, to meekly endure whatever affliction He is pleased to put upon us, to lay down our lives for the sake of His truth, if called upon to do so, is the highest point which faith can reach. Therefore, in the text which is now to engage our attention, He moved the apostle to pass on to an entirely different sort of the fruits of faith from those mentioned in the preceding verses, and shows us the power of faith to support the soul under sufferings, even the acutest afflictions to which the human mind and body can be subjected.

“For hearing of these great and glorious things, they might be apt to think that they were not so immediately concerned in them. For *their* condition was poor, persecuted, exposed to all evils,

and death itself, for the profession of the Gospel. Their interest, therefore, was to inquire what help in, what relief from faith they might expect in that condition? What will faith do where men are to be oppressed, persecuted, and slain? Wherefore, the apostle, applying himself directly unto their condition, with what they suffered and further feared on the account of their profession of the Gospel, he produceth a multitude of examples, as so many testimonies unto the power of faith in safe-guarding and preserving the souls of believers under the greatest sufferings that human nature can be exposed unto” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

Not only were these instances of the sufferings of the Old Testament saints pertinent to the circumstances the Hebrew Christians of Paul’s time were in, but *we* too need to be informed of what faith in God and fidelity to His truth may entail. At the outset of the Christian life we are bidden to first sit down and “count the cost” (Luke 14:28), which means that we are required to contemplate those sufferings which the following of Christ is likely to involve, and it is well that we should frequently remind ourselves that “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22). It is criminal silence on the part of any servant of God *to conceal from his hearers* that a true profession of the name of Christ will necessarily bring down upon us not only the scorn and opposition of the outside world, but also the hatred and persecution of the false religious world. “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you” (1Pe 4:12).

The Lord Jesus Christ dealt openly in this matter, and plainly made known what was likely to befall those whom He called to follow Him, and expressly affirmed that He would admit none into the ranks of *His* disciples save those who denied themselves, took up their *cross*, and engaged to undergo all sorts of sufferings for His sake and the Gospel’s. He deceived none with fair promises of a smooth and easy passage through this world. So too does His faithful apostle, in the verses which are to be before us, after setting before the Hebrews some of the grand and glorious achievements which the faith of their predecessors had wrought, now reminds them of *others*, who were called upon to exercise *their* faith in the greatest miseries that could be undergone. Great trials and sore afflictions are to be expected in the path of faith. The Saviour Himself encountered them, and sufficient for the disciple to be as his Master.

“All the evils here enumerated, did befall the persons intended, on the account of their *faith*, and the profession thereof. The apostle does not present unto the Hebrews a company of miserable, distressed creatures that fell into that state through their own default, or merely on the account of common providence, disposing their lot in this world into such a state of misery, as it is with many, but all the things mentioned, they underwent merely and solely on the account of their faith in God, and the profession of true religion. So as that their case differed in nothing from that which they might be called unto” (John Owen).

But not only were these sufferings encountered in the path of fidelity to God, but it was the exercise of *faith* which enabled those Old Testament worthies to patiently and spiritually endure them. Faith is a grace which draws down from heaven whatever blessing of God is most needful to the saint, and therefore does it stand him in as good stead in the night of adversity as in the day of prosperity. Faith is a new-creation principle in the soul which not only energizes its possessor to perform exploits, but it also enables him to hold his head above the dark waters when floods threaten to drown him. Faith suffices the Christian to face danger calmly, to continue steadfast in duty when menaced by the most foreboding outlook, to stand his ground when threatened with sorest sufferings. Faith imparts a steadfastness of purpose, a noble courage, a tranquility of mind, which no human education or fleshly efforts can supply. Faith makes the righteous as bold as a lion, refusing to recant though horrible tortures and a martyr’s death be the only alternative.

Faith gives its possessor patience under adversities, for by faith he sees them in a scriptural light and bears them by the enabling strength of Christ. How good and profitable is a sanctified affliction, but then only is it sanctified to us when faith is “mixed with” it. When faith is not in exercise, the heart is occupied with the things which are seen and temporal—only the creature’s hand or the creature’s treachery is viewed, and peevishness and resentment prevail. Or worst still, we are tempted to entertain hard thoughts against God, and to say, “The LORD has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me” (Isa 49:14). But when the Spirit renews us in the inner man, and faith becomes active again, how differently do things then appear! Then we take ourselves to task and say, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?...hope in God”(Psa 43:5).

It belongs entirely unto the sovereign pleasure of God to order and dispose the outward conditions through which His church passes upon earth—seasons of prosperity and times of adversity are regulated by Him as He deems best. Eras of peace and security and eras of persecution and peril are interchangeable, like day and night, summer and winter. Yet God does not act arbitrarily. It was not until after Abraham left Bethel and its altar, and journeyed southward (Egypt-wards) that there arose a famine in the land (Gen 12:8-10). It was only when Israel “forsook the LORD God of their fathers...and followed other gods,” that His anger was kindled against them, and “He delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about” (Jdg 2:11-14). It was only when men “slept” that He suffered the enemy to sow “tares” among the wheat (Mat 13:25). It was after Ephesus *left* her “first love” that the Smyranean era of persecution was experienced (Rev 2:4 and 9-10). And it is because so many of the professing servants of God repudiated His law during the previous generation that we are now plagued with a reign of lawlessness in the church, home, and state.

God will not be mocked, and in His righteous government He visits the iniquities of the fathers upon their children, and hence it is that seasons of prosperity are followed by seasons of adversity. Yet during these seasons of adversity, whether they take the form of spiritual dearth or of physical peril, the godly remnant who sigh and cry because of the abominations which are found in what are termed the public “places of worship,” or who meekly endure the persecutions of hypocritical professors or of the openly ungodly world, are no less acceptable with God, and are *as precious in His sight* as those whose lot was previously cast in times of the greatest earthly felicity.

The darker the night the more evident the few stars twinkling between the clouds. The more awful be the state of professing Christendom as a whole, the more suitable is the background for the children of God to display their colours. The fiercer be the opposition made against a spiritual faith, the grander the opportunity for bringing forth its choicest fruit. There is no higher aspect of faith than that which brings the heart to patiently submit unto whatever God sends us, to meekly acquiesce unto His sovereign will, to say, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (Joh 18:11). Oftentimes the faith which *suffers* is greater than the faith that can boast an open triumph. Love “beareth all things” (1Co 13:7), and faith when it reaches the pinnacle of attainment declares, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”

“There is as much glory unto a spiritual eye, in the catalogue of the effects of faith that follow, as in that which went before. The church is no less beautiful and glorious when encompassed, and seemingly overwhelmed with all the evils and dreadful miseries here recounted, than when it is in the greatest peace and prosperity. To look, indeed, only on the outside of them gives a terrible undesirable prospect. But to see faith and love to God, working effectually under them all, to see comforts retained, yea, consolations abounding, holiness prompted, God glorified, the world

condemned, the souls of men profited, and at length triumphant over all—this is beautiful and glorious.

“It may also be observed that the apostle takes most of these instances, if not all of them, from the time of the persecution of the church under Antiochus, the king of Syria, in the days of the Maccabees. And we may consider concerning this season: 1. That it was after the closing of the canon of Scripture, or putting of the last hand unto writings by divine inspiration under the Old Testament. Wherefore, as the apostle represented these things from the notoriety of fact then fresh in memory, and it may be, some books then written of those things, like the books of the Maccabees, yet remaining, yet as they are delivered out unto the church *by him*, they proceeded from divine inspiration. 2. That in those days wherein these things fell out, there was no extraordinary prophet in the church. Prophecy, as the Jews confess, ceased under the second temple. And this makes it evident that the rule of the Word, and the ordinary ministry of the church, *is sufficient* to maintain believers in their duty against all oppositions whatever. 3. That this last persecution of the church under the Old Testament by Antiochus, was typical of the last persecution of the Christian church under antichrist, as is evident to all that compare Daniel 8:10-14, 23-25; 11:36-39 with that of the Revelation in sundry places. And indeed the martyrologies of those who have suffered under the Roman antichrist are a better exposition of this context than any that can be given in words” (John Owen).

“Women received their dead raised to life again” (Heb 11:35). Some have complained, because this clause is not placed at the end of verse 34, urging that it belongs there much more appropriately than it does at the beginning of verse 35, being a fitting climax to the miraculous achievements of faith enumerated in verses 33-34. While it be true that the particular item here before us belongs to the same class of miracles found in the preceding verse, yet personally we regard it as suitable for placing at the head of what follows in verses 35-38, for it forms a suitable *transition* from the one to the other. And in this respect—those women passed through the sufferings of a sore bereavement before they had their beloved children restored to them—a reward for their kindness unto God’s servants.

“Women received their dead raised to life again.” (Heb 11:35). The historical reference is to what is recorded in 1 Kings 17:22-24 and 2 Kings 4:35-37. How those remarkable cases show us once more that there is nothing too hard or difficult for *faith* to effect when it works according to the revealed will of God! But what is the *spiritual* application of this unto us today? Is it not faith’s seeking the Spirit’s renewal of languishing graces? the practical heeding of that word “Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die” (Rev 3:2)! Or, to take a more extreme case, is it not a word of hope to the backslidden Christian, who has to all appearances lapsed back into a state of unregeneracy? Is it not faith’s response to that word (addressed to Christians) “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Eph 5:14)!

“And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance” (Heb 11:35). It is very touching to remember that the hand which first penned those words had taken a prominent part in inflicting torture upon the saints of God (Act 8:3, 9:1), but, by grace, he was now a *sharer* of them (2Co 11:24-27). The word “torture” here signifies “were racked.” Those Old Testament saints were fastened to a device and then a wrench was turned which caused their joints to be pulled out of their sockets—a method of torture frequently resorted to by fiendish Romanists when seeking to force Protestants to recant. By this fearful form of suffering the graces of God’s people were tested and tried.

“Not accepting deliverance” (Heb 11:35). It was offered to them, but at the price of apostasy. Two alternatives were set before them—disloyalty to the Lord or enduring the most excruciating suffering; surrender of the truth or being tortured by devils in human form. Freedom from this torture was offered to them in return for forsaking their profession. This is expressly affirmed of Eliezer and his seven brethren in 2 Maccabees. Yea, they were not only offered freedom from tortures and death, but promised great rewards and promotions, which they steadfastly refused. The *principal* design of Satan in setting torture before God’s saints is not to slay their bodies, but is to *destroy their souls*. Space has always been given to the victim for consideration and recantation—entreaties have been mingled with threats to induce a renouncing of their profession.

Thus, the real test presented was which did these saints of God esteem more highly—the present comfort of their bodies or the eternal interests of their souls? Let it be remembered that they were men and women of like passions with us. Their bodies were made of the same tender and sensitive flesh as ours are, but such was the care they had for their souls, so genuine was their faith and hope in a better resurrection, that they listened not to the appeals and whinings of the outward man. The *same* issue is drawn, though in another form, today. Alas, what countless millions of people lose their souls eternally for the temporary gratification of their vile bodies. Reader, which do you esteem the more highly—your body or your soul? Your *actions* supply the answer—which receives the more thought, care, and attention; *which* is “denied,” and *which* is catered unto?

“Not accepting deliverance” (Heb 11:35). The word for “deliverance” here is commonly translated “redemption” in the New Testament. Its usage in this verse helps to a clearer understanding of that important term, and emphasizes the difference between it and “ransom.” “Ransom” is the paying of the price which justice requires, but “redemption” is the actual emancipation of the one for whom the price was paid. These saints refused to accept a temporal “redemption” or “deliverance,” because to have done so on the terms it was proffered to them would have meant the renunciation of their profession, apostasy from God. It was “through *faith*” they made this noble decision. It was love for the truth, which caused them to hold fast that which was infinitely dearer to them than an escape from bodily suffering. They had “bought the truth,” at the price of turning their backs on the world and their former religious friends, and bringing down upon themselves the scorn and hatred of them. And now they refused to “sell the truth” see Pro 23:23, out of a mere regard to bodily ease.

“Not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection” (Heb 11:35). That last clause shows the *ground* of their steadfastness. The primary force of the expression *here* is a figurative one, as the verse as a whole clearly shows. They were offered a “resurrection” on the condition of their recantation, namely a “resurrection” from reproach to honour, from poverty to riches, from pain to ease and pleasure—it was a “resurrection” from the physical torture which threatened them, compare Hebrews 11:19. But their hearts were occupied with something far, far better than being raised up to earthly comforts and honours. Their faith anticipated that morning without clouds, when their bodies would be raised in glory, made like Christ’s, and taken to be with Him forever. It was the hope of *that* which supported their souls in the face of extreme peril and sustained them under acutest sufferings.

“That they might obtain a better resurrection” (Heb 11:35). In passing, let it be noted that God had set before the *Old* Testament saints the hope of resurrection—they were not nearly so ignorant as the dispensationalists make them out to be, in fact were far wiser than most of our moderns. Resurrection has always been the top stone in the building of faith (Job 19:25-26), that which promised eternal reward, and that which gave life unto their obedience. A further proof of

this fact is found in Acts 24:14-16—the faith of the “fathers” embraced “a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” That glorious resurrection will more than compensate for any bodily denials or bodily sufferings which the Christian makes or experiences for Christ’s sake.

“And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment” (Heb 11:36). This verse supplies further details of what some of the Old Testament saints were called upon to suffer for their fidelity to the truth, sufferings which have been frequently duplicated during this Christian era. We are here informed of the various methods which the enemies of God employed in the afflicting of His people. No stone was left unturned in the persevering and merciless efforts to produce a denial of the faith. While these things are harrowing to our feelings, yet they also serve to make manifest the sufficiency of divine grace to support its recipients under most painful trials, and should evoke thanksgiving and praise unto Him that is able to make the weak stand up under the fiercest assaults of the enemy.

“And others had trial of cruel mockings” (Heb 11:36). Let us, when we are reproached for Christ’s sake and ridiculed because of our adherence to God’s truth, call to mind that *this* was the *mildest* form of suffering which many who went before us on the pilgrim path were called upon to endure! The sneers and unkind words of our foes are not worthy of a pang in comparison with the far sorer pains which other believers have had to bear. It has ever been the portion of God’s servants and people to be derided, reproached, and insulted, see Galatians 4:29, 2 Chronicles 36:16, Jeremiah 20:7, Lamentations 3:14, and my reader, if *we* are not being “mocked”—sneered at, scoffed at—it is because we are too lax in our ways and too worldly in our walk. Human nature has not changed. Satan has not changed. The world has not changed, and the more Christlike is our life, the more we shall drink—in our measure—of the cup He drank from.

“And scourgings.” The reference is to the lashings of their backs with whipcords of wire, which were most painful to experience, for they lacerated the flesh, drew blood, and macerated the body. It was not only a painful form of suffering, but a most humiliating one as well, for “scourgings” were reserved for the basest and most degenerate of men. The Lord Jesus was subjected to this form of ignominy and suffering from His enemies (Mat 27:26), and so also were His apostles (Act 5:40, 16:23). It is true that *we* are now (for the immediate present) spared these corporeal “scourgings,” but there is such a thing as being lashed by the tongue and harrowed in our minds. Nevertheless, happy are we (Mat 5:10-12) if we are so honoured as to experience a little fellowship with the sufferings of Christ. But let us see well to it that we do not retaliate. Ponder carefully and turn into earnest prayer Psalm 38:12-14; 1 Peter 2:21-23.

“Yea, moreover of bonds” (Heb 11:36). The reference is to cords, chains, manacles, and fetters, binding them fast, so that they could not run away. In this item we see how “the excellent” of the earth (Psa 16:3) were basely dealt with as though they had been the vilest of malefactors. Does your heart go out in pity to them, dear reader? Ah, what if *you* are “bound” even now with something far, far worse than outer and material ropes and chains! Multitudes are held fast by habits they cannot break. Their souls are fettered by iniquities from which they cannot free themselves. Sin has taken them captive and has full dominion over them. Has it over you? Or has Christ set you free—not from the hateful presence of indwelling sin, but from its reigning power. Daily ought we to pray and strive against everything which limits us spiritually.

“And imprisonment,” (Heb 11:36). which was the lot commonly apportioned to robbers and murderers. Here again we see the saints of God treated as the offscouring of the earth, and let it be remembered that the prisons of those days were of a far different order from the comfortable buildings in which criminals are now incarcerated. One has only to read the experience of

Jeremiah 38:11-13 to get some idea of the meaning of this word in our text. God's children were thrown into dark and damp dungeons, far below the level of the earth, unheated, unpaved, unilluminated. One cannot read this clause in our text without thinking of dear Bunyan. Ah, my reader, nothing but a *real* faith in the living God could have enabled those believers to have remained faithful unto death. The whole of the verses which have been before us exhibit the efficacy and *sufficiency* of a spiritual faith to endure the worst that men and devils could inflict upon its favoured possessors. Is *yours* only an easy-chair "faith"?

THE LIFE OF DAVID

32. His Failure

In our last article (so far as the application of the principles enunciated therein related to him who is the principal subject of this series), we endeavored to show that very much hinged on the manner in which David now conducted himself. A most important crises had been reached in his life. The time which he spent at Hebron constituted the dividing-line in his career. On the one side of it was what we may designate as the period of his rejection, when the great majority of the people clave unto Saul, who hounded him from pillar to post. On the other side of it was the period of his exaltation when he reigned over the nation. When pondering the different events which happened in the first stage of his career, we sought to point out the moral connection between them, seeking to trace the relation between the personal conduct of David and the various circumstances which the governmental dealings with God brought about as the sequel. We propose, by divine aid, to follow a similar procedure in taking up the details under the second stage of his career.

In article 20, we saw how David displeased the Lord by his taking unto himself two wives (1Sa 25:43-44), and in article 22, we noticed how one sin led to another. While in article 24, we observed the divine chastisement which followed. In article 26, we dwelt upon David's putting things right with God and encouraging himself in the Lord, following which we traced out the blessed results which ensued (articles 27, 28), terminating in his being restored to full fellowship with the Lord, as was typified by God's directing him to "Hebron." There he received a "token for good" (Psa 86:17) in the reception which he met with from the men of his own tribe, who came and "anointed David king over the house of Judah" (2Sa 2:4), that was indeed a promising intimation that if his ways continued to please the Lord, He would make "even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Pro 16:7). On the other hand, that "token for good" only becomes the more solemn in the light of all that follows.

How much there is in the later chapters of 2 Samuel which makes such pathetic and tragic reading. Few men have experienced such sore social and domestic trials as David did. Not only was he caused much trouble by political traitors in his kingdom, but what was far more painful, the members of his own family brought down heavy grief upon him. His favourite wife turned against him (2Sa 6:20-22), his daughter Tamar was raped by her half-brother (2Sa 13:14), his son

Amnon was murdered (2Sa 13:28-29). His favourite son Absalom sought to wrest the kingdom from him, and then was murdered (2Sa 18:14). Before his death, another of his sons, Adonijah, sought to obtain the throne (1Ki 1:5), and he too was murdered (1Ki 2:24-25). Inasmuch as the Lord never afflicts willingly (Lam 3:33), but only as our sins occasion it, how are these most painful family afflictions to be accounted for?

If the Holy Spirit has been pleased to furnish us with any explanation of the sore trials which David encountered in his later life, or if He has supplied us with materials that serve to throw light upon what is recorded in the second half of 2 Samuel, then that explanation must be sought for or that illuminating material must be inquired after, in the *early* chapters of that book. That is a principle of great importance in order to a right understanding of the Scriptures. As a general rule, God hangs the key for us right on the door itself. In other words, the opening chapters (often the first verses) contain a clear intimation or forecast of what follows. True, in some cases, this is more apparent than in others, yet concerning each one of the sixty-six books of the Bible, it will be found that the closer be the attention given unto its introduction, the easier will it be to follow the development of its theme. Such is obviously the case here in 2 Samuel.

“Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker” (2Sa 3:1). The battle referred to at the end of the previous chapter, though it went so greatly in favour of David, did not put an end to the warfare between him and Ishbosheth. Though Saul himself was no more, yet his son and subjects refused to quietly submit to David’s sceptre. For another five years, they continued to manifest their defiance, and many were the skirmishes which took place between his men and the loyal subjects of David. The latter was loath to employ harsh measures against them, and probably his magnanimity and mildness were mistaken for weakness or fear, and encouraged his opponents to renew their efforts for his overthrow. But little by little they were weakened, until Ishbosheth was willing to make a league with David.

“Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker” (2Sa 3:1). The contents of this verse may well be taken as a type of the conflict which is experienced in the heart of the Christian. David, exalted to be king over Judah, may be regarded as a figure of one of God’s elect when he has been lifted out of the miry clay (into which the fall of Adam plunged him) and his feet set upon the Rock of Ages. As 1 Samuel 2:8 declares, “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.” But is all now henceforth peace and joy? Far from it. Inward corruption is there, and is ever assailing the principle of grace which was imparted at regeneration, “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh” (Gal 5:17). What is the outcome? Is the flesh victorious? No, it may annoy, it may win minor skirmishes, but little by little the flesh is weakened, and the spirit strengthened, until at the last sin is completely destroyed.

“Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David” (2Sa 3:1). Thus the kingdom of Israel was rent asunder by civil war. That it should last so long, when David was clearly in the right, has presented quite a problem to the commentators. Personally, we regard the contents of this verse as a plain intimation *that David was missing God’s best*. This is an expression we use rather frequently in these pages, so perhaps a definition of it here will not be amiss. For the benefit of our Calvinistic friends (and the editor is not ashamed to confess that he is a “high Calvinist”), let it be pointed out that it is by no means equivalent to affirming that God’s counsel may be thwarted by us. No indeed, puny man can no more defeat the eternal

purpose of the Almighty than he can cause the sun to cease from shining or the ocean from rolling. “But our God is in the heavens: he hath done *whatsoever* he hath pleased” (Psa 115:3).

There is a vast difference between the *promises* of God and His eternal *decrees*—many of the former are conditional, whereas the latter are immutable, dependent upon nothing for their fulfillment save the omnipotence of God. In saying that many of the divine promises recorded in Holy Writ are “conditional,” we do not mean they are uncertain and unreliable. No, we mean that they are infallible declarations of what God will do or give *providing* we follow a certain course of conduct, just as the divine threats recorded in Scripture are declarations of what God will do or inflict *if* a certain course be pursued. For example, God has declared “Them that honour me I will honour” (1Sa 2:30). But suppose we *fail* to “honour” God, suppose we do not obtain that enabling grace which He is ever ready to give unto those who earnestly seek it in a right way—what then? The same verse tells us, “And they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.”

Take for instance the declaration made in Joshua 1:8, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for *then* thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and *then* thou shalt have good success.” First, let it be pointed out that that verse has nothing whatever to do with the eternal destiny of the soul, instead, it relates only to the present life of the saint. In it God tells us *if* we give His Holy Word the first place in our thoughts and affections, and regulate both our inner and outer life by its teaching, *then* He will make our way “prosperous” and we shall have “good success.” This does not mean that we shall become millionaires, but that by heeding the rules of His Word we shall escape those rocks upon which the vast majority of our fellows make shipwreck, and that the *blessing of God* will rest upon our lives in all their varied aspects and relations—an all-wise and sovereign God determining both the kind and measure of the “success” which will be most for His glory and our highest good.

Nor are the principals enunciated in Joshua 1:8 to be restricted in their application to those who lived under the old covenant. Inasmuch as the governmental ways of God remain the same in all ages, those principles hold good in all dispensations. From the beginning of human history it has always been true, and to the end of history it will continue so to be, that “no good thing will he withhold from *them that walk uprightly*” (Psa 84:11). On the other hand, it is equally a fact that those who are not subject to God’s Word, who follow instead the devices of their own hearts and give way to the lusts of the flesh, suffer adversity and come under the rod of divine chastisement. Of them it has to be said, “Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you” (Jer 5:25). In other words, they have missed God’s best, not that they have failed to obtain any blessing which He had eternally decreed should be theirs, but they have not entered into the good of what God’s Word promises should be the *present* portion of those who walk in obedience thereto.

“Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured forever. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee” (Psa 81:13-16). What could be plainer than that! Those verses need present no difficulty to the high Calvinist, nor is there anything in them which will support the Arminian delusion that having created men free moral agents, God is unable to do with and for them what He desires, without reducing them to mere machines. This passage is not treating of the eternal counsels of God, but of His governmental dealings with men in this life.

The key to the above verses is found in their immediate context, “But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels” (Psa 81:11-12). The children of Israel walked contrary—not to the eternal purpose of Jehovah, but—to His revealed will. They would not submit to the rules laid down in God’s Word, but in their self-will and self-pleading determined to have their own way. In consequence, *they missed God’s best for them in this life*. Instead of His subduing their enemies, He allowed those enemies to subdue them; instead of providing abundant harvests, He sent them famines; instead of giving them pastors after His own heart, He suffered false prophets to deceive.

Many more are the passages which might be quoted from the Old and New Testament alike, which set forth the same great fact, warning us that if we walk contrary to the Scriptures, we shall certainly suffer for it, both in soul and body, both in our estate and circumstances, in this life, failing to enter into those blessings—spiritual and temporal—which the Word promises to those who are in subjection to it. That is as true today as it was under the old economy, and it supplies the key to many a problem, and explains much in God’s governmental dealings with us. It certainly supplies the key to David’s life, and explains why the chastening rod of God fell so heavily upon himself and his family. Bear in mind carefully what has been said above, read the passage which now follows, and then there is no reason why we should be surprised at all that is found unto the end of 2 Samuel.

“And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; And his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; And the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah David’s wife. These were born to David in Hebron” (2Sa 3:2-5). In the light of all that has been said in the preceding article and in this one up to here, there is little need for us to attempt any lengthy comments upon these unpleasant verses. Here we see David giving way to the lust of the flesh, and practicing polygamy, and as he sowed to the flesh in his family life, so in the flesh he reaped corruption in his family. Three of the above-mentioned sons were murdered!

The subject of polygamy as a whole is too large a one for us to deal with here, nor can we discuss it at length as it bore upon the lives of the different patriarchs. God’s original creation of only one man and one woman indicated from the beginning that monogamy was the divine order for man to heed (Mat 19: 4-5). The first of whom we read in Scripture that had more wives than one was Lamech (Gen 4:19), who was of the evil line of Cain. And while Moses, because of the hardness of Israel’s heart (Mat 19:8), introduced the statute of divorce, yet nowhere did the Mosaic law sanction a plurality of wives. The limitation of one wife only is plainly suggested by such Scriptures as Proverbs 5:18 and 18:22.

“Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself...*Neither shall he multiply wives to himself*, that his heart turn not away” (Deu 17:15-17). Here was a definite and express law which the *kings* of Israel were required to obey, and thereby set before their subjects an example of sobriety and marital fidelity. And this was the commandment which David so flagrantly disobeyed, for no sooner was he anointed “king over the house of Judah” (2Sa 2:4), than he began to *multiply* “wives” unto himself (2Sa 3:2-5). Not only so, but when Abner sought to make a league with him, David laid it down as a condition that his first wife, Michal, who had

been given to another man (1Sa 25:44) must be restored to him (2Sa 3:13), which was an open violation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

A little later on we read, “And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron” (2Sa 5:13). Here, then, was David’s besetting sin, to which he yielded so freely—little wonder that his son Solomon followed in his footsteps! And a holy God will not tolerate evil, least of all in those whom He has made leaders over His people. Though in the main, David’s life was pleasing to God, and though he was endowed with so many spiritual excellencies, yet there was this one sad weakness. His giving way to it brought down long and sever chastenings, and the record of it as a whole—the sowing and the consequent reaping—is for our learning and warning. Learn, then, dear reader, that even when restored from backsliding and brought back to fellowship with God, your only safety lies in earnestly crying to Him daily “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe” (Psa 119:117).

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

2. The Everlasting Covenant

The Word of God opens with a brief account of creation, the making of man, and his fall, but from later Scriptures we have no difficulty in ascertaining that the issue of the trial to which man was subjected in Eden had been divinely foreseen. “The Lamb slain [in the purpose of God] from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8) makes it clear that, in view of the fall, provision had been made by God for the recovery of His people, who had apostatized in Adam, and that the means whereby their recovery would be effected were consistent with the claims of the divine holiness and justice. All the details and results of the plan of mercy had been arranged and settled from the beginning of divine wisdom.

That provision of grace which God made for His people before the foundation of the world embraced the appointment of His own Son to become the Mediator, and of the work which, in that capacity, He should perform—involving His assumption of human nature, the offering of Himself as a sacrifice for sin, His exaltation in the nature He had assumed to the right hand of God in the heavenlies, His supremacy over His Church, and over all things for His Church, the blessings which He should be empowered to dispense, and the extent to which His work should be made effectual unto the salvation of souls. These were all matters of definite and certain arrangement, agreed upon between God and His Son in the terms of the Everlasting Covenant.

The first germinal publication of the Everlasting Covenant is found in Genesis 3:15, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Thus, immediately after the fall, God announced to the serpent his ultimate doom through the work of the Mediator, and revealed unto sinners the channel through which alone salvation could flow to them. The continual additions which God subsequently made to the revelation He gave in Genesis 3:15, were, for a considerable time,

largely through *covenants* which He made with the fathers, which covenants were both *the fruit of* His eternal plan of mercy, and the gradual *revealing of* the same unto the faithful. Only as those two facts are clearly recognized and held fast by us are we in any position to appreciate and perceive the force of those subordinate “covenants.”

God made covenants with Noah, Abraham, David, but were *they*, as fallen creatures, able to enter into covenant with their august and holy Maker? Were they able to stand for themselves or be sureties for others? The very question answers itself. What, for instance, could Noah possibly do which would insure that the earth should never again be destroyed by a flood? Those subordinate “covenants” were nothing more or less than the Lord’s *making manifest*, in an especial and public manner, the Grand Covenant—making known something of its glorious contents, confirming their own personal interest in it, and assuring them that Christ the great Covenant-Head should be of themselves and spring from their seed.

This it is which accounts for that singular expression which occurs so frequently in Scripture, “Behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you,” (Gen 9:9) and yet there follows no mention of any *conditions*, or work to be done by them, only a promise of unconditional blessings. And why? Because the “conditions” were to be fulfilled and the “work” was to be done *by Christ*, and nothing remained but to bestow the blessings on His people. So that when David says, “He hath made with me an everlasting covenant” (2Sa 23:5) he simply means God had admitted him into an interest in the Everlasting Covenant and made him partaker of its privileges. Hence it is that when the apostle Paul refers to the various “covenants” which God had made with men in Old Testament times, he styles them not “covenants of *stipulations*,” but “covenants of *promise*” (Eph 2:12).

Above we have pointed out that the continual additions which God made to His original revelation of mercy in Genesis 3:15 were, for a while, given mainly through the “covenants” which He made with the fathers. It was a process of gradual development, issuing finally in the fulness of Gospel grace, the substance of those “covenants” indicated the outstanding stages in this process. They are the great landmarks of God’s dealings with men, points from which the disclosures of the divine mind expanded into increased and established truths—revelations exhibiting in ever-augmented degrees of fulness and clearness of plan of salvation through the mediation and sacrifice of the Son of God, for each of those “covenants” consisted of gracious promises *ratified by sacrifice* (Gen 8:20 and 9:9; 15:9-11 and 18). Thus, those “covenants” were so many intimations of that method of mercy which took its rise in the eternal counsels of the divine mind.

Those divine revelations and manifestations of the grace decreed in the Everlasting Covenant were given out at important epochs in the early history of the world. Just as Genesis 3:15 was given immediately after the fall, so we find that immediately following the flood, God solemnly renewed the Covenant of Grace with Noah. In like manner, at the beginning of the third period of human history, following the call of Abraham, God renewed it again, only then making a much fuller revelation of the same. It was now made known that the coming Deliverer of God’s people was to be of the Abrahamic stock and that all the families of the earth should be blessed in Him—a plain intimation of the calling of the Gentiles and the bringing of the elect from all nations into the family of God. In Genesis 15:5-6, the great requirement of the covenant, namely, *faith*, was then more fully made known.

Unto Abraham God gave a remarkable pledge of the fulfillment of His covenant-promises in the striking victory which He granted him over the federated forces of Chedorlaomer, which was

more than a hint of the victory of Christ and His seed over the world, carefully compare Isaiah 41:2-3, 10, 15! Genesis 14:19-20 supplies proof of what we have just said, for upon returning from his memorable victory, Abraham was met by Melchizedek (type of Christ) and was *blest* by him! A further revelation of the contents of the Covenant of Grace was granted unto Abraham in Genesis 15, where in the vision of the smoking furnace which passed through the midst of the sacrifice, an adumbration was made of the *sufferings* of Christ. In the miraculous birth of Isaac, intimation was given of the *supernatural birth* of Christ, the promised seed. In the deliverance of Isaac from the altar, representation was made of the *resurrection* of Christ (Heb 11:19).

Thus we may see how fully the Covenant of Grace was revealed and confirmed unto the father of all them that believe, by the which he and his descendants obtained a clearer sight and understanding of the great Redeemer, and the things which were to be accomplished by Him. And therefore did Christ take notice of this when He said, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (Joh 8:56)—the last words clearly intimating that Abraham had a definite spiritual apprehension of those things. Under the Siniatic Covenant, a yet fuller revelation was made by God to His people of the contents of the Everlasting Covenant—the tabernacle and all its holy vessels, the high priest, his vestments and service, and the whole system of sacrifices and ablutions, setting before them its blessed realities in typical forms, they being “patterns” of heavenly things.

Thus, before seeking to set forth the Everlasting Covenant itself in a specific way, we have first endeavoured to make clear *the relation borne to it* of the principal “covenants” which God was pleased to make with different men during the Old Testament era. Our sketch of them has necessarily been brief, for (D.V.) we shall take them up separately and consider them in fuller detail in the succeeding articles. Yet sufficient has been said, we trust, to demonstrate that, while the *terms* of the “covenants” which God made with Noah, with Abraham, with Israel at Sinai, and with David, are to be understood, first, in their plain and natural sense, yet that it should be clear to any anointed eye that they have a second and higher meaning, a *spiritual* content—the things of earth being employed to represent heavenly things. In other words, those subordinate “covenants” need to be contemplated *both* in their “letter” and in their “spirit.”

Coming now more directly to the present aspect of our theme, let it be pointed out that, as there is no one verse in the Bible which expressly affirms there are three divine persons in the Godhead, co-eternal, co-equal, co-glorious, nevertheless by carefully comparing Scripture with Scripture we know that such is the case. In like manner, there is no one verse in the Bible which categorically states that the Father entered into a formal agreement with the Son—that on His executing a certain work, He should receive a certain reward, nevertheless, a careful study of different passages obliges us to arrive at this conclusion. The Holy Scriptures do not yield up their treasures to the indolent, and as long as the individual preacher is willing to let Dr. Scofield or Mr. Pink do his studying for him, he must not expect to make much progress in divine things, ponder Proverbs 2:1-5!

There is no one plot of ground on earth on which will be found growing *all* varieties of flowers or trees, nor is there any part of the world in which may be secured representatives of every variety of butterflies. Yet by expense, industry, and perseverance, the horticulturist and the natural-historian may gradually assemble together specimens of every variety until he possesses a complete collection. In like manner, there is no one chapter in the Bible in which *all* the truth is found on any subject. It is the part of the theologian to diligently attend unto the various hints and then the more definite contributions which he finds scattered throughout the Scriptures on any

given theme, and carefully classify and co-ordinate them. Alas, that genuine and independent theologians (those unfettered by any human system) have well-nigh disappeared from the earth.

The language of the New Testament is very explicit in teaching us the true light in which the plan of mercy is to be viewed, and in showing the saint that he is to regard all his spiritual blessings and privileges as coming to him out of the Everlasting Covenant. It speaks of “The eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph 3:11). Our covenant-oneness with Christ is clearly revealed in Ephesians 1:3-5, that marvelous declaration reaching its climax in 1:6, “to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” “Accepted *in* the beloved” goes deeper and means far more than “accepted *through* him.” It denotes not merely a recommendatory passport from Christ, but *a real union with Him*, whereby we are incorporated into His mystical Body, and made as truly partakers of His righteousness as the members of the physical body partake of the life which animates its head.

In like manner, there are many, many statements in the New Testament concerning Christ Himself which are only pertinent and intelligible in the light of His having acted in fulfillment of a covenant-agreement with the Father. For example, in Luke 22:22, we find Him saying, “And truly the Son of man goeth, *as it was determined*”—“determined” when and where but in the Everlasting Covenant! Plainer still is the language in John 6:38-39, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” Three things are there to be seen. First, that Christ had received a certain *charge* or commission from the Father. Second, that He had solemnly engaged and undertaken to execute that charge. Third, that the end contemplated in that arrangement was, not merely the *announcement* of spiritual blessings, but the actual *bestowal* of them upon all who had been given to Him.

Again, from John 10:16, it is evident that a specific charge had been laid upon Christ. Referring to His elect scattered among the Gentiles, He said, not “them also I *will* bring,” but “them also I **MUST** bring.” In His high priestly prayer, we hear Him saying, “Father, I *will* that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am” (Joh 17:24). There Christ was claiming something that was *due* Him on account of or in return for the work He had done (Joh 17:4)—which clearly presupposes both an arrangement and a promise on the part of the Father. It was the Surety putting in His claim, and a “claim” necessarily implies a preceding promise annexed to a condition to be performed by the party to whom the promise is made, which gives a right to demand the reward. This is one reason why Christ, immediately afterward, addressed God as “*righteous Father*,” appealing to *His faithfulness* in the agreement.

Again, the parallel which is drawn between Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12-19 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 45-47 can only be satisfactorily interpreted on the principle that Adam and Christ were representative and federal heads of those whom the one involved in sin and death, and for whom the Other has secured righteousness and eternal life. “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Ti 1:2). But how could God *promise* eternal life *before* the world began on any other hypothesis than of a compact with the Son acting in the behalf of and for the benefit of His people? In Hebrews 3:2, it is said that the apostle and High Priest of our profession “was *faithful* to him that appointed him.” Now just as “obedience” implies a precept, so “faithfulness” presupposes *a trust*, that is, a pledge that a certain thing shall be done in accordance with the directions given him. But our present space is exhausted, and we must leave for our next article a further consideration of the Everlasting Covenant.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Carson on Esther (Part Eight)

Let us here learn to trace the hand of God in the most trivial events. There is nothing fortuitous, nothing without God. Who would think of ascribing to God so seemingly an unimportant a matter? Yet this link is essential in the chain of the wonderful providences by which the Ruler of the world executed His plan on this memorable occasion. Take this away, and the whole chain is useless. Another night would have seen Mordecai on the gallows, or in the grave. This fact teaches us that there is nothing really casual as to God, even in a restless night of a human creature. How wonderful is the providence of JEHOVAH! how minute, how amazingly diversified are its operations! The eye of the Lord beholds, and His wisdom directeth, *all the events* with respect to *all the creatures* in the universe. This would be too much trouble, and too mean an employment, for the god of the philosophers. But the God of the Scripture not only created all things at first, and established laws by which He governs them, but He continually worketh in His Providence. It is in Him we live, and move, and have our being. It is by His immediate power that creation is sustained in existence, that every function of animal life is performed, and that every motion in the universe is effected.

The blindness and enmity of the mind of man wish to put Him at a distance, and to consider Him no farther the Governor of the world than as the Author of the general laws of nature, according to which all events take place. But the Bible brings God before us in all things that occur. Of the innumerable insects that inhabit a blade of grass, there is not one whose vital functions are not carried on by the power of God. To Him the lion roars for his prey, and He feedeth the ravens. He ever works without weariness. Epicurus removed his gods to a distance from the earth, that they might feast without disturbance from the tumults of men. He gave them a luxurious ease, far above the clouds, and did not interrupt their festivities with the government of the world. And an infidel philosophy in modern times does nearly the same, under the name of Christianity, by ascribing to God *only* what it calls a *general* providence. *This is not the God of the Bible.* The Christian may recognize his God as shining in the sun, breathing in the air, and living in all life. His immediate power is as necessary to sustain all things in existence, and to effect every change in their state, as it was to create them at first. His Providence is as necessary for the care of a microscopic insect, as for regulating the motions of a solar system.

Why then, monarch of the east, did thy sleep forsake thee on that memorable night? When it fled, why didst thou not pursue it, and with thy instruments of music force it back to thy royal chamber? Call thy minstrels, and woo it with softest sounds of sweetest melody. Lure it to thy couch with the voice of song. Come forth, ye harmonious choirs, raise your most enchanting airs, and lull your monarch in repose. Tell me, you wise men of the world, why nothing could amuse the king at this time, but the chronicles of his kingdom? Is this the usual requiem of an eastern

monarch? Is a dry register of facts a likely expedient to hush the restless thoughts and induce the gentler influences of sleep? Tell me, Ahasuerus, why that thought passed across thy mind at this time? Where shall I find its origin? Out of a million of millions of thoughts, this appears the least likely to strike thee at such a time. Thou art silent O monarch! of this thou knowest no more than the bed on which thou dost lie. It came, but whence it came thou knowest as little as thou dost of the birth-place of the wind. And why didst thou yield to it when it came? What made thy free will to indulge this thought? Was not the thought thine own? Was not compliance with its suggestions thine own action?

Of this it is impossible for thee to doubt. How then can this thy thought be ascribed to God? In what mysterious sense can this action be the appointment of God? All is light, yet all is mystery. The facts are as certain and as obvious as the mind of man can wish, yet *to adjust their boundaries* is as impossible as to draw a line between the colours of the rainbow. The most obvious truths may be incomprehensible to man. This thought, and the action which was its result, are the king's, yet they are the instruments through which the Almighty Ruler of the world performs His purpose. Take these away, and you destroy the whole chain of Providence exhibited in the book of Esther. But even when the book of the chronicles comes, are there not a thousand chances that *the suitable part* may not turn up? What directed the reader *to the proper place*? In so extensive a subject as the annals of the Persian empire, what probability is there that the reader will happen on the few lines that record the service of Mordecai? He might have read till morning without touching this subject. What finger guided him to this story? Is it not more likely that the curiosity of the king would prompt him to hear some of the transactions of former reigns? This was the hour for the deliverance and exaltation of Mordecai, and it was the finger of God that pointed to the record of his service. Every step we advance in this wonderful history, we see a display of an overruling Providence. The book of Esther is a book of wonders without a miracle.

The king hears the record of the conspiracy and inquires about the reward of his services. He takes it for granted that he must have received a suitable recompense in honour and dignity, but finds that he is yet unrewarded! Strange! very strange! inexplicably strange! But God's design is clear. The divine plan required that Mordecai's exaltation should be delayed till now. But it shall be delayed no longer. God's providence requires that this very moment Mordecai shall be raised, for Haman is at the door to demand his life. Keep Mordecai's services another hour unknown to the king and the servant of God is given into the hand of the enemy. How injudiciously are royal favours often conferred! The man who deserved of the king more than any subject in his empire is neglected, while that worthless minion, Haman, rose almost to royal honours!

In the preservation of the life of the king, we may learn the duty of the servants of God to their chief rulers. Mordecai was in the land of the captivity of his people, yet, instead of forwarding a scheme for the murder of the sovereign, he saved him by a discovery of his danger. Christians ought to stand at the utmost distance from every scheme that tends to overturn or embarrass civil government. Their duty and safety in every country demands submission to the ruling powers.

There is something worthy of admiration in the courage of Mordecai during the time of his being neglected after his important service. We find no unbecoming intrusion on the notice of majesty, no cringing at the knees of Haman and the minions of court, to forward his claims to preferment. Yet, when honours came, they are received without any affectation of social indifference. He appears in the splendour of royalty, and becomes greater and greater in the Persian empire. Unlike an Aristides or a Diogenes, he spurns not the favour of the king, nor returns a rude reply to the kindness of majesty. A Christian ought never to show himself lower

than an heir of heaven, but to affect a disregard to all worldly comfort is the affectation of philosophic pride.

While in Mordecai we find something to blame, we may find in him much more to praise. God accepted him as His servant, though he was ignorant of some points of duty. In him we find the strongest faith in the divine protection, and the most heroic devotedness to the cause of God and His people. Should not this be a lesson to us all? And while we faithfully bear our testimony against errors of every kind, let us be willing to acknowledge the servants of God in all the various denominations where they are to be found. We have all our own errors, and though this ought not to induce us to look on error as innocent, it ought to keep us from despising the weakest of the people of God. Is it not a most surprising thing, that any Christian can find a difficulty in recognizing those whom *God* has recognized and sealed with His Holy Spirit?

At the critical moment of the king's inquiries about Mordecai, Haman had come into the outward court, to solicit for his immediate execution. Mark the Lord of providence in every step. Had not the king been kept from sleep—had not the book of records been called for his amusements—had not the account of the conspiracy turned up to the reader—Mordecai would now have been given into the hand of his enemy.

Mark the providence of God, also, in having Haman at hand, that by his mouth the honours of Mordecai might be awarded, and that by *his* instrumentality they might be conferred. Why did the king think of referring the reward of Mordecai to another? Why did he not himself determine the dignities to be conferred on his preserver? Or, if he refers to another, why did he not immediately leave the matter to those now about him? Why does he ask, Who is in the court? Why was Haman there at this moment? Why was he the only one that waited so early on the king? Why did Ahasuerus put the question in such a manner as to conceal the object of the royal favour? Why does the king, instead of plainly naming Mordecai, use the periphrasis “the man whom the king delighteth to honour” (Est 6:6)? Why did this form of the question allow Haman to suppose that he was himself the happy man for whom the honours were intended? At this time the king knew nothing of the designs of Haman, and had no design to ensnare him. Every circumstance here is wonderfully providential. From this we see that *God can make the greatest enemies of His people the means of advancing their interests*. Whom then ought the Christian to fear, but God?

Behold the retributive justice of God in the death of Haman! One of the chamberlains, who probably had seen it when he went to call him to the feast, mentioned the gallows that Haman had prepared in his house to hang Mordecai. “The king said, Hang him thereon.”

But we are not yet done with the wonders of Providence in this affair. Even with all the good intentions of the king, how can the Jews be preserved? The first decree could not be revoked. How then could a handful of Jews, scattered over all the provinces of the empire, stand up against their enemies in all nations? Although they had the royal license to defend themselves and destroy their adversaries, how could one small nation, so widely dispersed, escape destruction when impunity invited the assault and instigated malice? Their escape is secured by the awe inspired into the nations by the elevation of Mordecai. The God who so often filled the hearts of the most numerous armies with the dread of His people, few in number, now filled the nations of the Persian empire with the fear of them. “The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; *for the fear of them fell upon all people*. And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because *the fear of Mordecai fell upon them*. For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame

went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater. Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them” (Est 9:2-5). Fear not the malice of your enemies, ye children of the Most High. Your God can deliver you out of their hands. Lift up your heads, Christians, for your redemption draweth nigh. Ye shall yet have “light, and gladness, and joy, and honour” (Est 8:16).

But in the Book of Esther we are not only to attend to the wonderful interpositions of Providence manifested in the facts of history. From the manner of revelation, in innumerable other instances, we are warranted to consider this history as prophetic and typical. In the deliverance of the Jews on this occasion, we may see God’s method of *preserving His Church* in the time of the fourth beast, and *the final triumph of the saints* of the Most High. When the Reformation opened the gates of Babylon, many Christians have remained there, or in some of its provinces. They are thus exposed to loss and danger, but they shall not be destroyed. Their enemies plot their ruin, but the mischief will ultimately fall on their own heads. In Haman we see a striking type of the Man of Sin. He seeks to destroy the whole Israel of God, but his effort will only bring on his own ruin. All must honour this wicked Haman. He indeed seeks divine honours, and there is a temptation here to stretch the type to the antitype, and find Haman guilty of claiming divine worship. But this is not in evidence, and there is no necessity that there should in all things be a perfect correspondence between the type and the antitype. This likeness is seen sufficiently in the honours that his imagination suggested for the man whom the king delights to honour, when he supposed that he was himself the person.

It is astonishing that he presumed to award royal honours to any subject of the empire. Was not this likely to awaken the jealousy of a despot? Yet such was the arrogance of this Man of Sin, that Haman answered the king, “For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king’s most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour” (Est 6:7-9). Can there be a more correct figure of the blasphemous pretension of the Man of Sin, who has usurped the honours of God? These honours, however, were without scruple awarded to Mordecai by the king. “Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king’s gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken” (Est 6:10). And if Mordecai is a type of the Son of God, how justly were these honours awarded! The Father delights to have Him honoured even as Himself.

In the unchangeable laws of the Medes and the Persians, we may see one of the features of the kingdom of the Man of Sin (Popery), whose infallible decrees cannot be altered. Yet notwithstanding the irreversible decree that determines the destruction of all heretics, the providence of God has made other provisions for their safety. The decree never dies, but it may slumber. Other laws may be made by the state to counteract it.

In the fall of Haman, let us anticipate the overthrow of all the opposers of the kingdom of Christ. All the schemes devised for overturning Christianity will not only prove abortive, but will finally bring down vengeance on the heads of their authors.

We may here see how God can bring down the Man of Sin by the ordinary course of Providence, without employing a single miracle. He can make His very enemies the instruments

of effecting His designs. By them He usually cuts off those whom He devotes to temporal destruction, and by them also He can deliver His own people. When Haman was cut off “many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them” (Est 8:17). How well does this correspond with the increase of the true kingdom of Christ by genuine converts, when destruction shall have fallen on mystical Babylon! No king but the Messiah can reign in the midst of His enemies, and perform His will by those who design to oppose it.

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

6. Its Source

Let us here review, briefly, the ground which we have already covered. We have seen, first, that “to justify” means to pronounce righteous. It is not a divine work, but a divine verdict, the sentence of the Supreme Court, declaring that the one justified stands perfectly conformed to all the requirements of the law. Justification assures the believer that the Judge of all the earth is for him, and not against him, that justice itself is on his side. Second, we dwelt upon the great and seemingly insoluble problem which is thereby involved—how a God of truth can pronounce righteous one who is completely devoid of righteousness, how He can receive into His judicial favour one who is a guilty criminal, how He can exercise mercy without insulting justice, how He can be gracious and yet enforce the high demands of His law. Third, we have shown that the solution to this problem is found in the perfect satisfaction which the incarnate Son rendered unto divine law, and that on the basis of that satisfaction God can truthfully and righteously pronounce just all who truly believe the Gospel.

In our last article, we pointed out that the satisfaction which Christ made to the divine law consists of two distinct parts, answering to the twofold need of him who is to be justified. First, as a responsible *creature* I am under binding obligations to keep the law—to love God with all my heart and my neighbor as myself. Second, as a *criminal* I am under the condemnation and curse of that law which I have constantly transgressed in thought and word and deed. Therefore, if another was to act as my surety and make reparation for me, he must perfectly obey all the precepts of the law, and then endure the awful penalty of the law. That is exactly what was undertaken and accomplished by the Lord Jesus in His virtuous life and vicarious death. By Him, every demand of the law was fulfilled, by Him every obligation of the believer was fully met.

It has been objected by some that the obedience of Christ *could not* be imputed to the account of others, for being “made under the law” (Gal 4:4) as *man*, He *owed* submission to the law on His own account. This is a serious mistake, arising out of a failure to recognize the absolute uniqueness of the Man Christ Jesus. Unlike we, He was never placed under the Adamic Covenant and therefore He owed nothing to the law. Moreover, the manhood of Christ never had a separate existence—in the virgin’s womb, the eternal Son took the seed of Mary into union with His deity, so that whereas the first man was of the earth, earthy, “the second man is *the Lord from heaven*” (1Co 15:47), and as such He was infinitely superior to the law, owing nothing to it, being

personally possessed of all the excellencies of deity. Even while He walked this earth “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”

It was entirely for His peoples’ sake that the God-man Mediator was “made under the law.” It was in order to work out for them a perfect righteousness, which should be placed to their account, that He took upon Himself the form of a servant and became “obedient unto death.” What has been said above supplies the answer to another foolish objection which has been made against this blessed truth, namely, that if the obedience of the Man Christ Jesus were transferable, it would be available *only for one other man*, seeing that every human being is required to obey the law, and that if *vicarious* obedience be acceptable to God, then there would have to be as many *separate sureties* as there are believers who are saved. That would be true if the “surety” were *merely* human, but inasmuch as the Surety provided by God is the God-man Mediator, *His* righteousness is of infinite value, for the law was *more* “honoured and magnified” by the obedience of “the Lord from heaven” than had every member of the human race perfectly kept it. The righteousness of the God-man Mediator is of *infinite* value, and therefore available for as many as God is pleased to impute it unto.

The value or merit of an action increases in proportion to the dignity of the person who performs it, and He who obeyed in the room and stead of the believer was not only a holy man, but the Son of the living God. Moreover, let it be steadily borne in mind that the obedience which Christ rendered to the law was entirely *voluntary*. Prior to His incarnation, He was under *no* obligation to the law, for He had Himself (being God) formulated that law. His being made of a woman and made under the law was entirely *a free act* on His own part. We come into being and are placed under the law without our consent, but the Lord from heaven existed before His incarnation, and assumed our nature by His spontaneous act, “Lo, I come...I delight to do thy will” (Psa 40:7-8). No other person could use such language, for it clearly denotes a *liberty* to act or not to act, which no mere creature possesses. Placing Himself under the law and rendering obedience to it was founded solely on His own voluntary deed. His obedience was therefore a “free will offering,” and therefore as He did not owe obedience to the law by any prior obligation, not being at all necessary for Himself, it is available for imputation to others, that they should be *rewarded for it*.

If, then, the reader has been able to follow us closely in the above observations, it should be clear to him that when Scripture speaks of God “justifying the ungodly,” the meaning is that the believing sinner is brought into an entirely *new relation to the law*, that in consequence of Christ’s righteousness being made over to him, he is now absolved from all liability to punishment, and is given a title to all the reward merited by Christ’s obedience. Blessed, blessed truth for comforting the *conscientious* Christian who daily groans under a sense of his sad failures and who mourns because of his lack of practical conformity to the image of Christ. Satan is ever ready to harass such an one and tell him his profession is vain. But it is the believer’s privilege to overcome him by “the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 12:11)—to remind himself anew that Another has atoned for all his sins, and that despite his innumerable shortcomings, he still stands “accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:6). If I am truly resting on the finished work of Christ for me, the devil cannot successfully lay anything to my charge before God, though if I am walking carelessly He will suffer him to charge my conscience with unrepented and unconfessed sins.

In our last article, under the *nature* of justification, we saw that the constituent elements of this divine blessing are two in number, the one being negative in its character, the other positive. The negative blessing is the cancellation of guilt, or the remission of sins—the entire record of the believer’s transgressions of the law, filed upon the divine docket, having been blotted out by the

precious blood of Christ. The positive blessing is the bestowal upon the believer of an inalienable title to the *reward* which the obedience of Christ merited for him—that reward is life, the judicial favour of God, heaven itself. The unchanging sentence of the law is, “The man which doeth those things shall *live* by them” (Rom 10:5). As we read in Romans 7:10, “The commandment, which was ordained to *life*.” It is just as true that obedience to the law secured life, as disobedience insured death. When the young ruler asked Christ, “What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” He answered, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (Mat 19:16-17).

It was because His people had failed to “keep the commandments” that the God-man Mediator was “made under the law,” and obeyed it for them. And therefore its *reward* of “life” is due unto those whose Surety He was—yea, due unto Christ Himself to bestow upon them. Therefore did the Surety, when declaring, “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (Joh 17:4), remind the Father, “that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him” (Joh 17:2). But more, on the footing of *justice*, Christ demands that His people be taken to heaven, saying, “Father, I *will* that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am” (Joh 17:24)—He *claims* eternal life *for His people* on the ground of His finished work, as the *reward* of His obedience.

“Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto *justification of life*” (Rom 5:18). The offence of the first Adam brought down the curse of the broken law upon the whole human race, but the satisfaction of the last Adam secured the blessing of the fulfilled law upon all those whom He represented. Judgment unto condemnation is a law term intending eternal death, the wages of sin. The “free gift” affirms that a gratuitous justification is bestowed upon all its recipients—“*justification of life*” being the issue of the gift, parallel with “shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:17). The sentence of justification adjudges and entitles its object unto eternal life.

Having now considered the two great blessings which come to the believer at his justification—deliverance from the curse of the law (death) and a title to the blessing of the law (life)—let us now seek to take a view of the originating *source* from which they proceed. This is the free, pure sovereign *grace* of God, as it is written, “Being *justified* freely by his grace” (Rom 3:24). What is grace? It is God’s unmerited and uninfluenced favour, shown unto the undeserving and hell-deserving—neither human worthiness, works or willingness, attracting it, nor the lack of them repelling or obstructing it. What could there be in me to win the favourable regard of Him who is of too pure eyes to behold evil, and move Him to justify me? Nothing whatever. Nay, there was everything in me calculated to make Him abhor and destroy me—my very self-righteous efforts to earn a place in heaven deserving only a lower place in hell. If, then, I am ever to be “justified” *by God*, it must be by pure grace, and that alone.

Grace is the very essence of the Gospel—the only hope for fallen men, the sole comfort of saints passing through much tribulation on their way to the kingdom of God. The Gospel is the announcement that God is prepared to deal with guilty rebels on the ground of free favour, of pure benignity, that God will blot out sin, cover the believing sinner with a robe of spotless righteousness, and receive him as an accepted son—not on account of anything he has done or ever will do, but of sovereign mercy, acting independently of the sinner’s own character and deservings of eternal punishment. Justification is perfectly gratuitous so far as we are concerned, *nothing* being required of us in order to it, either in the way of price and satisfaction or preparation and meetness. We have not the slightest degree of merit to offer as the ground of our acceptance, and therefore if God ever does accept us, it must be out of unmingled grace.

It is as “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10) that JEHOVAH justifies the ungodly. It is as “the God of all grace” He seeks, finds, and saves His people, asking them for nothing, giving them everything. Strikingly is this brought out in that word “being justified *freely* by his grace” (Rom 3:24), the design of that adverb being to exclude all consideration of anything in us or from us which should be the cause or condition of our justification. That same Greek adverb is translated “without a cause” in John 15:25—“they hated me without a cause.” The world’s hatred of Christ was “*without* a cause” so far as *He* was concerned. There was nothing whatever in Him which, to the slightest degree, deserved their enmity against Him. There was nothing in Him unjust, perverse, or evil. Instead, there was everything in Him which was pure, holy, lovely. In like manner, there is nothing whatever in us to call forth the approbation of God. By nature there is “*no good thing*” in us, but instead, everything that is evil, vile, loathsome.

“Being *justified without a cause* by his GRACE.” How this tells out the very *heart* of God! While there was no motive to move Him, outside of Himself, there was one inside Himself. While there was nothing in us to impel God to justify us, His own grace moved Him, so that He devised a way whereby His wondrous love could have vent and flow forth to the chief of sinners, the vilest of rebels. As it is written, “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions *for mine own sake*, and will not remember thy sins” (Isa 43:25). Wondrous, matchless grace! We cannot for a moment look outside the grace of God for any motive or reason why He should ever have noticed us, still less had respect unto such ungodly wretches.

The first moving cause, then, that inclined God to show mercy to His people in their undone and lost condition, was His own wondrous grace—unsought, uninfluenced, unmerited by us. He might justly have left us all obnoxious to the curse of His law, without providing any Surety for us, as He did the fallen angels, but such was His grace toward us that, “He spared not his own Son” (see Rom 8:32). “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified *by his grace*, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Ti 3:5-7). It was His own sovereign favour and good will which actuated God to form this wondrous scheme and method of justification.

Against what has been said above, it has been objected by Socinians and their echoists that this cannot be. If the believing sinner is justified upon the grounds of a full satisfaction having been made to God for him by a surety, then his discharge from condemnation and his reception into God’s judicial favour must be an act of pure *justice*, and therefore could not be by grace. Or, if it be purely an act of divine *grace*, then no surety can have obeyed the law in the believer’s stead. But this is to confound two distinct things—the relation of God to Christ the Surety, and the relation of God to me the sinner. It was *grace* which transferred my sins to Christ. It was *justice* which smote Christ on account of those sins. It was *grace* which appointed me unto everlasting bliss. It is *justice to Christ* which requires I shall enjoy that which He purchased for me.

Toward the sinner, justification is an act of free unmerited favour, but toward Christ, as a sinner’s Surety, it is an act of justice that eternal life should be bestowed upon those for whom His meritorious satisfaction was made. First, it was pure grace that God was *willing to accept* satisfaction from the hands of a surety. He might have exacted the debt from us in our own persons, and then our condition had been equally miserable as that of the fallen angels, for whom no mediator was provided. Second, it was wondrous grace that God Himself *provided* a Surety for us, which we could not have done. The only creatures who are capable of performing perfect

obedience are the holy angels, yet none of them could have assumed and met *our* obligations, for they are not akin to us, possessing not human nature, and therefore incapable of dying. Even had an angel become incarnate, his obedience to the law could not have availed for the whole of God's elect, for it would not have possessed *infinite* value.

None but a divine person taking human nature into union with Himself could present unto God a satisfaction adequate for the redemption of His people. And it was impossible for men to have found out that Mediator and Surety. It must have its first rise in God, and not from us. It was He that "found" a ransom (Job 33:24) and laid help upon One that is "mighty" (Psa 89:19). In the last place, it was amazing *grace* that the Son was willing to perform such a work for us, without whose consent the justice of God could not have exacted the debt from Him. And His grace is the most eminent in that He knew beforehand all the unspeakable humiliation and unparalleled suffering which He would encounter in the discharge of this work, yet that did not deter Him, nor was He unapprised of the character of those for whom He did it—the guilty, the ungodly, the hell-deserving, yet He shrank not back.

*O to grace how great a debtor,
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.*

A WORD OF WARNING

"Take heed what ye hear" (Mar 4:24). The word "hear" obviously includes what is *read*, for that which is written or printed is addressed to the ears of our intellect. Few people today realize the urgent need for "taking heed" unto *what* they read. Just as the natural food which is eaten either helps or hinders the body, so the mental food we receive either benefits or injures the mind, and that, in turn, affects the heart. Now just as it is harmful to *listen* to the rubbish and poison which is being served from the great majority of present-day pulpits, so it is exceedingly injurious to the soul to read most of what is now being published. "Take *heed* what ye hear" and read. But let us seek to be more specific.

The only thing which is really worth calling "religion" is *the life of God in the soul*—commenced, carried on, and consummated solely by the Holy Spirit. Hence, whatever does not bear the impress of the Spirit's unction should be rejected by the saint, for not only can unctionless messages do us no good, but what proceeds not from the Spirit is of the flesh. Here, then, is the test which God's children ought to apply unto all they hear, and here is the balance in which they should weigh all that they read. True, there are varying degrees of the Spirit's unction, as it is in the natural so it is in the spiritual—there will be a varying amount of deposition from the faintest moisture of dew to the copious shower. As there had to be "salt" in every sacrifice (Lev 2:13), so every discourse or article proceeding from the Spirit's aid is "seasoned with salt" (Col 4:6). But O how very much today is *devoid of spiritual* savour and flavour!

Some of God's dear people may suppose that it would be presumptuous to set themselves up as *judges* of what they hear or read, but that is a serious mistake, being both a false humility and a shirking of duty. The apostle rebuked the Hebrews because their senses (spiritual faculties) *were not developed* so as to discern between good and evil (Heb 5:13). With as much reason might it be termed pride for anyone to pass judgment upon the groceries or meats purchased from the stores. Others may ask, "But how are simple and unlearned souls to distinguish between the different religious publications of the day?" Very simply—in sampling your natural food, how do you determine whether or not it be *seasoned*? By your natural taste, of course. So it is spiritually—the "new man" *has a palate too!* If the God of creation has given us natural palates for the purpose of distinguishing between wholesome and unwholesome food, the God of grace has furnished His people with a capacity, a spiritual sense, to distinguish between nutritious and innutritious soul food.

"For the ear *trieth* words, as the mouth tasteth meat" (Job 34:3). Does *yours*, my reader? Are you as careful about what you take into your mind as what you take into your stomach? You certainly ought to be, for the former is even more important than the latter. If you eat some material food which is injurious, you can take a purgative and get rid of the same, but if you have devoured mental food which is injurious, it *stays with you!* "For the ear *trieth* words, as the mouth tasteth food." Again, we ask, Does *yours*, dear reader? Are you learning to distinguish between "letter" and "spirit," between the "form" and the "power," between that which is of the earth and that which is from heaven, between that which is lifeless and ununctionless, and that which is instinct with the breath of God? If the answer be No, then you are greatly the loser.

How many of God's dear children listen to the automaton "letter" preachers of today, and yet find nothing suited to the needs of their poor souls! And how many are subscribing for one magazine after another, hoping to find that which will the better furnish them to fight the good fight of faith, only to be disappointed? What they hear and what they read does not penetrate and grip. It has *no power*—it neither breaks down nor lifts up. It produces neither godly sorrow nor godly joy. The messages they hear or read fall upon their ear like an idle or twice-told tale. It completely fails *to reach their case* or minister to their needs. They are no better off after hearing a hundred such "sermons" or reading through a hundred such periodicals than they were at the beginning. They are no farther from the world and no nearer unto God.

It is often a long time before God's children are able to account for this. They *blame themselves*. They are exceedingly loath to say, "This message *is not of God.*" They are afraid to act in the spiritual as they do in the natural, and condemn and discard that which is worthless. While they feel a *lack of power* in the sermons they hear or the articles they read, and while their souls steadily get dried up like a potsherd, they are slow to realize that this is *the inevitable effect* of the ununctionless preaching they listen to or the ununctionless matter they read, and that such dryness and leanness of soul is *inevitable* by their association with unhumbled and empty professors. But in due time God opens their eyes, and they see through the flimsy veil and discover that both the sermons they hear and the literature they read are only the product of a *dead* profession.

Ah, it is a great thing when once the Holy Spirit teaches a soul that it is *power* which is lacking from the lifeless preaching and lifeless articles of dead professors. It is *power* which the renewed soul seeks—a message which has power to search his conscience, to pierce him to the quick, to write it upon his *heart*—a message which has power to bring him to his knees in broken-hearted confession to God, a message which has power to make him *feel* that *he is* "vile," a message which has power to drive him to *Christ*, for the binding up of his wounds, for Him to

pour in “oil and wine,” and send him on his way rejoicing. Yes, what the *renewed* soul longs for (though at first he knows it not) is that divine message which comes to him “not in word only, but also *in power*” (see 1Th 1:5).

Sooner or later, every member of the Body of Christ comes to value “power,” and to *count as worthless whatever lacks it*. It is by divine power he is taught in his own soul, by which he is made to feel acutely his sinnership, his carnality, his beggarliness. It is divine power working in his heart—the *same* power which brought Christ again from the dead (Eph 1:19-20)—which draws his affections unto things above and makes his soul pant after God “as the hart panteth after the water brooks” (Psa 42:1). It is this divine power working in him which reveals to his burdened spirit the throne of grace, and causes him to implore mercy and to seek grace “to help in time of need.” It is this divine power working in him which makes him cry, “Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness” (Psa 119:35-36).

They who are partakers of this divine power (and they are *few* in number) can never be satisfied with a powerless ministry, either oral or written. “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh” (Rom 8:5), and are charmed with oratorical eloquence, catchy sayings, witty allusions, and jocular interspersions. On just such “husks” do the religious “swine” feed, but the penitent prodigal can find no nutriment therein! Men “of the world”—and they may be graduates from some “Bible Institute” or possessors of a diploma from some seminary, now styling themselves “preachers of the Gospel”—will speak of the things of the world (varnishing it over by denominating them “signs of the times”) and “the world heareth them” (1Jo 4:5). But those who are seeking to “work out their own salvation with fear and trembling” obtain no help therefrom, yea, they perceive clearly that such sermons and periodicals are “broken cisterns, that can hold *no water*” (Jer 2:13).

“*Take heed* what ye hear” and *read!* More than forty years ago the saintly Adolph Saphir wrote, “I think the fewer books we read the better. It is like times of cholera, when we should only drink filtered water.” What would he say if he were on earth today and glanced over the deadly poison sent forth by the heterodox and the lifeless rubbish put out by the orthodox? Christian reader, if you value the health of your soul, cease hearing and quit reading all that is lifeless, ununctionless, powerless, no matter what prominent or popular name be attached thereto. Life is too short to waste valuable time on that which profits not. Ninety-nine out of every hundred of the religious books, booklets, and magazines now being published are not worth the paper on which they are printed.

To turn away from the lifeless preachers and publishers of the day may involve a real cross. Your motives will be misconstrued, your words perverted, and your actions misinterpreted. The sharp arrows of false report will be directed against you. You will be called proud and self-righteous because you refuse to fellowship empty professors. You will be termed censorious and bitter if you condemn in plain speech the subtle delusions of Satan. You will be dubbed narrowminded and uncharitable because you refuse to join in singing the praises of the “great” and “popular” men of the day. More and more you will be made to painfully realize that the path which leadeth unto life *is* “narrow” and that FEW there be that find it. The Lord be pleased to grant unto each of us the hearing ear and obedient heart, “*Take heed* what ye hear” and *read!*

POOR YET RICH

One of the prayers which the Lord teaches His people to pray is, “Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: *for* I am poor and needy” (Psa 86:1). Empty professors filled with pride, by their very attitude and actions, boast that they are “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (Rev 3:17). But the real child of God, whose eyes have been opened by the Holy Spirit to see his utter worthlessness, freely acknowledges that he *is* (in himself) “poor and needy,” and the Lord Jesus declares, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit*” (Mat 5:3). May more of *this* poverty be our felt portion.

Above we have said that the child of God is *in himself* “poor and needy.” That is a most necessary qualification, for *in Christ* he is rich and possesses all things (1Co 3:21). In Christ there is an infinite “fulness,” and it is the office and work of faith to draw upon and draw from the same. It is the Christian’s unspeakable privilege to recognize that he *is now* (not simply will be in heaven) a “joint-heir” with Christ. It is his glorious privilege to perceive that Christ is the *Head* of His people, and as a wife turns to her husband for money to meet the household expenses, so His Spouse should *act* toward her Husband—coming to Him for counsel, help, supplies of need, *in full confidence* that *His* love will freely bestow them.

Thus we have sought, again, to preserve the *balance* of truth. Not until we are made to feel anew our emptiness, nothingness, sinfulness, woe-begone condition, shall we continue to turn unto Him whose exhaustless riches are ever available when the empty hand of *faith* is extended toward Him. Alas, so many of His dear people have been left with the impression (if not expressly taught so) that there is nothing better for them, while here in this wilderness, than to feel their helplessness and groan over their wretchedness, remaining spiritual paupers to the end of their journey. No doubt *that* is greatly to be preferred to the self-sufficiency and self-righteousness of the bloated and Satan-deceived “free-willers.” Yes, indeed, a million times better for any of us to lie wounded, stripped, groaning, and *half*-dead by the wayside, than be left by God *wholly* dead in a state of carnal complacency. And yet, beloved, it is far from glorifying to the Lord, as it is far from our entering into the inheritance which is now ours, to be the helpless “victim of circumstances,” the captive of the flesh, or the doormat of Satan.

Daily living by faith on Christ is what makes the difference between the sickly and the healthy Christian, between the defeated and the victorious saint. Not that we are suggesting it is possible for any of us to attain a state or experience where we are no longer tripped up by Satan or wounded by the flesh. No, but rather that the Christian should refuse to *continue* in that wounded state *and go on* lying on the ground moaning and groaning. Our duty is to *search out* what it was in us which gave Satan the occasion *to* trip us up and the flesh to wound us. Confess it to God, put it under the blood, and seek grace to enable us to be more watchful against a repetition of the same. We should eye the all-sufficient atonement, count upon its efficacy to *cleanse from* the guilt and defilement of the fall we experienced, and having put the matter right with God, refuse

to allow it now to hinder our communion with Him—our free approaches unto and our delighting ourselves in His promises.

Does the reader say, in answer to what has just been said, “That is easier said than done.” Of course, for all “doing” requires *effort*! After the confession of a failure and fall, a feeling of shame and heaviness frequently oppresses the soul and makes it exceedingly difficult to approach the Holy One with filial freedom. What then is to be done? This—begin by *thanking* God for the marvelous grace which has made such full provision for our wretched failures, *praise* Him for laying *all* your sins upon Christ. Then what? Why, *continue praising* Him that the blood of Christ is of such amazing potency, of such infinite efficacy, that it “cleanseth us from all sin.” Bless the God of all grace that He invites needy souls to come to His throne for *mercy*. That, my Christian reader, is the way to overcome heaviness of soul when filled with shame (after confession), and the way to overcome Satan’s efforts to keep you depressed—*thanksgivings and praises* for the provisions of mercy for *failing* saints will give “freedom of access” and restore unto the joy of communion quicker than anything.

It is written “the *joy* of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10). There can be no spiritual energy for the cheerful performance of duty, no buoyant heart for the trials of life, unless the joy of the Lord fills the soul. It was by the “joy that was set before Him” that Christ “endured the cross” (Heb 12:2). True, He was “the man of sorrows,” and “acquainted with grief” to an extent which none of us ever are, yet those sorrows did not incapacitate Him for attending to His Father’s business, that deep “grief” hindered Him not from daily going about “doing good.” No, there was a “joy” which sustained, which nerved, which energized Him for the doing of God’s will. And beloved fellow-pilgrim—groaning it may be over vile corruptions felt within, or disheartened and dismayed by the multiplying difficulties and obstacles without—that blessed One is still saying, “If any man thirst [for joy, or any spiritual grace], let him come *unto me*, and DRINK” (Joh 7:37)—draw from My fulness.

It is striking to observe *the setting* of these words, “The joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10). They were spoken to the godly remnant in a “day of small things.” That remnant had listened to the reading and expounding of the law (Neh 8:7-8). As they listened, they were rebuked, reprovéd, condemned, and in consequence, “*all* the people *wept* when they heard the words of the law.” That was startling, unusual, blessed—to behold a contrite and broken-hearted people is both a rare and precious sight. But were they to *continue* thus? lying in the dust sobbing and groaning? No, to *them* the words came, “Neither be ye sorrowful”—dry up your tears, “for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” There is “a time to weep,” and there is also “a time to laugh,” “a time to mourn, *and* a time to dance” (Ecc 3:4)! After grief for sin there should be joy for forgiveness.



September

THE HOLY SPIRIT

21. The Spirit Convicting (Part 1)

Though man in his natural estate is spiritually dead, that is, entirely destitute of any spark of *true holiness*, yet is he still a rational being and has a conscience by which he is capable of perceiving the difference between good and evil, and of discerning and feeling the force of moral obligation (Rom 1:32; 2:15). By having his sins clearly brought to his mind and conscience, he can be made to realize what his true condition is as a transgressor of the holy law of God. This sight and sense of sin, when aroused from moral stupor, under the common operations of the Holy Spirit, is usually termed “conviction of sin,” and there can be no doubt that the views and feelings of men may be very clear and strong even while they are in an *unregenerate* state. Indeed, they do not differ in *kind* (though they do in degree), from what men will experience in the day of judgment, when their own consciences shall condemn them, and they shall stand guilty before God (Rom 3:19).

But there is nothing whatever in the kind of conviction of sin mentioned above which has any tendency to *change the heart* or make it better. No matter how clear or how strong such convictions be, there is nothing in them which approximates to those that the Spirit produces in them whom He quickens. Such convictions may be accompanied by the most alarming apprehensions of danger, the imagination may be filled with the most frightful images of terror, and hell may seem almost uncovered to their terrified view. Very often, under the sound of the faithful preaching of eternal punishment, some are aroused from their lethargy and feelings of the utmost terror awakened in their souls, while there is no real *spiritual* conviction of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. On the other hand, there may be deep and permanent spiritual convictions where the passions and the imagination are very little excited.

Solemn is it to realize that there are now in hell multitudes of men and women who on earth were visited with deep conviction of sin, whose awakened conscience made them conscious of their rebellion against their Maker, who were made to feel something of the reality of the everlasting burnings, and the *justice* of God meeting out such punishment to those who spurn His authority and trample His laws beneath their feet. How solemn to realize that many of those who experienced such convictions were aroused to flee from the wrath to come, and became very zealous and diligent in seeking to escape the torments of hell, and who under the instincts of self-

preservation, took up with “religion” as offering the desired means of escape. And how unspeakably solemn to realize that many of those poor souls fell victims to men who spoke “smooth things,” assuring them that they were the objects of God’s love, and that nothing more was needed than to “receive Christ as your personal Saviour.” How unspeakably solemn, we say, that such souls look to Christ merely as a *fire-escape*, who never—from a supernatural work of the Spirit in their hearts—surrendered to Christ as *Lord*.

Does the reader say, Such statements as the above are most unsettling, and if dwelt upon would destroy my peace. We answer, O that *it may* please God to use these pages to disturb some who have long enjoyed a *false* peace. Better far, dear reader, to be upset, yea, searched and terrified *now*, than die in the *false* comfort produced by Satan, and weep and wail for all eternity. If you are unwilling to be tested and searched that is clear proof that you *lack* an “honest heart.” An “honest” heart desires to know the truth. An “honest” heart hates pretense. An “honest” heart is fearful of being deceived. An “honest” heart welcomes the most searching diagnosis of its condition. An “honest” heart is humble and tractable, not proud, presumptuous, and self-confident. O how very few there are who *really* possess an “honest heart.”

The “honest” heart will say, If it is possible for an *unregenerate* soul to experience the convictions of sin you have depicted above, if one who is dead in trespasses and sins may, nevertheless, have a vivid and frightful anticipation of the wrath to come, and engage in such sincere and earnest endeavours to escape from the same, then how am I to ascertain whether *my* convictions have been of a different kind from theirs? A very pertinent and a most important question, dear friend. In answering the same, let us first point out that, *soul terrors of hell* are not, in themselves any proof of a supernatural work of God having been wrought in the heart. It is not horrifying alarms of the everlasting burnings felt in the heart which distinguishes the experience of quickened souls from that of the unquickened, though such alarms *are* felt (in varying degrees) by both classes.

In His particular saving work of conviction, the Holy Spirit occupies the soul more with *sin itself*, than with punishment. This is an exercise of the mind to which fallen men are exceedingly averse. They had rather meditate on almost anything than upon their own wickedness—neither argument, entreaty, nor warning, will induce them so to do. Nor will Satan suffer one of his captives—till a mightier One comes and frees him—to dwell upon sin, its nature, and vileness. No, he constantly employs all his subtle arts to keep his victim from such occupation, and his temptations and delusions are mixed with the natural darkness and vanity of men’s hearts so as to fortify them against convictions, so that he may keep “his goods are *in peace*” (Luk 11:21).

It is by the exceeding greatness of His power that the Holy Spirit fixes the mind of a quickened and enlightened soul upon the due consideration of sin. Then it is that the subject of this experience cries, “My sin is ever before me” (Psa 51:3), for God now reproves him and “sets his sins in order” before his eyes see Psa 50:21. Now he is forced to behold them, no matter which way he turns himself. Feign would he cast them out of his thoughts, but he cannot. The “arrows” of God stick in his heart (Job 6:4), and he cannot get rid of them. He now realizes that his sins are more in number than the hairs of his head (Psa 40:12). Now it is that “the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: *because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it*” (Isa 40:7).

The Spirit occupies the quickened and enlightened soul with the exceeding *sinfulness of sin*. He unmask its evil character, and shows that all our self-pleasing and self-gratification was but a species of continued insubjection to God, of enmity against Him—against His person, His attributes, His government. The Spirit makes the convicted soul feel how grievously he has turned

his back upon God (Jer 32:33), lifted up his heel against Him, and trampled His laws underfoot. The Spirit causes him to see and *feel* that he has forsaken the pure fountain for the foul stream, preferred the filthy creature above the ineffable Creator, a base lust to the Lord of glory.

The Spirit convicts the quickened soul of the *multitude of his sins*. He realizes now that all his thoughts, desires, and imaginations, are corrupt and perverse. Conscience now accuses him of a thousand things which hitherto never occasioned him a pang. Under the Spirit's illumination the soul discovers that his very righteousness are as "filthy rags," for the motives which prompted even his best performances were unacceptable unto Him who "weigheth the spirits." He now sees that his very prayers are polluted, through lack of pure affections prompting them. In short, he sees that "from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores" (Isa 1:6).

The Spirit brings before the heart of the convicted one the *character and claims of God*. Sin is now viewed in the light of the divine countenance, and he is made to feel what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against God. The pure light of God shining in the conscience over against vile darkness horrifies the soul. The convicted one both sees and feels that God is holy and that he is completely unholy, that He is good and we are vile, that there is a most awful disparity between Him and us. He is made to feelingly cry, "How can such a corrupt wretch like me ever stand before such a holy God, whose majesty I have so often slighted?" Now it is that the soul is made to realize how it has treated God with the basest ingratitude, abusing His goodness, perverting His mercies, scorning his best Friend. Reader, has this been your experience?

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

81. The Pinnacle of Faith (11:37-38)

There has been no greater instance of the degeneracy of human nature and its likeness to the devil than in the fearful fact that so many who have occupied prominent positions—magistrates, ecclesiastical dignitaries, kings and emperors—were not content to take the bare lives of true worshippers of God by the sword, but invented the most fiendish methods of torture to destroy them. That educated men and women in high places, that those professing the name of Christ, should conduct themselves like savages, that their rage against the excellent of the earth should express itself in such villainy and inhumanity, is a most dreadful demonstration of human depravity when the hand of God is withdrawn. With what infinite patience does the Most High bear with the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction!

But why should God allow many of His dear children to encounter such terrible experiences? Among other answers, the following may be suggested. First, for the more thorough trial of His champions, that their faith, courage, patience, and other graces, might be more manifest. Second, to seal or ratify more plainly the truth which they profess. Third, to encourage and strengthen the faith of their weaker brethren. Fourth, to give them more sensible evidence of what Christ

endured for them. Fifth, to cause them to perceive the better the torments of hell—if those whom God loves are permitted to endure such grievous and painful trials, what must we understand of those torments which the wrath of God inflicts upon those whom He hates!

The teaching of Scripture upon the various reasons why God calls upon His children to suffer at the hands of the openly wicked, or as is more often the case, from those professing to be His people, is full of valuable instruction and calls for prayerful pondering. One of the advantages gained from such an exercise is the plainer perception of the very real and radical difference there is between that spiritual and supernatural faith which is possessed by God's elect, and that notional and natural faith which is all that millions of empty professors have. Should it please God to remove His restraining hand and permit open and fierce persecution to once more break forth upon the true followers of the Lamb, the difference just mentioned would be made apparent, for "When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word," the stony-ground hearer is soon "offended" (Mat 13:21) or as Luke 8:13 expresses it, "fall away." But different far is it with the good-ground hearer.

"The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1Pe 1:7). That faith which is the gift of God *endures to the end*. The testing of that faith, the fiery trial thereof serves the better to make manifest the divine origin of it—only that faith which has come from God is able to endure the testing of God. Just as it is in *the furnace* that genuine gold is most quickly distinguished from tinsel, so it is under sore trials that the difference between spiritual and natural faith becomes the more apparent. Like much of the *imitation* jewelry of the day, the creature-faith of empty professors may look more glittering, be more bulky, and have more attraction for the outward eye, and be better calculated to adorn its possessor than does the genuine faith of God's elect, which is often small in size, dull in appearance, and lacking in attractiveness to the human beholder.

Yes, dear reader, it is *the fiery trial* which puts to the proof the kind of faith we really possess. Let the two faiths—that natural faith which man originates and exercises by an act of his own will, and that spiritual faith which is the gift of God and which man can no more exercise of himself than he can create a world—be placed side by side in the crucible. Let the burning flame try which is the genuine metal. Let the hot fire play around them both, and the false faith (like imitation gold) will soon melt away into a shapeless mass of base metal, but the true faith will come forth uninjured by the fire, having lost nothing but what it could well spare—the dross with which it has been mixed. See that fact strikingly and solemnly adumbrated in Daniel 3—the furnace of Babylon harmed not the three Hebrews who were cast into it—it merely destroyed their bonds, but it *consumed* the Babylonians (Dan 3:22)!

Let it be duly noted that in 1 Peter 1:7, the apostle, when comparing faith with gold, accredits to the former a higher value—it is "much more precious than of gold that perisheth." Gold, though its genuineness may be proved by enduring the test of fire, is yet a perishing thing—a thing of the earth, a thing of time. That gold, for which men toil so labouriously and sell their souls to acquire, is of no avail on a deathbed, still less will it stand any in good stead in the day of judgment! At death it has to be left behind, for none can take it with him into the next life. Then how much more precious is that *faith* which, instead of, like gold, leaving its possessor under the wrath of God, will be "found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1Pe 1:7)

But the point to which we would now direct special attention is that it is not so much the faith itself as “the *trial* of faith” which is more precious than of gold which perisheth. This is clear to the spiritual mind—trials and temptations are the means which God employs to make manifest to the soul the reality and strength of that faith which He bestows, for there is in every trial and temptation an opposition made to the faith which is in the heart, and trial and temptation, so to speak, threatens the life of faith. How so? Because under the trial, God, for the most part, *hides* Himself—the light of His countenance is no longer visible, His smile is overcast by a dark providence. Nevertheless, He puts forth a secret power which upholds the soul, otherwise it would sink into utter despair, be swallowed up by the power of unbelief. Here, then, is the conflict—the trial fighting against faith, and that faith against the trial.

Now when in this trial, under this sharp conflict, in this hot furnace, the spiritual and supernatural faith is not burned or destroyed, but instead, grips firmly the promise and the faithfulness of Him who has given it. And thus trial of faith becomes exceedingly *precious*. It is “precious” to its possessor when its genuineness is made the more manifest to him. It is “precious” in the sight of God’s people, who discern it, and derive strength and comfort from what they witness in the experience of a fellow-saint, who is thus tried and blessed. It is “precious” in the sight of God Himself, who crowns it with His own manifest approbation and puts upon it the seal of His approving smile. But above all things it will be found “precious” at the final appearing of the Lord Jesus in glory, for then He will “be admired in all them that believe” (2Th 1:10).

To suffer the hardest things as well as to do the greatest, is all one to faith. It is equally ready for both when God shall require and it is equally effectual in both, as God shall strengthen. The performing of spectacular exploits and the enduring of terrible affliction, differ almost as much to the flesh as do heaven and hell, but they are one to faith when duty calls. This is very evident from the section of Hebrews 11 which is now before us (vv. 33-38), the closing portion of which is about to engage our attention. At the beginning of this section, we are furnished with a list of the marvels which were wrought by a God-given faith. At the close thereof, we are given a list of fearful sufferings and privations which were patiently and courageously borne by a God-sustained faith. The latter, as much as the former, demonstrates the supernatural character of that faith which is in view throughout our chapter, yea, forms a most glorious climax thereto.

We say that the fearful sufferings experienced by God’s people form a blessed climax in the Spirit’s unfolding of the life of faith—those sufferings mark, in fact, the pinnacle of its attainments. Why so? Because they make manifest a heart that is completely subject to God, that bows submissively to whatever He is pleased to send, which has been so completely won to Him that torture and death are deliberately chosen and gladly preferred to apostasy from Him. A “meek and quiet spirit” is of “great price” in the sight of God (1Pe 3:4), and nothing more plainly evidences the *meekness* of the Christian—his lying passive as clay in the hands of the Potter—as faith’s willing acceptance of whatever lot our Father sees fit to appoint us. To be faithful unto death, to have unshakable confidence in the Lord, though He suffers us to be slain, to trust Him when to sight and sense it seems He has deserted us, is the highest exercise of all of faith.

Ere closing these introductory paragraphs, let us seek to point out the various *actings of faith* in times of danger, trial, and persecution. First, faith recognizes that “the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Rev 19:6), that He is on the throne of the universe, and “doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand” (Dan 4:35). Yes, dear reader, a spiritual faith perceives that things do not happen by chance, but that everything is regulated by the Lord God. Second, faith recognizes that everything which enters our lives is ordered by Him who is our Father, and that our enemies can do nothing whatever

against us without His direct permission—the devil could not touch Job nor sift Peter until he first obtained leave from the Lord! Oh what a sure resting place is there here for the troubled and trembling heart. Third, faith recognizes that, no matter how fiercely Satan may be permitted to rage against us, or how sorely men persecute, their malicious efforts will be made to work together for *our good* (Rom 8:28).

Fourth, by mixing itself with God's promises, faith obtains present help, strength, and consolation from God. It derives peace and comfort from that sure word, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa 43:2). It counts upon the assurance, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1Co 10:13). Finally faith looks away from the present conflict and views the promised rest. It anticipates the future reward, and as it does so, is assured that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom 8:18). Such are some of the workings of faith when God's children are called upon to pass through the furnace.

"They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb 11:37-38). These verses continue the list of sufferings begun in verse 35. They enumerate the various kinds of persecution to which many of the Old Testament saints were subjected. They are of two types: first, such as fell under the utmost rage of their enemies, enduring a martyr's death; second, such as to escape death, exposed themselves to great miseries which were undergone in this life.

It may be helpful at this point for us to raise the question, how are such dreadful sufferings to be harmonized with the divine promises of *temporal* blessings on those whose ways please the Lord. Dispensationalists are very fond of emphasizing the *temporal* character of the Old Testament promises, imagining that the promises of the New Testament are of a greatly superior character. In this they err seriously. On the one hand, the verses which are now under consideration describe the temporal experiences of some of the most eminent of the *Old* Testament saints. On the other hand, the *New* Testament expressly affirms godliness has "promise of the life *that now is*, and of that which is to come" (1Ti 4:8). The answer to our opening query is very simple—such promises as those in Deuteronomy 28:1-6 (which still hold good to *faith!*) are to be understood with two exceptions—unless our sins call down divine chastisements, or unless God is pleased to make trial of our graces by afflictions.

"They were stoned" (Heb 11:37). This form of death was appointed by God Himself to be inflicted upon notorious malefactors, Leviticus 20:2, Joshua 7:24, 25. But our text has reference to the Satanic perversion of this divine institution, for here it is the enemies of God inflicting this punishment upon His beloved and faithful people. "The devil is never more a devil nor more outrageous, than when he gets a pretense of God's weapons into his own hands" (John Owen, 1616-1683). Stephen, the first Christian martyr, suffered death in this form. It is touching to remember that the one who first penned our text, himself "consented" to the stoning of Stephen (Act 8:1) and later he himself was stoned at Lystra.

"They were sawn asunder" (Heb 11:37). This was a barbarous method of execution which the later Jews seemed to have learned from the heathen. There is no record in Scripture of anyone

being put to death in this way, though tradition says Isaiah ended his earthly career in this manner. That some of the heroes of faith perished in this way is clear from our text, evidencing the malice of the devil and the brutal rage of persecution. Their endurance of such torture demonstrates the reality and power of the Spirit's support, enabling them to remain true to God, and in the midst of their agonies sweetly commit their spirits into His hands, to the astonishment of their murderers. How this should stir us up to bear patiently the far smaller trials we may be called upon to encounter.

"Were tempted" (Heb 11:37). This may be considered two ways, as pointing to an *aggravation* of their sufferings, or as referring to a *separate* trial of faith. We will take it in both respects. First, as signifying an intensification of their other trials, the reference would be to their persecutors setting before them the promise of relief upon their repudiation of the truth—liberty at the price of perfidity. The baits of immunity and advancement were offered to them on the condition that they would abandon their strictness and join the ranks of the loose livers of that day. We believe that our text also includes *the temptings of Satan*, seeking to fill their minds with doubts as to God's goodness and power, urging them to recede from the stand they have taken. Because they remained resolute, refusing to yield to the insidious demands of their persecutors, they were cruelly butchered.

"Were tempted" may in the second place, be contemplated as referring to that life of ease and pleasure which worldly advancement and riches might provide. History solemnly records that numbers of those who courageously endured long and cruel imprisonment (and other sore trials) for the truth's sake during the reign of the papist and bloody queen Mary of England, yet upon the accession of queen Elizabeth were freed, elevated to high places, and obtaining much wealth and power, denied the power of godliness and made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. But those in our text were possessed of a faith like unto that of Moses (Heb 11:24-26), and therefore were enabled to withstand the powerful temptations of the world. Poverty, dear reader, is often sent by God upon His people as a merciful means of delivering them from the dangerous snares which wealth entails.

"Were slain with the sword" (Heb 11:37). There is probably a double reference here. First, to the sword of *violence*, when persecutors in their fury fell upon the servants and people of God, butchering them for their fidelity, see 1 Samuel 22:18, 21, 1 Kings 19:10. Second, the sword of *justice*, or rather injustice, the law being enforced against the saints. Probably this form of death is mentioned last to signify the *multitude* of martyrs who by their blood sealed up the truth. Literally rendered our text reads, "they died in the slaughter of the sword," which denotes the insatiable thirst of the persecutors and the large number which they felled. Papists have exceeded pagans herein—witness their cruel massacres in France and other places. Well may the Holy Spirit represent the whore Babylon as being "drunken with the blood of the saints" (Rev 17:6).

"They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins" (Heb 11:37-38), which means they were hounded out of their homes, and forced to go forth and exist as they might, without any settled habitation. "They were driven out to share the lot of wild animals, and were reduced to wear their skins, instead of clothes woven by man. This form of suffering is mentioned here to show, on the one hand, the cruelty of religious persecution, and on the other hand, the mighty sustaining power of faith. What power indeed is this! It was not merely the compulsion such as that which enforced the wandering of society's outlaws. It was rather the deliberate choice like that of Moses (Heb 24-26). Any day, any one of these wanderers could have rejoined their fellowmen, enjoyed their society, and shared their comforts, but they preferred this lot to apostasy" (E. W. Bullinger, 1837-1913)

“Being destitute, afflicted, tormented” (Heb 11:37-38). These terms set forth the variety and intensity of the sufferings experienced by the homeless saints. “Destitute” means they were deprived of the ordinary necessities of life, and further signifies they were denied the kind assistance of relatives and friends. They were driven forth without the means of subsistence and were beyond the reach of succour from all who cared for them. “Afflicted” probably has reference to their state of mind. They were not emotionless stoics, but felt acutely their sad condition. No doubt the enemy took full advantage of their state and injected many unbelieving and harassing thoughts into their minds. “Tormented” is rather too strong a word here. We understand the reference to be unto the ill-treatment they met with from the unfriendly strangers encountered in their wanderings, who regarded them without any pity and evilly treated them.

“Of whom the world was not worthy” (Heb 11:38). This parenthetical clause is brought in here for the purpose of removing an objection. Many might suppose that these despised wanderers were only receiving their just due, as not being fit to live in decent society. To remove this scandal the apostle put the blame where it rightly belonged, affirming that it was society which was unworthy of having the saints of God in their midst. In its wider aspect, the “world” here takes in the whole company of the ungodly, but in its narrower sense (that of the context), it has reference to the apostate “world”—all history, sacred and secular—is harmonious on this point—the most merciless, conscienceless, cruel, and inveterate persecutors of God’s elect have been *religious* people!

“Of whom the world was not worthy” (Heb 11:38). Here we see the difference between *God’s* estimate and that of unregenerate religionists concerning the children of faith. God regards them as “the excellent” of the earth in whom is His “delight” (Psa 16:3). “A true believer by reason of his union with Christ, and of the abode of the Spirit of sanctification in him, is worth more than a million worlds; as a rich and precious jewel is more worth than many loads of filthy mud” (William Gouge, 1617-1679). The excellency of saints appears also in the benefit and blessings which they bring to the places where they reside. They are the “salt of the earth,” though the corrupt multitude around them realize it not. Their presence stays the hand of divine judgment (Gen 19:22), brings down blessing (Gen 30:27), and their prayers secure divine healing (Gen 20:17). How little does the world realize how much it owes to those whom they hate so bitterly!

“They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb 11:38). Not only were they without a settled habitation, but they were compelled to resort to desolate places and the dens of wild beasts in order to escape the fury of their foes. The word for “wandering” here is different from the one used in the previous verse. There it signifies to go up and down from house to house, or town to town, in hope of finding succour, but in which they were disappointed. Here the term denotes a wandering in unknown territory, going (like a blind man) they knew not whither. It is the term used of Abraham in Heb 11:8, and of Hagar in Genesis 16:6, and of wandering sheep in Matthew 18:12. What a commentary upon fallen human nature. These saints of God were safer among the beasts of the field than in the religious world inflamed by the devil! While these lines are being read, there are probably some of God’s children in foreign lands suffering these very experiences.

Seeing that faith in the living God will alone support the soul under manifold trials, how necessary it is that we labour in the fear of the Lord to get our hearts rooted and grounded in the truth, so that when afflictions or persecutions come we may be enabled to show forth the power and fruits of this spiritual grace. Faith has to overcome the fear of man as well as the love of the world! Whatever sufferings God may appoint in the path of duty, they are to be patiently borne as seeing Him who is invisible. Their enemies clothed death in the most hideous and horrible forms

that hatred could devise, yet the faith of those saints boldly met and endured it. How thankful *we* should be that God's restraining hand is still upon the reprobate, for human nature has not improved any.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

33. His Coronation

Inasmuch as it is not our design to write a verse by verse commentary on the books of Samuel, but rather to study the life of David, we pass over what is found in the remainder of 2 Samuel 3 and 4 and come to the opening verses of chapter five. In the interval between what was before us in our last article and the incident we are now to contemplate, the providence of God has been working on David's behalf. His principal opponents had met with a summary and tragic end, and the way was now cleared for the purpose of God concerning our hero, to receive its accomplishment. Viewing him typically, it is indeed striking to observe how that David's path to the throne was marked by *blood shedding*. From the human side, Saul, Jonathan, and later, Ishbosheth, stood in the way, and none of them died a natural death, by the hand of violence was each one removed!

We cannot regard as accidental or as a trivial detail, what has just been pointed out above. There is nothing trivial in the imperishable Word of God. Everything recorded therein has a profound significance, if only we have eyes to see it. Here, the deeper meaning of these details is not hard to discern. David, in all the essential features of his history (his failures excepted), foreshadowed the Lord Jesus, and as we know, *His* path to the throne was along one of blood shedding. True, the Lord Jesus was "born King of the Jews" (Joh 19:19), as David also had been born into the royal tribe of Judah. True, Christ had been "anointed" (Mat 3; Act 10:38), prophet, priest, and king, years before His coronation, as David also had been "anointed" to the royal office (1Sa 16:13). Yet, it was not until after His precious blood was shed at Calvary, that God exalted Christ to be a "Prince" unto the *spiritual* "Israel" (Act 2:36; 5:31), as it was not until after the blood shedding of Saul, Jonathan, and Ishbosheth, that David became king.

Upon the death of Abner and Ishbosheth, the tribes of Israel were left without a leader. Having had more than sufficient of the rule of Saul and Ishbosheth over them, they had no inclination to make a further experiment by setting another of Saul's family on the throne, and having observed the prosperous state of Judah under the wise and benign government of David, they began to entertain higher and more honourable thoughts of the "man after God's own heart." That illustrates an important principle in God's dealings with those whom He has marked out for salvation. There has to be a turning from Satan unto God, from the service of sin unto subjection to Christ. *That* is what true conversion is—it is a change of masters. It is a saying from the heart, "O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by *thee only* will we make mention of thy name" (Isa 26:13).

But conversion is preceded by conviction. There is wrought in the soul a dissatisfaction with the old master, before there is begotten desires towards the new Master. Sin is made to be realized as a bitter thing, before there is an hungering and thirsting after righteousness. The cruel bonds of Satan must be felt before there is any longing to be made free by Christ. The prodigal son was made to feel the wretchedness of the far country before he had any thought of journeying toward the Father's house. Clearly is this principle exemplified and illustrated in the case of these men who now sought unto David, desiring that he should be king over them. They had had more than enough of what the prophet Samuel had faithfully warned them (1Sa 8:11-18)! They had no desire for any other of the house of Saul to reign over them, but were now desirous of submitting themselves to *David's* scepter.

Unspeakably blessed, then, is the typical picture here presented to our view. In the voluntary coming unto David of those men of the different tribes, following their unhappy lot under the reigns of Saul and Ishbosheth, we have adumbrated the outcome of the Holy Spirit's operations in the hearts of God's elect when He draws them to Christ. He first makes them discontented with their present lot. He gives them to realize there is no real and lasting satisfaction to be found in the service of sin and in continuing to follow a course of opposition to God and His Christ. He creates within the soul an aching void, before He reveals the One who alone can fill it. In short, He makes us thoroughly discontented with our present portion before He moves us to seek the true riches. The Hebrews must be made to groan under their merciless taskmasters in Egypt, before they were ready to start out for the promised land.

"Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel. So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel" (2Sa 5:1-3). Ah, note well the opening word, "Then," after a period of no less than seven and a half years since the death of Saul, verse 5.

After the death of the apostate king, and following David's recognition by the royal tribe, "It might have been expected that all Israel would have been ready to welcome him. Had it not long ago been declared by the lips of Samuel that God had forsaken the house of Saul? Had not this been acknowledged by Saul himself? Had not God by the destruction on Gilboa, finally set His seal to the truth of His denunciations? And was it not evident that the strength and blessing that had departed from Saul had accompanied the dishonoured sojourn of David in the wilderness? The might of Israel was there. There were they who were able to break through the host of the Philistines, and to draw from the well of Bethlehem, when Bethlehem and its waters were in the grasp of the enemy. There too, was the Psalmody of Israel. And yet, despite every indication that God had given—careless alike of the tokens of His favour towards David and of His displeasure towards themselves—the tribes of Israel continued to reject the chosen servant of God and Judah only welcomed him.

"The son of Saul, though feeble and unknown, was preferred to David and David left the wilderness, only to be engaged in a long and destructive struggle with those who should have welcomed him as the gift of God for their blessing. So slowly does the hand of God effectuate its purpose—so resolute are men in refusing to recognize any thing save that which gratifies the tendencies of their nature, or approve itself to the calculation of their self-interest. For seven years and six months, Abner and all the tribes of Israel fiercely assailed David, and yet afterwards, they were not ashamed to confess that they knew that David was he whom God had destined to be the

deliverer of Israel. They knew this and yet for seven years they sought to destroy him, and no doubt, all the while, spoke of themselves, and were spoken of by others, as conscientious men fulfilling an apprehended duty in adhering to the house of Saul. So easy is it to speak well of evil and to encourage iniquity by smooth words of falsehood.

“At last, however, God accomplished the long cherished desire of His servant’s heart—the desire that He had Himself implanted—and David became the head and governor of Israel” (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899). Yes, at last the hearts of these rebels were subdued. At last they were willing to submit themselves unto David’s scepter. Ah, note well dear reader, *the particular character* in which David was owned by them, “Thou shalt be a *captain over Israel*” (2Sa 5:2). As we have pointed out in the introductory paragraphs, the surrender of the men of the eleven tribes unto David, was a type of the sinner’s *conversion*. This presents to us a vital and fundamental aspect of salvation which has well-nigh disappeared from modern “evangelism.” What is conversion? true and saving conversion, we mean. It is far, far more than a believing that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God, and that He made an atonement for our sins. Thousands believe that who are yet dead in trespasses and sins!

Conversion consists not in a believing certain facts or truths made known in Holy Writ, but lies in the complete surrender of the heart and life to a divine Person. It consists in a throwing down of the weapons of our rebellion against Him. It is the total disowning of allegiance to the old master—Satan, sin, self, and a declaring “We *will*...have this man to reign over us” (Luk 19:14). It is owning the claims of Christ and bowing to His rights of absolute dominion over us. It is taking His yoke upon us, submitting unto His scepter, yielding to His blessed will. In a word, it is receiving Christ Jesus *the Lord* (Col 2:6), giving Him the throne of our hearts, turning over to Him the control and regulation of our lives. And my reader, nothing short of this is a Scriptural *conversion*—anything else is a make-believe, a lying substitute, a fatal deception.

In the passage now before us, these Israelites, who had for so long resisted the claims of David, serving under the banner of his adversary instead, now desired the king of Judah to be *their* king. It is evident that a great change had been *wrought in them*—wrought in them by God, though He was pleased to use circumstances to incline toward or prepare for that change. We purposely qualify our terms, for it should be quite obvious that no mere “circumstances” could have wrought *such* a change in their attitude toward the ruler of God’s appointment, unless He had *so* “used” or influenced them by the same. So it is in connection with conversion. The distressing “circumstances” of a sinner may be used of the Spirit to convict him of the vanity of everything beneath the sun, and to teach him that no real heart satisfaction is to be found in mere *things*—even though those “things” may be an earthly mansion, with everything in it that the flesh craves, but He must perform a miracle of grace within the soul before any descendant of Adam is willing to pay full allegiance to Christ as *King*!

“Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh” (2Sa 5:1). What a precious line in our typical picture is this! After conviction and conversion follows spiritual illumination. The Holy Spirit is given to glorify Christ, to take of the things concerning Him and reveal them to those whom He draws to the Saviour (Joh 14:16). After a soul has been brought from death unto life by His mighty and sovereign operations, the Spirit of God *instructs* him, shows him the marvelous relation which divine grace has given him to the Redeemer. He discovers to him the glorious fact of his *spiritual union* with Christ, for “he that is *joined unto the Lord* is one spirit” (1Co 6:17). He reveals to the quickened children of God’s family the amazing truth that they are members of that mystical Body of which Christ is the Head, and thus we are “members of his body, of his flesh, and of *his bones*” (Eph 5:30).

It is precious to see that these words of all the tribes of Israel, “we are thy bone and thy flesh,” were used by them *as a plea*. They had long ignored his rights and resisted his claims. They had been in open revolt against him, and deserved nought but judgment at his hands. But now they humbled themselves before him, and pleaded their near relation to him as a reason why he should forgive their ill-usage of him. They were his brethren and on that ground they sought his clemency. And *this* is the very ground on which the Spirit-instructed believer sues for mercy from God in Christ. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same...Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest” (Heb 2:14, 17). What confidence does the apprehension of this impart to the penitent heart of the Satan-harassed and sin-distressed saint!

O dear Christian reader, beg God to make this transcendent and precious fact more real and moving to thy heart. The Saviour is not one who, like the cherubim and seraphim, is far removed from thee in the scale of being. True, He *is* very God of very God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the King of kings and Lord of lords, but He *is also* one who was born of woman, who became man, who is bone of thy bone, and flesh of thy flesh, and therefore “He is not ashamed to call them *brethren*” (Heb 2:11). And for the same reason He can “be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb 4:15), and “in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb 2:18). Then hesitate not to approach Him with the utmost freedom and pour out thy heart unreservedly before Him. He will not reprove thee any more than David did his erring brethren. Take full encouragement from this endearing relation. We are the *brethren* of Christ. He is our *kinsman* Redeemer!

“Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel” (2Sa 5:2). This too is very blessed when we look through the type to the antitype. These humbled revolvers now praise David for his *former* services, which before they had overlooked, and now acknowledged the Lord’s appointment of him, which before they had resisted. So it is in the experience of the converted. While in the service of Saul (Satan), we have no appreciation of the work Christ has done and no apprehension of the position of honour to which God has elevated Him. The depths of humiliation into which the Beloved of the Father entered and the unspeakable suffering which He endured on behalf of His people, melted not our hearts, nor did the scepter which He now wields bring us into loving subjection to Him. But conversion alters all this!

But more, “The LORD said to thee, thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel” (2Sa 5:2). They not only praised David for his former services, but recognizing him as the divinely appointed *shepherd* of Israel they determined to put themselves under his protection, desiring that he would rule over them in tenderness and righteousness, for their safety and comfort, and that he would lead them forth to victory over his enemies. This too finds its counterpart in the history of those who are truly converted. They realize they have many foes, both within and without, which are far too powerful for them to conquer, and therefore do they “commit the keeping of their souls to *him*” (1Pe 4:19), assured that “He is able to...against that day” (2Ti 1:12). Yes, He who is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh is “*mighty* to save,” “able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Heb 7:25).

1 Chronicles 12:23-40 supplies fuller light upon the opening verses of 2 Samuel 5. There we are shown not only the numbers which came unto David from each tribe, and with what zeal and sincerity they came, but also *the gracious reception they met with*. The one whom they had so

grievously wronged did not refuse to accept them, but instead gave them a hearty and royal welcome, “And there they were with David three days (typically, now on *resurrection* ground), eating and drinking” (v. 39)—at perfect ease in his presence, “for there was *joy* in Israel” (v. 40). Blessed be God, the Saviour of sinners has declared, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (Joh 6:37). Hallelujah!

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

2. The Everlasting Covenant (Part 2)

The Everlasting Covenant or Covenant of Grace is that mutual agreement into which the Father entered with His Son before the foundation of the world respecting the salvation of His elect, Christ being appointed the Mediator, He willingly consenting to be their Head and Representative. That there *is* a divine covenant to which Christ stands related, and that the great work which He performed here on earth was the discharge of His covenant-office, is very plain from many Scriptures, first of all, from the covenant-*titles* which He bears. In Isaiah 42:6, we hear the Father saying to the Son, “I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee *for a covenant* of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.” As a covenantee in it, Christ is thus “given” unto His people, as the pledge of all its blessings (cf. Rom 8:32). He is the Representative of His people in it. He is, in His own Person and work, the sum and substance of it. He has fulfilled all its terms and now dispenses its rewards.

In Malachi 3:1, Christ is designated “the *messenger* of the covenant,” because He came here to make known its contents and proclaim its glad tidings. He came forth from the Father to reveal and publish His amazing grace for lost sinners. In Hebrews 7:22, Christ is denominated “a *surety* of a better testament [covenant].” A “surety” is one who is legally constituted the representative of others, and thereby comes under an engagement to fulfill certain obligations in their name and for their benefit. There is not a single legal obligation which the elect owed unto God but what Christ has fully and perfectly discharged. He has paid the whole debt of His insolvent people, settling all their liabilities. In Hebrews 9:16, Christ is called “the *testator*” of the covenant or testament, and this, because to Him belong its riches, to Him pertain its privileges, and because He has, in His unbounded goodness, bequeathed them as so many inestimable legacies unto His people.

Once more, in Hebrews 9:15 and 12:24, Christ is styled “the *mediator* of the new covenant,” because it is by His efficacious satisfaction and prevailing intercession that all its blessings are now imparted to its beneficiaries. Christ now stands between God and His people, advocating their cause (1Jo 2:1) and speaking a word in season to him that is weary (Isa 50:4). But how could Christ sustain such offices as these unless the covenant had been made with Him (Gal 3:17) and the execution of it had been undertaken by Him (Heb 10:5-7)? “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, *through the blood of the everlasting covenant*” (Heb 13:20)—that one phrase is quite sufficient to establish the fact

that an organic connection existed between the Covenant of Grace and the sacrifice of Christ. In response to Christ's execution of its terms, the Father now says to Him, "by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth *thy prisoners* [those given to Him before the foundation of the world, but in Adam fallen under condemnation] out of the pit wherein is no water" (Zec 9:11).

The covenant-*relationship* which the God-man Mediator sustains unto God Himself is that which alone accounts for and explains the fact that He so frequently addressed Him as, "My God." Every time our blessed Redeemer uttered the words, "*My God*," He gave expression to His *covenant* standing before the Godhead. It must be so, for considering Him as the second Person of the Trinity, He *was* God, equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit. We are well aware that we are now plunging into deep waters, yet if we hold fast to the very words of Scripture we shall be safely borne through them, even though our finite minds will never be able to sound their infinite depths. "Thou art my God from my mother's belly" (Psa 22:10) declared the Saviour. From the cross He said, "My God." On the resurrection-morning, He spoke of "My God" (Joh 20:17). While in the compass of a single verse (Rev 3:12), we find the glorified Redeemer saying, "My God," no less than four times.

What has been pointed out in the above paragraph receives confirmation in many other Scriptures. When renewing His covenant with Abraham, Jehovah said, "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, *to be a God unto thee*, and to thy seed after thee" (Gen 17:7). *That* is the great covenant promise—to be a "God" unto any one signifies that He will supply all their need (Phi 4:19), spiritual, temporal, and eternal. It is true that God is the *God* of all men, inasmuch as He is their Creator, Governor, and Judge, but He is the "God" of His people in a much more blessed sense. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and *I will be to them a God*, and they shall be to me a people" (Heb 8:10). Here again we are shown that it is with respect unto *the covenant* that, in a special way, God is *the God* of His people.

Before leaving Hebrews 8:10, let us note the blessed tenor of the covenant as expressed in the words immediately following, "And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (vv. 11-12)—what *conditions* are there there? What terms of fulfillment are required from impotent men? None at all, it is all *promise* from beginning to end. So too in Acts 3:25, we find Peter saying, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers." Here *the* covenant (not "covenants") is referred to generally, then it is specified particularly, "saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth"—be laid under "conditions"? No, be required to perform certain works? No, but "*shall be blessed*," without any regard to qualifications or deeds of their own—entitled by virtue of their interest in what was performed for them by their Covenant-Head.

Let us consider now the various features of the Everlasting Covenant. 1. The Father covenanted with Christ that He should be the federal Head of His people, undertaking for them, freeing them from that dreadful condemnation wherein God foresaw from eternity they would fall in Adam—this alone explains why Christ is denominated the "last Adam," the "second man" (1Co 15:45, 47). Let it be very carefully noted that in Ephesians 5:23, we are expressly told, "Christ is the *head* of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." He could not have been the "Saviour" unless He had *first* been the "head," that is, unless He had voluntarily entered into the work of suretyship by divine appointment, serving as the Representative of His people, taking

upon Him all their responsibilities and agreeing to discharge all their legal obligations, putting Himself in the stead of His insolvent people, paying all their debts, working out for them a perfect righteousness, and legally meriting for them the reward or blessing of the fulfilled law.

It is to that eternal compact the apostle makes reference when he speaks of a certain “covenant, that was confirmed before of God in (or “to”) Christ,” in Galatians 3:17. There we behold the covenant *Parties*—on the one side, “God,” in the Trinity of His Persons and on the other side, “Christ,” that is, the Son viewed as the God-man Mediator. There we learn of an *agreement* between Them, a “covenant” or contract, and that “confirmed” or solemnly agreed upon and ratified. There too, in the immediate context, we are shown that Christ is here viewed not only as the *Executor* of a testament bequeathed to the saints by God, or that salvation was promised to us through Christ, but there twice over we are specifically told (v. 16) that the *promises* were made to Abraham’s “seed, which is *Christ*”! Thus we have the clearest possible scriptural proof that the Everlasting Covenant contained something which is promised by God to Christ Himself.

Most blessedly were several features of the Everlasting Covenant typed out in Eden. First, Christ was “set up” (Pro 8:23) in the eternal counsels of the three-one JEHOVAH as the Head over and Heir of all things. The figure of His headship is seen in the Creator’s words to Adam, “have *dominion* over the fish of the sea,” etc. (Gen 1:28). There we behold him as the lord of all creation and head of all mankind. But second, Adam was *alone*—among all the creatures he ruled, there was not found a help-meet for him. He was solitary in the world over which he was king, so Christ was alone when “set up” by God in a past eternity. Third, a help-meet was provided for Adam, who was one in nature with himself, as pure and holy as he was, in every way suitable to him—Eve became his wife and companion (Gen 2:21-24). Beautifully did that set forth *the eternal marriage* between Christ and His Church (Eph 5:29-32). Let it be carefully noted that Eve was married to Adam, and was pure and holy, *before* she fell—so it was with the Church (Eph 1:3-6). For much in this paragraph we are indebted to a sermon by James K. Popham (1847-1937).

2. In order to the execution of His covenant-engagement, it was necessary for Christ to assume human nature and be made in all things like unto His brethren, so that He might enter their place, be made under the law, and serve in their stead. He must have a soul and body in which He was capable of suffering and being paid the just wages of His people’s sins. This it is which explains to us that marvelous passage in Hebrews 10:5-9, the language of which is most obviously couched in covenant-terms—the whole displaying so blessedly the voluntary engagement of the Son, His perfect readiness and willingness in acquiescing to the Father’s pleasure. It was at the incarnation Christ fulfilled that precious type of Himself in Exodus 21:5—out of love to His Lord, the Father, and to His Spouse the Church, and His spiritual children, He subjected Himself to a place of perpetual servitude.

3. Having voluntarily undertaken the terms of the Everlasting Covenant, a special economical *relationship* was now established between the Father and the Son—the Father considered as the Appointer of the Everlasting Covenant, the Son as the God-man Mediator, the Head and Surety of His people. Now it was that the Father became Christ’s “Lord” (Psa 16:2, as is evident from vv. 9, 11; Micah 5:4), and now it was that the Son became the Father’s “Servant” (Isa 42:1 and cf. Phi 2:7), undertaking the work appointed—observe that the clause “took upon him the form of a servant” *precedes* “and was made in the likeness of men”! This it is which explains His own utterance, “as the Father *gave me commandment*, even so I do” (Joh 14:31 and cf. 10:18, 12:49). This it is which accounts for His declaration, “My Father is greater than I” (Joh 14:28), wherein

our Saviour was speaking with reference to the covenant-engagement which existed between the Father and Himself.

4. Christ died in fulfillment of the covenant's requirements. It was absolutely impossible that an innocent person, absolutely considered as such, should suffer under the sentence and curse of the law, for the law denounced no punishment on any such person. Guilt and punishment are related, and where the former is not, the latter cannot be. It was because the Holy One of God was *relatively* guilty, by the sins of the elect being imputed to Him, that He could righteously be smitten in their stead. Yet even that had not been possible unless the spotless Substitute had first assumed the office of the Suretyship, and that, in turn, was only legally valid because of Christ's federal Headship with His people. The sacrifice of Christ owes all its validity from the covenant—the holy and blessed Trinity, by counsel and oath, having appointed it to be the true and only propitiation for sin.

So too it is utterly impossible for us to form any clear and adequate idea of what the Lord of Glory died to achieve if we have no real knowledge of the agreement in fulfillment of which His death took place. What is popularly taught upon the subject today is that the atonement of Christ has merely *provided an opportunity* for men to be saved, that it has opened the way for God to justly pardon any and all who avail themselves of His gracious provisions. But that is only a part of the truth, and by no means the most important and blessed part of it. The grand fact is that Christ's death was the *completion* of His agreement with the Father, which guarantees the salvation of all who were named in it—not one for whom He died can possibly miss heaven, John 6:39. This leads us to consider:

5. That on the ground of Christ's willingness to perform the work stipulated in the Covenant, certain *promises* were made to Him by the Father. First, promises concerning Himself and second, promises concerning His people. The promises which concerned the Mediator Himself may be summarized thus. First, He was assured of divine endowment for this discharge of all the specifications of the covenant, Isaiah 11:1-3; 61:1 and cf. John 8:29. Second, He was guaranteed the divine protection under the execution of His work, Isaiah 42:6, Zechariah 3:8-9 and cf. John 10:18. Third, He was promised the divine assistance unto a successful conclusion, Isaiah 42:4; 49:8-10 and cf. John 17:4. Fourth, those promises were given to Christ for the stay of His heart, to be pleaded by Him, Psalms 89:26; 2:8; and this He did, Isaiah 50:8-10 and cf. Hebrews 2:13. Fifth, Christ was assured of success of His undertaking and a reward for the same, Isaiah 53:10-11, Psalms 89:27-29, 110:1-3 and cf. Philippians 2:9-11. Christ also received promises concerning His people. First, that He should receive gifts for them, Psalm 68:18 and cf. Ephesians 4:10-11. Second, that God would make them willing to receive Him as their Lord, Psalm 110:3 and cf. John 6:44. Third, that eternal life should be theirs, Psalm 133:3 and cf. Titus 1:2. Fourth, that a seed should serve Him, proclaim His righteousness, and declare what He had done for them, Psalm 22:30-31. Fifth, that kings and princes should worship Him, Isaiah 49:7.

Finally, let it be pointed out that this compact made between the Father and the Son on behalf of the whole election of grace is variously designated. It is called an "*everlasting covenant*" (Isa 55:3) to denote the perpetuity of it, and because the blessings in it devised in eternity past will endure forever. It is called a "*covenant of peace*" (Eze 34:25; 37:26) because it secures reconciliation with God, for Adam's transgression produced enmity, but by Christ the enmity has been removed (Eph 2:16), and therefore He is denominated the "Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6). It is called the "*covenant of life*" (Mal 2:5), in contrast from the covenant of works which issued in death, and because life is the principal thing pledged in it, Titus 1:2. It is called the "*holy covenant*" (Luk 1:72), not only because it was made by and between the Persons of the Holy

Trinity, but also because it secures the holiness of the divine character and provides for the holiness of God's people. It is called a "*better* testament" (Heb 7:22) in contrast from the Sinaiatic arrangement, wherein the national prosperity of Israel was left contingent on *their own* works.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Carson on Esther (Part Nine)

This history, that has been thought by some unworthy of a place among the inspired writings, discovers, when attentively considered, the most surprising series of events brought about without a miracle, that ever was exhibited to the consideration of the human mind. Among the most admired works of genius, of all ages and countries, we will not find that the invention of man has been able to form a story, and connect a series of surprising events, like this true history. Homer, and Virgil, and Milton, and all the writers of epic poetry, have been obliged to use supernatural agency upon all critical occasions. To interest their readers, they must depart from the ordinary course of nature, and employ means that never really existed. Gods, and demons, and muses, are so necessary to the poet, that they still have their impression on the phraseology of poetry. If you prevent him from invoking the inspirations of his muse, from conversing familiarly with Apollo and the nine, from mounting to the top of Parnassus, and from drinking of the Pierian spring, you deprive him of the chief resources of his art.

But the book of Esther presents us with the most interesting and surprising narrative. It gives us a series of wonders in producing danger and deliverance, yet the means employed are so much in the ordinary course of nature, that a careless reader scarcely perceives the hand of the Lord. Every event appears the natural and obvious result of the situation in which it is produced, but to create and combine these situations is as truly a work of divine wisdom and power, as to create the world or to fix the laws of nature. It is *thus* God rules the world. He is continually working, yet blind men perceive Him not. Nature or chance is worshipped instead of Him, whose power is necessary to the life, motion, and existence of every being.

This book, then, whose inspiration has lately been called into question by ignorance, speaking from the chair of learning, commends its claims to me, in the most convincing manner, by its own internal evidence. No human pen could have produced it. The characteristic feature which I have pointed out proves it to be a child of God. Had man been its author, it would have been crowded with miracles. I challenge the world to produce anything resembling it in this point, from the writings of uninspired men.

There is another feature in this history that proves it to be of heavenly birth. *There is no instance in which it gratifies mere curiosity.* While it informs us of facts, it informs us no farther than they contribute to the design of the Holy Spirit, and are important for instruction. In this feature, it shows its resemblance to the teaching of our Lord, and to the writings of the apostles. So far from gratifying idle curiosity, our Lord declined compliance with respect to some points in

which human wisdom would think it important to be informed. His communications manifest a striking reserve, and even when pressed, He could not be induced to reply to any curious questions. In the writings of the evangelists and the apostles, how often do we wish that they had been a little more communicative. And, assuredly, had they spoken from their own wisdom, they would have made a larger Bible.

Now, with this in his view, let anyone read the book of Esther. In how many points do we wish more information! Facts are stated simply, where we would wish to see them standing in connection with their origin. To see this argument illustrated in a striking light, let anyone cast his eye over Gill's Commentary on this book, that he may see, from the Talmuds and Rabbinical writings, the additional information that human wisdom seeks in vain in the Book of God. There is not one point interesting to curiosity but what is supplied by their traditions or their conjectures. Had the book of Esther been written by the wisdom of men, it would have manifested its origin by gratifying curiosity in a similar way. Let us illustrate this remark by a reference to a few particulars in this history. The first I shall mention is the account of Mordecai's conduct in reference to the marriage of Esther. How human wisdom endeavours to justify or excuse him in this business, may be seen by looking into almost any of the commentaries. But this history relates the fact, without any observation either in justification or condemnation of him. We are left to acquit or blame him, according to the light of the Scriptures.

With respect to the conspiracy against the life of the king, who is it that would not wish a little more information? What uninspired writer would not have given us at least a sketch of the cause of the discontent of the conspirators, and of the means by which it was discovered to Mordecai? What a human author would have done on this subject, we may see from what human wisdom has actually supplied. Dr. Gill tells us that the Jewish writers say that the two conspirators were Tarsians, and spake in the Tarsian language, supposing that Mordecai did not understand it, but that he being skilled in languages, understood what they were saying. According to Josephus, it was discovered to Mordecai by Barnabazus, a servant of one of the chamberlains. The latter Targum says that it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit of God speaking by the writer of the book of Esther, deigns not to inform us how Mordecai came to know the matter. He only declares that the thing was known to Mordecai.

The account of the rise of Haman affords us another specimen of this divine wisdom. In giving an account of the rise of a favourite, every historian informs us of the ground of his acceptance with his sovereign, but not one word on this heard here. We are merely told, "After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him" (Est 3:1).

Whether the conduct of Mordecai, in refusing to reverence Haman, was blamable or justifiable, and the grounds on which he acted, are things that no human author would have overlooked. But whether he was right or wrong, or what was the principle on which he refused obedience, in this instance, to the royal mandate, this book says nothing. It merely states the fact, "But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence" (Est 3:2). In order to justify him, the Targum and Aben Ezra say that Haman had a statue erected to himself and had images painted on his clothes. Dr. Gill, who does not rely on this, strains hard to make out a good case for his client from the passage itself, and from conjecture. He thinks Haman claimed divine honours, because they were given to the Persian kings, and *might have been given to their favourites*. But this 'might have been' is a very bad foundation for an argument, though it is sufficient to remove a difficulty in a case that is attested by other credible testimony. This disposition to acquit the hero in an interesting narrative, in every part of his conduct, whatever may be its success in this

instance, proves clearly that if the writer had not been guided by divine wisdom, he would have given us a few remarks in justification of Mordecai.

The last instance to which I shall allude is the account of the affair that brought Mordecai into royal notice. We are not told what diverted the monarch from sleeping, nor what induced him to call for the book of the chronicles of his kingdom, nor what led to the reading of one passage more than another. Human wisdom would have gratified us on all these points, but the Spirit of God says no more than, "On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus" (Est 6:1-2).

But though I perceive internal evidence in this book, confirming its authenticity and inspiration, I do not submit to the dogma on which some modern critics seem to act, that the authority of the canon is not sufficient to entitle a book to be admitted to the rank of inspiration, and that it is necessary for each book to be separately tried on the independent evidence from its own contents. Modern critics, in acting on this principle, resemble the lawyers who excite litigation in order to obtain clients. They have an opportunity of displaying the treasures of their learning, and the reach of their ingenuity, in defending the claims of Scripture without the authority of the canon. In judging of this internal evidence, they lay down first principles that are not entitled to that rank, and overlook first principles that demand universal respect. A first principle of the latter description is that testimony is a sound source of evidence, and that the books of Scripture are to be received on the authority of the canon. In ascertaining whether the book of Esther, among other books, is inspired, we have to inquire, Was it in the collection called Scripture in the days of our Lord? If it was, its inspiration is past dispute. Jesus Christ recognized the Jewish Scripture as the Word of God. The apostle Paul represents it as one of the chief privileges of the Jews, that they are the depositories to whom were entrusted the oracles of God, and neither the apostles nor their Master charged them with unfaithfulness in their trust. Now, the book of Esther, as Dr. Gill observes, has been generally received as canonical, both by Jews and Christians. "It stands," he says, "in Origen's catalogue of the books of the Old Testament; nor is it any material objection, that it appears not in the catalogue of Melita, since in that list is comprehended under Ezra, not Nehemiah only, but Esther also, which Jerome mentions along with it."

As in rejecting the inspiration of this book, some modern theologians disclaim a first principle entitled to the most confident reception, so they admit some first principles that are mere fragments of the imagination. Why is the book of Esther denied as a book of Scripture? Because it has not the name of God in its whole compass. Here it is taken as a first principle, that no book can be inspired, that does not contain the name of God. But where have they got this axiom? It is not self-evident, nor asserted by any portion of Scripture, and is therefore entitled to no respect. Whether a book may be inspired, though the name of God is not mentioned in it, depends not on any self-evident first principles, but on matter of fact. And matter of fact determines in this instance, that a book may be inspired, although it does not express the name of God.

This objection, though it affects an appearance of wisdom, manifests a very inadequate conception of the nature of the Word of God. It considers every book in the collection as an independent whole, standing unconnected with the other books. But the Bible is like the human body, all the books together form one whole and there is no reason that one book should serve the place of another more than that the hand or the foot should perform the duty of the eye or of the ear. It is enough if the whole will of God is learned from the Book as a whole. If it is contended

that every book of Scripture *must* contain the name of God, a like demand may be made with respect to every chapter, or any small division. The prophecy of Obadiah contains but one chapter—must it prove its divine origin by containing a whole body of divinity? Let the Christian form his views of the characteristics of Scripture from itself, and not from the arbitrary conceits of his own mind.

But if God is not expressly named in this book, He is most evidently referred to by periphrasis, and the strongest confidence in Him is manifested by Mordecai. The faith of that illustrious servant of God is among the most distinguished examples that Scripture affords. “Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (4:13-14). Is not this a reference to God and confidence in Him as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? “*From another place.*” Can there be any doubt as to the place from which he expected deliverance? Is not this an obvious reference *to God*? Does not this reasoning to persuade Esther express the fullest confidence that the Jews would be eventually delivered, though the danger was so great and so inevitable, that no human eye could discern the means of preservation, should not Esther undertake the intercession? As Abraham counted Him faithful who had promised, and believed that though Isaac should die on the altar, he should by him be the father of the Messiah, so Mordecai believed that when every apparent means of safety failed, God would on this occasion be the Deliverer of Israel. Is it not from the retributive justice of God that he threatens destruction to Esther and her father’s house, should she decline the intercession through unbelief? The very Providence that is illustrated in this book is exhibited in the faith of Mordecai. He looked for deliverance through means, and if all apparent means should fail, still he believed that Providence would raise up means.

How clearly and strongly is this view of Providence expressed in the question to Esther, “And who knoweth whether thou are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” He justly concluded, from the occurrence of such a danger, that the reason why Providence had raised her to the rank of queen, was to be the deliverer of her people. Mordecai’s view of Providence is that which is inculcated in all the wonderful events of this singular narrative. It is the view of Providence which I wish to press on all my brethren in Christ. If times of trouble are before us, what better preparation for it, than the study of the book of Esther? If the great Antichrist, under any form, is yet to mediate the destruction of the whole Israel of God—if there is any just apprehension from the prophecies of Scripture that great calamities are still before the Church of Christ, ought not every Christian to be nourishing his faith with this wonderful display of Providence, as the Deliverer of those who put their trust in Him? Surely there can be no harm in watchfulness and apprehension, when the enemies of the cross are so rapidly increasing, and when indecision and lukewarmness so fearfully characterize the great body of the people of God. All the other symptoms of danger are not so dreadfully alarming as that spurious liberality that begins to look with complaisance on the enemies of Christ, an affectation of that love of man that manifests disaffection to some parts of the character of God.

Esther also manifests confidence in God, and a resolution to die for His people, if that should be the result of her application in their favour. She approaches the king, not confiding in her charms, nor hoping to escape destruction from the love or pity of a husband, but in the way of *divine appointment*, in the time of danger, by *much fasting and prayer*. This is an exhibition of a true servant of God. The power of Jehovah, and the love of His people, are strongly manifested in

the conduct of these two illustrious Israelites. If God is not mentioned by name, He is seen in all their conduct.

In the exhibition of the conduct of Esther on this occasion, we have a strong internal evidence of inspiration. Had human wisdom formed a heroine, it would have been likely to represent her from the first moment as intrepid and ready to encounter the greatest dangers with more than masculine bravery. But Esther is not presented to us in this light by this history. She comes before us in the usual character of her sex, and as in the ordinary attainments in the divine life. She at first declines the hazardous undertaking for fear of losing her life. Her timidity is overcome by such arguments as ought to influence a believer in the God of Abraham, and she finally displays resignation and confidence though not altogether unmixed with fear. Such is the usual conduct, such is the usual confidence, of the people of God.

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

7. Its Objects

We have now reached a point in our discussion of this mighty theme where it is timely for us to ask the question, *Who are the ones* that God justifies? The answer to that question will necessarily vary according to the mental position we occupy. From the standpoint of God's eternal decrees the reply must be, *God's elect*, Romans 8:33. From the standpoint of the effects produced by quickening operations of the Holy Spirit the reply must be, *those who believe*, Acts 13:39. But from the standpoint of what they are, considered in themselves, the reply must be, *the ungodly*, Romans 4:5. The persons are the same, yet contemplated in three different relations. But here a difficulty presents itself—If faith be essential in order to justification and if a fallen sinner must be quickened by the Holy Spirit before he can believe, then with what propriety can a regenerated person, with the spiritual grace of faith already in his heart, be described as “ungodly”?

The difficulty pointed out above is self-created. It issues from confounding things which differ radically. It is the result of bringing in the *experimental* state of the person justified, when justification has to do only with his *judicial* status. We would emphasize once more the vital importance of keeping quite distinct in our minds the objective and subjective aspects of truth, the legal and the experimental—unless this be steadily done, nought but confusion and mistakes can mark our thinking. When contemplating what he is *in himself*, considered alone, even the Christian mournfully cries, “O wretched man that I am” (Rom 8:24), but when he views himself *in Christ*, as justified from all things, he triumphantly exclaims, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect!” (Rom 8:33).

Above, we have pointed out that from the viewpoint of God's eternal decrees the question, “Who are the ones whom God justifies?” must be “the elect.” And this brings us to a point on which some eminent Calvinists have erred, or at least, have expressed themselves faultily. Some

of the older theologians, when expounding this doctrine, contended for the *eternal justification* of the elect, affirming that God pronounced them righteous before the foundation of the world, and that their justification was then actual and complete, remaining so throughout their history in time, even during the days of their unregeneracy and unbelief, and that the only difference their faith made was in *making manifest* God's eternal justification in their consciences. This is a serious mistake, resulting (again) from failure to distinguish between things which differ.

As an *immanent* act of God's mind, in which *all* things (which are to us past, present, and future) were cognized by Him, the elect might be said to be justified from all eternity. And as an *immutable* act of God's will, which cannot be frustrated, the same may be predicated again. But as an actual, formal, historical sentence, pronounced by God upon us, not so. We must distinguish between God's looking upon the elect in the *purpose* of his grace, and the objects of justification lying under the sentence of the law. In the former, He *loved* His people with an everlasting love (Jer 31:3), in the latter, we were "by nature the children of *wrath*, even as others" (Eph 2:3). Until they believe, every descendant of Adam is "condemned already" (Joh 3:18) and to be under God's condemnation is the very opposite of being justified.

In his ponderous treatise on justification, the Puritan Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680), made clear some vital distinctions, which if carefully observed will preserve us from error on this point. "1. In the everlasting covenant. We may say of all spiritual blessings in Christ, what is said of Christ Himself, that their 'goings forth are from everlasting' (Mic 5:2). Justified then we were when first elected, though not in our own persons, yet in our Head (Eph 1:3). 2. There is a farther act of justifying us, which passed from God towards us in Christ, upon His payment and performance at His resurrection (Rom 4:25, 1Ti 3:16). 3. But these two acts of justification are wholly out of us, immanent acts in God, and though they concern us and are *towards* us, yet not acts of God *upon* us, they being performed towards us not as actually existing in ourselves, but only as existing in our Head, who covenanted for us and represented us: so as though by those acts we are *estated* into a right and title to justification, yet the benefit and possession of that estate we have not without a farther act being passed upon us."

Before regeneration we are justified by existing in our Head only, as a feoffee, held in trust for us, as children under age. In addition to which, we "are to be in our own persons, though still through Christ, possessed of it, and to have all the deeds and evidences of it committed to the custody and apprehension of our faith. We are in our own persons made true owners and enjoyers of it, which is immediately done at that instant when we first believe; which act (of God) is the completion and accomplishment of the former two, and is that grand and famous justification by faith which the Scripture so much inculcates—note the 'now' in Romans 5:9, 11; 8:1!...God doth judge and pronounce His elect ungodly and unjustified till they believe" (Ibid.)

God's elect enter this world in precisely the same condition and circumstances as do the non-elect. They are "by nature the children of *wrath*, *even as others*" (Eph 2:3), that is, they are under the condemnation of their original sin in Adam (Rom 5:12, 18-19), and they are under the curse of God's law because of their own constant transgressions of it (Gal 3:10). The sword of divine justice is suspended over their heads and the Scriptures denounce them as rebels against the Most High. As yet, there is nothing whatever to distinguish them from those who are "fitted to destruction" (Rom 9:22). Their state is woeful to the last degree, their situation perilous beyond words, and when the Holy Spirit awakens them from the sleep of death, the first message which falls upon their ears is, "Flee from the *wrath* to come" (Luk 3:7). But how and whither, they, as yet, know not. Then it is they are ready for the message of the Gospel.

Let us turn now to the more immediate answer to our opening inquiry, Who are the ones that God justifies? A definite reply is given in Romans 4:5, “Him that justifieth the”—whom? the holy, the faithful, the fruitful? no, the very reverse: “Him that justifieth *the ungodly*.” What a strong, bold, and startling word is this! It becomes yet more emphatic when we observe what precedes:

“But to him *that worketh not*, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly” (Rom 4:5). The subjects of justification, then, are viewed in themselves, apart from Christ, as not only destitute of a perfect righteousness, but as having *no* acceptable works to their account. They are denominated, and considered as *ungodly* when the sentence of justification is pronounced upon them. The mere *sinner* is the subject on which grace is magnified, toward which grace reigns in justification!

“To say, he who *worketh not* is justified through believing, is to say that his works, whatever they be, have *no* influence in his justification, nor hath God, in justifying him, any respect unto them. Wherefore he *alone* who worketh not, is the subject of justification, the person to be justified. That is, God considereth no man’s works, no man’s duties of obedience, in his justification; seeing we are justified *freely* by His grace” (John Owen, 1616-1683). Those whom God, in His transcendent mercy, justifies, are not the obedient, but the disobedient—not those who have been loyal and loving subjects of His righteous government, but they who have stoutly defied Him and trampled His laws beneath their feet. Those whom God justifies are lost sinners, lying in a state of defection from Him, under a loss of original righteousness (in Adam) and by their own transgressions brought in guilty before His tribunal (Rom 3:19). They are those who by character and conduct have *no* claim upon divine blessing, and deserve nought but unsparing judgment at God’s hand.

“Him that justifieth *the ungodly*” (Rom 4:5). It is deplorable to see how many able commentators have weakened the force of this by affirming that, while the subject of justification *is* “ungodly” up to the time of his justification, he is *not* so at the moment of justification itself. They argue that, inasmuch as the subject of justification is *a believer* at the moment of his justification and that believing presupposes regeneration—a work of divine grace wrought in the heart—he could not be designated “ungodly.” This seeming difficulty is at once removed by calling to mind that justification is entirely a *law* matter and not an experimental thing at all. In the sight of God’s law, *every* one whom God justifies *is* “ungodly” until Christ’s righteousness is made over to him. The awful sentence “ungodly” rests as truly upon the purest virgin as much as it does upon the foulest prostitute until God imputes Christ’s obedience to her.

“Him that justifieth the ungodly” (Rom 4:5). These words cannot mean less than that God, in the act of justification, has no regard whatever to any thing good resting to the credit of the person He justifies. They declare, emphatically, that immediately prior to that divine act, God beholds the subject *only* as unrighteous, ungodly, wicked, so that no good, either in or by the person justified, can possibly be the ground on which or the reason for which He justifies him. This is further evident from the words, “to him that worketh not”—that this includes not only works which the ceremonial law required, but *all works* of morality and godliness, appear from the fact that the same person who is said to “work not” is designated “ungodly.” Finally, seeing that the faith which belongs to justification is here said to be “counted for [or “*unto*”] righteousness,” it is clear that the person to whom “righteousness” *is* imputed, *is destitute* of righteousness in himself.

A parallel passage to the one which has just been before us is found in Isaiah 43. There we hear God saying, “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will

not remember thy sins” (Isa 43:25). And to whom does God say this? To those who had sincerely endeavoured to please Him? To those who, though they had occasionally been overtaken in a fault, had, in the main, served Him faithfully? No, indeed, very far from it. Instead, in the immediate context we find Him saying to them, “But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel...Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast *wearied me with thine iniquities*” (Isa 43:22, 24). They were, then, thoroughly “ungodly,” yet *to them* the Lord declared, “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions”—why? Because of something good in them or from them? No, “for mine own sake” (Isa 43:25).

Further confirmation of what has been before us in Romans 4:5 is found in both what immediately precedes and what follows. In verses 1-3, the case of Abraham is considered, and the proof given that *he* was *not* “justified by works,” but on the ground of righteousness being imputed to him on his believing. “Now if a person of such victorious faith, exalted piety, and amazing obedience as his was, did not obtain acceptance with God on account of his own duties, but by an imputed righteousness; who shall pretend to an interest in the heavenly blessing, in virtue of his own sincere endeavors, or pious performances?—performances not fit to be named, in comparison with those that adorned the conduct and character of *JEHOVAH’s friend*” (Abraham Booth, 1734-1806).

Having shown that the father of all believers was regarded by the Lord as an “ungodly” person, having no good works to his credit at the moment of his justification, the apostle next cited David’s description of the truly blessed man. “And how does the royal Psalmist describe him? To what does he attribute his acceptance with God? To an inherent or to an imputed righteousness? Does he represent him as attaining the happy state, and as enjoying the precious privilege, in consequence of performing sincere obedience and of keeping the law to the best of his power? No such thing. His words are, ‘Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin’ (Rom 4:7-9). The blessed man is here described as one who is, in himself, a polluted creature, and a guilty criminal. As one who, before grace made the difference, was on a level with the rest of mankind; equally unworthy, and equally wretched: and the sacred penman informs us that all his blessedness arises from an *imputed* righteousness” (A. Booth).

“Him that justifieth the ungodly” (Rom 4:5). Here is the very heart of the Gospel. Many have argued that God can only pronounce just, and treat as such, those who are inherently righteous, but if this was so, what good news would there be for sinful men? Enemies of the truth insist that for God to pronounce just those whom His law condemns would be a judicial fiction. But Romans 4:5 makes known a divine *miracle*, something only God could have achieved. The miracle announced by the Gospel is that God comes to the ungodly with a mercy that is righteous, and in spite of all their depravity and rebellion, enables them through faith (on the ground of *Christ’s* righteousness) to enter into a new and blessed relation with Himself.

The Scriptures speak of mercy, but it is not mercy coming in to make up the deficiencies and forgive the slips of the virtuous, but mercy extended *through Christ* to the *chief of sinners*. The Gospel which proclaims mercy through the atonement of the Lord Jesus is distinguished from every religious system of man, by holding out salvation to *the guiltiest* of the human race, through faith in the blood of the Redeemer. God’s Son came into this world not only to save sinners, but even *the chief of sinners*, the worst of His enemies. Mercy is extended freely to the most violent and determined rebel. Here, and here only, is a refuge for the *guilty*. Is the trembling reader

conscious that he is a *great* sinner, then *that* is the very reason why you should come to Christ—the greater your sins, the greater your need of the Saviour.

There are some who appear to think that Christ is a Physician who can cure only such patients as are not dangerously ill, that there are some cases so desperate as to be incurable, beyond His skill. What an affront to His power, what a denial of His sufficiency! Where can a more extreme case be found than that of the thief on the cross? He was at the very point of death, on the very brink of hell! A guilty criminal, an incorrigible outlaw, justly condemned even by men. He had reviled the Saviour suffering by his side. Yet, at the end, he turned to Him and said, “Lord, remember me.” Was his plea refused? Did the Physician of souls regard him as a hopeless case? No, blessed be His name, He at once responded “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” *Only unbelief* shuts the vilest out of heaven.

“Him that justifieth *the ungodly*” (Rom 4:5). And how can the thrice holy God *righteously* do such a thing? Because “*Christ died for the UNGODLY*” (Rom 5:6). God’s righteous grace comes to us through the law-honouring, justice-satisfying, sin-atoning work of the Lord Jesus! Here, then, is the very essence of the Gospel—the proclamation of God’s amazing *grace*, the declaration of divine *bounty*, altogether irrespective of human worth or merit. In the great satisfaction of His Son, God has “*brought near HIS righteousness*” see Isa 46:13. “We do not need to go up to heaven for it, that would imply Christ had never come down. Nor do we need to go down to the depths of the earth for it, that would say Christ had never been buried and had never risen. It is *near*. We do not need to exert ourselves to bring it near, nor do anything to attract it towards us. It *is near*...The office of faith is not to work, but to *cease working*, not to do anything, but to own that *all is done*” (Andrew Bonar, 1810-1892).

Faith is the one link between the sinner and the Saviour. Not faith as a work, which must be properly performed to qualify us for pardon. Not faith as a religious duty, which must be gone through according to certain rules in order to induce Christ to give us the benefits of His finished work. No, but faith simply extended *as an empty hand*, to receive everything from Christ for nothing. Reader, you may be the very “*chief of sinners*,” yet is your case not hopeless. You may have sinned against much light, great privileges, exceptional opportunities. You may have broken every one of the Ten Commandments in thought, word, and deed. Your body may be filled with disease from wickedness, your head white with the winter of old age. You may already have one foot in hell and yet even now, if you but take your place alongside of the dying thief, and trust in the *divine efficacy* of the precious blood of the Lamb, *you* shall be plucked as a brand from the burning. God “justifieth *the ungodly*.” Hallelujah! If He did not, the writer had been in hell long ago.

DIVINE GUIDANCE

It is well for those who are sensible of their own weakness and fallibility, and of the difficulties with which they are surrounded in life, that the Lord has promised to guide His people with His eye, and to cause them to hear a word behind them, saying, “This is the way, walk ye in

it,” when they are in danger of turning aside either to the right hand or to the left. For this purpose He has given us the written Word to be a lamp to our feet and encouraged us to pray for the teaching of His Holy Spirit, that we may rightly understand and apply it. It is, however, too often seen, that many widely deviate from the path of duty, and commit gross and perplexing mistakes, while they profess a sincere desire to know the will of God, and think they have His warrant and authority. This must certainly be owing to misapplication of the rule by which they judge, since the rule itself is infallible, and the promise sure. The Scriptures cannot deceive us if rightly understood, but they may, if perverted, prove the occasion of confirming us in a mistake. The Holy Spirit cannot mislead those who are under His influence, but we may suppose that we are so, when we are not. It may not be unseasonable to offer a few thoughts upon a subject of great importance to the peace of our minds, and to the honour of our holy profession.

Many have been deceived as to what they ought to do, or in forming a judgment beforehand of events in which they are nearly (closely) concerned, by expecting direction in ways which the Lord has not warranted. I shall mention some of the principal of these, for it is not easy to enumerate them all.

Some persons, when two or more things have been in view, and they could not immediately determine which to prefer, have committed their case to the Lord by prayer, and have proceeded to cast lots—taking it for granted, that after such a solemn appeal, the turning up of the lot might be safely rested in as an answer from God. It is true, the Scripture, and indeed, right reason assures us, that the Lord disposes the lot, and there are several cases recorded in the Old Testament, in which lots were used by divine appointment. But I think neither these, nor the choosing Matthias by lot to the apostleship, are proper precedents for our conduct. In the division of the land of Canaan, in the affair of Achan, and in the nomination of Saul to the kingdom, recourse was had to lots by God’s express command. The instance of Matthias likewise was singular, such as can never happen again, namely, the choice of an apostle, who would not have been on a par with the rest, who were chosen immediately by the Lord, unless He had been pleased to interpose in some extraordinary way, and all these were before the canon of Scripture was completed, and before the full descent and communication of the Holy Spirit, who was promised to dwell with the church to the end of time. Under the New Testament dispensation, we are invited to come boldly to the throne of grace, to make our request known to the Lord, and to cast our cares upon Him, but we have neither precept or promise respecting the use of lots, and to have recourse to them *without* His appointment, seems to be tempting Him rather than honouring Him, and to savour more of presumption than dependence. The effects likewise of this expedient have often been unhappy and hurtful. A sufficient proof how little it is to be trusted to as a guide of our conduct.

Others, when in doubt, have opened the Bible at a venture, and expected to find something to direct them in the first verse they should cast their eye upon. It is no small discredit to their practice, that the heathens who knew not the Bible, used some of their favourite books in the same way, and grounded their persuasions of what they ought to do, or what should befall them, according to the passage they happened to open upon. Among the Romans, the writings of Virgil were frequently consulted upon these occasions, which gave rise to the well-known expression of the *Sortes Virgilinae*. And indeed Virgil is as well adapted to satisfy inquiries in this way, as the Bible itself, for if people will be governed by the occurrence of a single text of Scripture, without regarding the context, or duly comparing it with the general tenor of the Word of God, and with their own circumstances, they may commit the greatest extravagancies, expect the greatest impossibilities, and contradict the plainest dictates of common sense, while they think they have

the Word of God on their side. Can the opening upon 2 Samuel 7:3, when Nathan said unto David, "Do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee," be sufficient to determine the lawfulness or expediency of actions? Or can a glance of the eye upon our Lord's words to the woman of Canaan, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Mat 15:28), amount to a proof, that the present earnest desire of the mind (whatever it may be) shall be surely accomplished? Yet it is certain that matters, big with important consequences, have been engaged in, and the most sanguine expectations formed, upon no better warrant than dipping (as it is called) upon a text of Scripture.

A sudden strong impression of a text, that seems to have some resemblance to the concern upon the mind, has been accepted by many as an infallible token that they were right, and that things would go just as they would have them. Or on the other hand, if the passage bore a threatening aspect, it has filled them with fears and disquietudes, which they have afterwards found were groundless and unnecessary. These impressions, being more out of their power than their former method, have been generally regarded and trusted to, but have frequently proved no less delusive. It is allowed that such impressions of a precept or a promise, as humble, animate, may comfort the soul by giving it a lively sense of the truth contained in the words, and are both profitable and pleasant, and many of the Lord's people have been instructed and supported (especially in a time of trouble) by some seasonable word of grace applied and sealed by His Spirit with power to their hearts. But if impressions or impulses are received as a voice from heaven, directing to such particular actions as could not be proved to be duties without them, a person may be inwardly misled into great evils, and gross delusions, and many have been so. There is no doubt but the enemy of our souls, if permitted, can furnish us with Scriptures in abundance in this way, and for these purposes.

Some persons judge of the nature and event of their designs by the freedom which they find in prayer. They say they commit their ways to God, seek His direction, and are favoured with much enlargement of spirit, and therefore they cannot doubt but what they have in view is acceptable in the Lord's sight. I would not absolutely reject every plea of this kind, yet without other corroborating evidence I could not admit it in proof of what it is brought for. It is not always easy to determine when we have spiritual freedom in prayer. Self is deceitful and when our hearts are much fixed and bent upon a thing, this may put words and earnestness into our mouths. Too often we first secretly determine for ourselves, and then come to ask counsel of God. In such a disposition, we are ready to catch at everything that may seem to favour our darling scheme, and the Lord, for the detecting and chastisement of our hypocrisy (for hypocrisy it is, though perhaps hardly perceptible to ourselves), may answer us according to our idols, see Ezekiel 14:3-4. Besides, the grace of prayer may be in exercise when the subject-matter of the prayer may be founded upon a mistake, from the intervention of circumstances which we are unacquainted with. Thus, I may have a friend in a distant country. I hope he is alive, I pray for him, and it is my duty to do so. The Lord, by His Spirit, assists His people in what is their present duty. If I am enabled to pray with much liberty for my distant friend, it may be a proof that the Spirit of the Lord is pleased to assist my infirmities, but it is no proof that my friend is certainly alive at the time I am praying for him. And if the next time I pray for him I should find my spirit straitened, I am not to conclude that my friend is dead, and therefore the Lord will not assist me in praying for him any longer.

Once more, a remarkable dream has sometimes been thought as decisive as any of the foregoing methods of knowing the will of God. That many wholesome and seasonable admonitions have been received in dreams, I willingly allow, but though they may be

occasionally noticed, to pay a great attention to dreams, especially to be guided by them, to form our sentiments, conduct our expectations upon them, is superstitious and dangerous. The promises are not made to those who *dream*, but to those who *watch*.

Upon the whole, though the Lord may give to some persons, upon some occasions, a hint or encouragement out of the common way, yet expressly to look for and seek His direction in such things as I have mentioned is unscriptural and ensnaring. I could fill many sheets with a detail of the inconveniences and evils which have followed such a dependence, within the courts of my own observation. I have seen some presuming they were doing God's service while acting in contradiction to His express commands. I have known others infatuated to believe a lie, declaring themselves assured beyond the shadow of a doubt, of things which, after all, never came to pass, and when at length disappointed, Satan has improved the occasion to make them doubt of the plainest and most important truths, and to account their whole former experience a delusion. By these things weak believers have been stumbled, cavils and offences against the Gospel multiplied, and the way of truth evil spoken of.

But how, then, may the Lord's guidance be expected? After what has been premised negatively, the question may be answered in a few words. In general, He guides and directs His people by affording them, in answer to prayer, the light of His Holy Spirit, which enables them to understand and to live the Scriptures. The Word of God is not to be used as a lottery, nor is it designed to instruct us by shreds and scraps, which, detached from their proper places, have no determined import, but it is to furnish us with just *principles*, right *apprehensions*, to regulate our judgments and affections, and thereby to influence and regulate our conduct. They who study the Scriptures in an humble dependence upon divine teaching, are convinced of their own weakness, are taught to make a true estimate of everything around them, are gradually formed into a spirit of submission to the will of God, discover the nature and duties of their several situations and relations in life, and the snares and temptations to which they are exposed. The Word of God dwelling richly in them is a preservative from error, a light to their feet, and a spring of strength and consolation. By treasuring up the doctrines, precepts, promises, examples, and exhortations of Scripture in their minds, and daily comparing them with the rule by which they walk, they grow into an habitual frame of spiritual wisdom, and acquire a gracious taste, which enables them to judge of right and wrong with a degree of readiness and certainty, as a musical ear judges of sounds, and they are seldom mistaken, because they are influenced by the love of Christ which rules in their hearts, and a regard to the glory of God, which are the great objects they have in view.

In particular cases the Lord opens and shuts for them, breaks down walls of difficulty which obstruct their path, or hedges up their way with thorns, when they are in danger of going wrong, by the dispensations of His providence. They know that their concernments are in His hands. They are willing to follow whither and when He leads, but are afraid of going before Him. Therefore they are not impatient. Because they believe, they will not make haste, but wait daily upon Him in prayer, especially when they find their hearts most engaged in any purpose or pursuit, they are most jealous of being deceived by appearances, and dare not move farther or faster than they can perceive His light shining upon their paths. I express at least their *desire*, if not their *attainment*. Thus they *would be*. And though there are seasons when faith languishes, and self too much prevails, this is their general disposition, and the Lord, whom they serve, does not disappoint their expectations: He leads them by a right way, preserves them from a thousand snares, and satisfies them that He is and will be their Guide even unto death.—John Newton (1770).

We heartily commend the above article to the careful attention of those who are exercised about the matter of divine guidance. Its exposure of the foolish, fanatical, and superstitious devices employed by not a few today, when they are undecided as to their line of duty, is timely. The positive side of the subject is capable of and probably needs some amplification, and we hope to write an article thereon for the next issue. The general rule or principle may be stated thus, if *we* are daily concerned in seeking to *please* God in all the details, great and small, of our lives, *He* will not leave us in ignorance of His will concerning us. But if we are accustomed to gratify self and only turn unto God for help in times of difficulty and emergency, then we must not be surprised if He mocks us, and allows us to reap the fruits of our own folly. Our business is to walk in obedient subjection to Christ, and His sure promise is, “He that followeth me *shall not walk in darkness*” (Joh 8:12). Make sure you are sincerely endeavoring *to* “follow” the “example” Christ has left us, and He will not leave you in ignorance or uncertainty as to which step you should take when you come to the parting of the ways.

A PERSONAL WORD

It seems strange that just as the above article is about to be printed, the final paragraph of which was written by us many weeks ago, that we ourselves appear to be now at the “parting of the ways” again. We are not sure at the moment of penning these lines (late in July), but the providential dealings of God with us at this time seem to indicate that He will soon call upon us to strike our tent once more. We are endeavouring to wait upon the Lord, for Him to work in us “both to will and to do his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13), and we shall greatly value the prayer-help of His people that He may be pleased to make *His* way very plain before our face, and mercifully preserve us from being deceived by Satan, or acting from any self-will. God willing, we hope to inform our readers of the sequel. Please earnestly supplicate the God of all grace on our behalf.—A.W.P.



October

THE HOLY SPIRIT

22. The Spirit Convicting (Part 2)

In the preceding article, we sought to point out something of the real and radical difference which exists between that conviction of sin, which many of the unregenerate experience under the common operations of the Spirit, and that conviction of sin which follows His work of quickening and enlightening the hearts of God's elect. We pointed out that in the case of the latter, the conscience is occupied more with sin itself, than with its punishment—with the real *nature* of sin, as rebellion against God—with its exceeding sinfulness, as enmity against God—with the multitude of sins, every action being polluted—with the character and claims of God, as showing the awful disparity there is between Him and us. Where the soul has not only been made to perceive, but also to *feel*—to have a heart-horror and anguish over the same—there is good reason to believe that the work of divine grace has been begun in the soul.

Many other contrasts may be given between that conviction which issues from the common operations of the Spirit in the unregenerate and His special work in the regenerate. The convictions of the former are generally light and uncertain, and of short duration, they are sudden frights which soon subside, whereas those of the latter are deep, pungent, and lasting, being *repeated* more or less frequently throughout life. The former work is more upon the emotions, the latter upon the judgment. The former diminishes in its clarity and efficacy, the latter grows in its intensity and power. The former arises from a consideration of God's justice, the latter are more intense when the heart is occupied with God's goodness. The former springs from a horrified sense of God's power, the latter issues from a reverent view of His holiness.

Unregenerate souls regard eternal punishment as the greatest evil, but the regenerate look upon *sin* as the worst thing there is. The former groan under conscience's presages of damnation. The latter mourn from a sense of their lack of holiness. The greatest longing of the one is to be assured of escape from the wrath to come. The supreme desire of the other is to be delivered from the burden of sin and conformed to the image of Christ. The former, while he may be convicted of many sins, still cherishes the conceit that he has some good points. The latter is painfully conscious that in his flesh there dwelleth *no* good thing and that his best performances are defiled. The former greedily snatches at comfort, for assurance and peace are now regarded as the highest good. The latter fears that he has sinned beyond the hope of forgiveness and is slow to believe the

glad tidings of God's grace. The convictions of the former harden, those of the latter melt and lead to submission. (The above two paragraphs are condensed from the Puritan, Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680).

The great instrument which the Holy Spirit uses in this special work of conviction is *the law*, for that is the one rule which God has given whereby we are to judge of the moral good or evil of actions, and conviction is nothing more or less than the formal impression of sin by the law upon the conscience. Clear proof of this is found in the passages that follow. "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20). It is the design of all laws to impress the understanding with what is to be done, and consequently with man's deviation from them, and so absolutely necessary is the law for this discernment, the Apostle Paul declared, "I had not known sin, but by the law" (Rom 7:7)—its real nature, as opposition to God, its inveterate enmity against Him, its unsuspected lustings within. "The law entered, that the offence [sin] might abound" (Rom 5:20) by deepening and widening the conviction of sin upon the conscience.

Now it is that God holds court in the human conscience and a reckoning is required of the sinner. God will no longer be trifled with, and sin can no longer be scoffed at. Thus a solemn trial begins. The law condemns and the conscience is obliged to acknowledge its guilt. God appears as holy and just and good, but as awfully insulted, and with a dark frown upon His brow. The sinner is made to feel how dreadfully he has sinned against both the justice and goodness of God, and that his evil ways will no longer be tolerated. If the sinner was never solemn before, he is solemn now. Fear and dismay fills his soul, death and destruction seem his inevitable and certain doom. When the Lord Almighty Himself appears in the court of conscience to vindicate His honour, the poor criminal trembles, sighs for mercy, but fears that pardoning mercy cannot justly be granted such a wretch.

Now it is that the Holy Spirit brings to light the hidden things of darkness. The whole past life is made to pass in review before the convicted soul. Now it is that he is made to experimentally realize that "the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb 4:12). Secret things are uncovered, forgotten deeds are recalled—sins of the eyes and sins of the lips, sins against God and sins against man, sins of commission and sins of omission, sins of ignorance and sins against light, are brought before the startled gaze of the enlightened understanding. Sin is now seen in all its excuselessness, filthiness, heinousness, and the soul is overwhelmed with horror and terror.

Whatever step the sinner now takes, all things appear to be against him. His guilt abounds and his soul tremblingly sinks under it, until he feels obliged, in the presence of a heart-searching God, to sign his own death-warrant, or in other words, freely acknowledge that his condemnation is just. This is one of "the solemnities of Zion" see Isa 33:20. As to whether this conviction is experienced at the beginning of the Christian life (which is often, though not always the case), or at a later stage, as to how long the sinner remains under the spirit of bondage see Rom 8:15, as to what extent he feels his wretchedness and ruin, or how deeply he sinks into the mire of despair, varies in different cases. God is absolute sovereign and here too He acts as He sees good. But to this point every quickened soul is brought—to see the spirituality of God's law, to hear its condemning sentence, to feel his case is hopeless so far as all self-help is concerned.

Here is the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 30:6, "The LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart." The blessed Spirit uses the sharp knife of the law, pierces the conscience, and convicts of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. By this divine operation the hardness of the heart is removed, and

the iniquity of it laid open, the plague and corruption of it discovered, and all is made naked to the soul's view. The sinner is now exceedingly pained over his rebellions against God, is broken down before Him, and is filled with shame, and loathes and abhors himself. "Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer 30:6, 7)—such is, sooner or later, the experience of all God's quickened people.

Of ourselves, we could never be truly convicted of our wretched state, for "the heart is deceitful above all things," and God alone can search it (Jer 17:9). O the amazing grace of the Holy Spirit that *He* should rake into such foul and filthy hearts, amid the dunghill of putrid lusts, of enmity against God, of wickedness unspeakable! What a loathsome work it must be for the *Holy* Spirit to perform! If God the Son humbled Himself to enter the virgin's womb and be born in Bethlehem's manger, does not God the Spirit humble Himself to enter our depraved hearts and stir up their vile contents in order that we may be made conscious thereof! And if praise is due unto the One for the immeasurable humiliation which He endured on our behalf, is not distinctive praise equally due unto the Other for His amazing condescension in undertaking to convict us of *sin*! Thanksgiving, honour and glory forever be ascribed unto Him who operates as "the spirit of judgment" and "the spirit of burning" (Isa 4:4).

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

82. The Family of Faith (11:39-40)

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (vv. 39-40). Several details in these verses call for careful consideration. First, to what does "the promise" here refer to? Second, in what sense had the Old Testament saints "not received" the promise? Third, what is the "better thing" which God provided for us. Fourth, what is here meant by "be made perfect"? Widely different answers have been returned to these questions, and even the most reliable of the commentators are by no means agreed. Therefore it would ill-become us to speak dogmatically, where men of God differ. Instead of wearying the reader with their diverse views, we will expound out text according to what measure of light God has granted us upon it.

As we approach our task, there are several considerations which need to be borne in mind, the observing of which should aid us not a little. First, ascertaining the relation of our text to that which precedes. Second, discovering the exact relation of its several clauses. Third, studying it in the light of the distinctive and dominant theme of the particular epistle in which it occurs. Fourth, weighing its leading terms in connection with their usage in parallel passages. If these four things be duly attended to we ought not to go far wrong in our interpretation. Our purpose in enumerating them is principally to indicate to your preachers the methods which should be followed in the critical examination of any difficult passage.

As to the connection between our present verses and those which precede, there is no difficulty. The Apostle, having so forcibly and largely set out the virtue and vigour of faith by the admirable workings and fruits thereof, both in doing and in suffering, now gives a general summary—they all “obtained a good report.” The relation of the several clauses of our text to each other may be set out thus—“and these all” refer to the entire company which has been before us in the previous verses—a “good report” is ascribed to them, yet they had not “received the promise”, because God had provided something “better” for the New Testament saints. The dominant theme of Hebrews is the immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism. The leading terms in our text will be pondered in what follows.

“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith” (Heb 11:39). Two things are here in view—the persons spoken of and that which is predicated of them. The reference is to all spoken of in the previous parts of the chapter, and by necessary inference, to all believers before the incarnation of Christ who exhibited a true faith. The words “*these* all” is restrictive, excluding others who had not the faith here mentioned. “Many more than these lived before Christ was exhibited, yea, lived in the time and place that some of these did, yet received no good report. Cain lived and offered a sacrifice with Abel, yet was none of these. Ham was in the ark with Shem, Ishmael in Abraham’s family with Isaac, Esau in the same womb with Jacob, Dathan and Abiram came through the Red Sea with Caleb and Joshua. Many other wicked unbelievers were mixed with believers, yet they obtained not any such good report. Though their outward condition was alike, yet their inward disposition was much different” (William Gouge, 1575-1653).

Thus it is today. There are two widely different classes of people who come under the sound of the Word—those who believe it and those who believe it not. And those of the former class have also to be divided, for while there are a few in whom that Word works effectually in a spiritual way, many have nothing more than a natural faith in its letter. This latter faith—which so many today mistake for a saving one—is merely an intellectual assent to the divine authority of the Bible and to the verities of its contents—like that possessed by most of the Jews of Christ’s day, and which though good so far as it goes, changes not the heart nor issues in a godly life. A supernatural faith, which is wrought in the soul by the operations of the Holy Spirit, issues in supernatural works, such as those attributed unto the men and women mentioned in our chapter. It is a divine principle which enables its possessor to overcome the world, patiently endure the sorest afflictions, and love God and His truth more than life itself.

“Having obtained a good report through faith” (Heb 11:39). Because of their trusting in Christ alone for salvation, and because of their walking in subjection to His revealed will, they received approbation. There is probably a threefold reference in the words now before us. First, unto God’s own testimony which He bore to them. This is found in His Word, where their names receive honourable mention, and where the fruits of their faith are imperishably preserved. Second, to the Spirit’s bearing witness with their spirit that they were the children of God (Rom 8:16), the rejoicing which they had from the testimony of a good conscience (2Co 1:12), this in blessed contrast from the world’s estimate of them, who regarded and treated them as the offscouring of all things. Third, to the esteem in which they were held by the church, their fellow-saints testifying to the unworldliness of their lives. This shows our faith should be evidenced by such good works that it is justified before men.

“Received not the promise” (Heb 11:39). The singular number here implies some pre-eminent excellent thing promised, and this is Jesus Christ, the divine Saviour. He is said to be given according to “the promise” (Act 13:23). God’s “promise” was declared to be fulfilled when He brought Christ forth (Act 13:32-33). In Acts 2:39 and 26:6, Christ is set forth under this term

“promise.” Christ Himself is the prime promise, not only because He was the substance of the first promise given after the Fall (Gen 3:15), but also because He is the complement or accomplishment of all the promises (2Co 1:20). The great promise of God to send His Son, born of a woman, to save His people from their sins, was the object of faith of the church throughout all the generations of the Old Testament era. Therein we may discern the rich grace of God in providing for the spiritual needs of His saints from earliest times.

“Received not the promise” (Heb 11:39). As several times before in the epistle, “promise” is here used metonymically for the thing promised, and this it is which explains the “received not.” As John Owen (1616-1683) expressed it, “The promise as a faithful engagement of future good, they received, but the good thing itself was not in their days exhibited.” They did not live to see historically accomplished that which their faith specifically embraced. As the Lord Jesus declared to His disciples, “Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them” (Mat 13:17). Herein we behold the strength and perseverance of faith, that they continued to look, unwaveringly, for so many centuries for Him that should come, and came not in their lifetime.

“God having provided some better thing for us” (Heb 11:40) The verb here looks back to the eternal counsels of divine grace, to the Everlasting Covenant. It is a word which denotes God’s determination, designation, and appointment of Christ to be the propitiatory sacrifice, and the exact season for His advent. “When the fulness of the time was come [the season ordained by heaven], God sent forth his Son” (Gal 4:4). Thus it should be clear that the contrast which is pointed in the sentence before us, is that between “the promise” *given* and “the promise” *performed*. It is at that point, and no other, we find the essential difference between the faith of the Old Testament saints and the faith of the New Testament saints—the one looked forward to a Saviour that *was* to come, the other looks back to a Saviour who *has* come.

It seems strange that what is really so obvious and simple should have been regarded by many as obscure and difficult. In his “Great Cloud of Witnesses” E. W. Bullinger (1837-1913) began his comments on this passage by saying, “These verses must be among those to which Peter referred when he said, speaking of Paul’s epistles, there are ‘some things hard to be understood.’ For they confessedly present no small difficulty.” But what is there here which is “hard to be understood”? The very epistle in which this verse occurs supplies a sure key to its correct interpretation. As we have said above, the great theme of it is the immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism, and those of our readers who have followed us through this series of expositions, will recall how many illustrations of this have been before us. Another one is present in 11:39-40, *they* “received not the [fulfillment of] promise,” *we* have—“God having provided some better thing for us,” cf. Heb 7:19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34 for the word “better.”

It is really pathetic and deplorable to see what most of the moderns make of our present verse. In their anxiety to magnify the contrast between the Mosaic and Christian economies, and in their ignorance of much of the contents of the Old Testament Scriptures, they have seized upon these words “God having provided some better thing for us” (Heb 11:40) to bolster up one of their chief errors, and have read into them that which anyone having even a superficial acquaintance with the Psalms and Prophets should have no difficulty in perceiving to be utterly untenable. Some have said that “better thing” which we Christians have is eternal life, others that it is regeneration and the indwelling of the Spirit, others that it is membership in the body of Christ with the heavenly calling that entails—denying that these blessings were enjoyed by any of the Old Testament saints. Such is a fair sample of the rubbish which is now to be found in most of the “ministry,” oral and written, of this degenerate age.

In their crude and arbitrary attempts to rightly divide the word of truth, those calling themselves “dispensationalists” have wrongly divided the family of God. The entire election of grace have God for their Father, Christ for their Saviour, the Holy Spirit for their Comforter. All who are saved, from the beginning to the end of earth’s history, are the objects of God’s everlasting love, share alike in the benefits of Christ’s atonement, and are begotten by the Spirit unto the same inheritance. God communicated to Able the same kind of faith as He does to His children today. Abraham was justified in precisely the same manner as Christians are now (Rom 4). Moses bore the “reproach of Christ,” and had respect unto the identical “recompense of the reward” (Heb 11:26) as is set before us. David was as truly a stranger and pilgrim on earth as we are (Psa 119:19), and looked unto the same eternal pleasures at God’s right hand as we do (Psa 16:11; 23:6).

The worst mistakes made by the “dispensationalists” grow out of their failures at the following points. First, to see the organic union between the Mosaic and Christian economies. Second, to perceive that the “old covenant” and the “new covenant” were but two different administrations under which the blessings of the “Everlasting Covenant” are imparted. Third, to distinguish between the spiritual remnant and the nation itself. The relation between the patriarchal and the Mosaic dispensations and this Christian era may be stated thus—they stood to each other, partly as the beginning does to the end, and partly as the shell does to the kernel. The former were preparatory, the latter is the full development—first the blade (in the patriarchal dispensation), then the ear (the Mosaic), and now the full corn in the ear, in this Christian era. In the former we have the type and shadow. In the latter, the antitype and substance. Christianity is but the full development of what existed in former ages, or a grander exemplification of the truths and principles which were then revealed.

The great fact that the Everlasting Covenant which God made with Christ as the Head of His church formed the basis of all His dealings with His people, and that the terms and blessings of that eternal Charter were being administered by Him under the “old” and “new” covenants, may be illustrated from secular history. In practically every country there are two chief political parties. The policy, and particularly the methods followed, by these rival factions, differ radically, yet though the one may succeed the other in power, and though great changes mark their alternative regimes, and though many diverse laws may be enacted or cancelled from time to time, yet *the fundamental constitution* of the country remains unchanged. Thus it is under the Mosaic and Christian economies. Widely different as they are in many incidental details, nevertheless, God’s moral government is always according to the same fundamental principles of grace and righteousness, mercy and justice, truth and faithfulness, in the one era equally as much as in the other.

The distinction between the regenerated remnant and the unregenerate nation during Old Testament times, is as real and radical as that which now exists between real Christians and the multitude of empty professors with which Christendom abounds. Yea, one is the type of the other. Just as empty professors now possess a “form of godliness,” (2Ti 3:5), but are destitute of its “power,” so the great bulk of the lineal descendants of Abraham were occupied only with the externals of Judaism—witness the scribes and Pharisees of Christ’s day. And just as the lifeless religionists of our time are taken up with the “letter” of the Word and have no experimental acquaintance with its spiritual realities, so the unquickened Israelites of old were engaged with the outward shell of their ritual, but never penetrated to its kernel. There was an election within an election, a remnant who were Jews “inwardly” (Rom 2:29), among the great company surrounding them who were Jews only in name, outwardly.

The spiritual portion of that Old Testament remnant of God's saints was identically the same as that of the Christian's now. They were the recipients of the free gift of grace in Christ (Gen 6:8), as we are. They possessed eternal life (Psa 133:3), as truly as we do. They rejoiced in the knowledge of sins forgiven (Psa 32:1-2), as heartily as we do. They were as really instructed by the Spirit (Neh 9:20), as we are. Nor were they left in total ignorance of the glorious future awaiting them. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country" (Heb 11:13-14). The word for "country" there is not the ordinary one "chora," but "patris," which signifies Homeland or Fatherland—*such* a "country" as one's father dwells in.

The question, then, returns upon us: Seeing the Old Testament saints enjoyed all the essential spiritual blessings of which Christians now partake, *exactly what is* the "better thing" which God "provides for us"? The answer is a *superior administration* of the Everlasting Covenant, (Heb 7:22). In what particular respects? Chiefly in these. First we now have a better view of Christ than the Old Testament saints had. They saw Him, chiefly through types and promises, whereas we view Him in the accomplishments and fulfillment of them. Second, there is now a broader foundation for faith to rest upon. They looked for a Christ who was to come and who would put away their sins. We look at a Christ who has come and who has put away our sins. Third, they were as minors, under teachers and governors, whereas we are in the position, dispensationally, of those who have attained their majority, Galatians 4:1-7. Fourth, there is now a wider outpouring of God's grace. It is no longer confined to an elect remnant in one nation, but reaches out to His favoured people scattered among all nations.

"That they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb 11:26). "The law [or Mosaic economy] made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did" (Heb 7:19). The "perfecting" of a thing consists in the well-finishing of it, and a full accomplishment of all things appertaining thereto. There is no doubt that the ultimate reference of our text is to the eternal glory of the whole family of faith in heaven, yet we believe it also includes the various *degrees* by which that perfection is attained, and the *means* thereunto. They are, first, the taking away of sin—which makes man most imperfect—and the clothing him with the robe of righteousness, in which he may appear perfect before God. These were secured by the life and death of Jesus Christ. In that, the Old Testament saints were not "made perfect *without us*," for their sins and our sins were expiated by the *same* sacrifice, and their persons and our persons are justified by the *same* righteousness.

Second, the subduing of the power of indwelling sin, enabling those justified to walk in the paths of righteousness, which is through the enabling of the Spirit. In this too the Old Testament saints were not (relatively) "made perfect *without us*," as is clear from Psalm 23:4; 51:11 etc. Third, the Spirit enabling those who are united to Christ to stand up against all assaults, and to persevere in a spiritual growth. In this also the Old Testament saints were not "made perfect *without us*," as is evident by a comparison of Psalm 97:10 with 1 Peter 1:5. Fourth, the receiving of the soul to glory, when it leaves the body—this also was common to Old and New Testament saints alike—we are not unmindful of the carnal theory held by some who imagine that prior to the death of Christ, the souls of saints went only to some imaginary Paradise "in the heart of the earth" (Mat 12:40). but this is much too near akin to the subterranean *limbus* of Romanism to merit any refutation.

Fifth, the resurrection of the body. In this the whole family of faith shall share alike, and at the same time, "In Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the

firstfruits; afterward *they that are Christ's* at his coming" (1Co 15:22-23). And *who are "Christ's"*? why, *all* that the Father gave to Him, *all* that He purchased with His blood. God's Word knows nothing of His people being raised in sections at intervals. Sixth, the reunion between the soul and body, which takes place at Christ's appearing. In Hebrews 12:23, the Old Testament saints are referred to as "the *spirits* of just men made perfect," but they are still "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom 8:23). In this too all the redeemed shall share alike, being "caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1Th 4:17).

Seventh, the entrance into eternal glory, when Old and New Testament saints alike shall, all together, "ever be with the Lord" (1Th 4:17). Then shall be completely realized that ancient oracle concerning Shiloh "unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen 49:10). Then shall be fulfilled that mystical word, "I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Mat 8:11). As the Lord Jesus declared, "I lay down my life for the [Old Testament] sheep. And other [New Testament] sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be *one fold* [Greek and R.V.], and one shepherd" (Joh 10:15-16). Then it shall be that Christ will "gather *together in one* the children of God that were scattered abroad" (Joh 11:52)—not only among all nations, but through all dispensations.

In all of these seven degrees mentioned above are the elect of God "made perfect" (Heb 11:40). In all of them shall the Old Testament and New Testament saints share alike. All shall come "in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph 4:13). God deferred the resurrection and final glorification of the Old Testament saints until the saints of this New Testament era should be called out and gathered into the one Body, "God has so arranged matters, that the complete accomplishment of the promise, both to the Old and New Testament believers, shall *take place together*; 'they' shall be made perfect, but not without 'us'; we and they shall attain perfection together" (John Brown, 1784-1858). Thus to "be made perfect" is here the equivalent of *receiving* (the full accomplishment of) the promise, or enjoying together the complete realization of the "better thing." Verses 39 and 40 are inseparably linked together, and the language used in the one serves to interpret that employed in the other, both being coloured by the dominant theme of this epistle.

Thus our understanding of these two verses which have occasioned so much trouble to many of the commentators, is as follows. First, though the Old Testament saints lived under an inferior administration of the Everlasting Covenant than we do, nevertheless, they "obtained a good report" (Heb 11:39) and went to heaven at death. Second, the "better thing" which God has provided for the New Testament saints is a superior administration of the Everlasting Covenant, that is, we enjoy superior *means of* grace to what they had. Spiritual and heavenly blessings were presented unto the church in the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations under temporal and earthly images—Canaan being a figure of heaven, Christ and His atonement being set forth under symbolic ceremonies and obscure ordinances. As the substance exceeds the shadows, so is the state of the church under the "new" covenant superior to its state under the "old." Third, God has ordered that the entire family of faith shall be "perfected" by the same sacrifice, and shall together enjoy its purchased blessings throughout an endless eternity.

The *practical application* of the whole of the above unto our hearts, was well put by John Calvin, "If they on whom the light of grace had not as yet so brightly shone, displayed so great a constancy in and during evils, what ought the full brightness of the Gospel to produce in us! A

small spark of light led them to heaven; when the sun of righteousness shines over us, with what pretense can we excuse ourselves if we still cleave to the earth?”

THE LIFE OF DAVID

34. His Coronation

The long-hunted exile has now been elevated to the throne. His principal enemies are in their graves and David is exalted over the kingdom of Israel. There is not a little in the opening chapters of 2 Samuel which we have passed over, as being outside the scope of this series of papers, yet they record several details that present some lovely traits in the character of our hero. As we have previously pointed out, the news of the death of Saul and Jonathan was received by David with no carnal joy, but instead with magnanimous grief (2Sa 1:17). He had never regarded the apostate king and his favourite son as standing between him and the kingdom, and his first feeling on their fall was not—as it had been in a less generous heart—a flush of gladness at the thought of the empty throne, but instead a sharp pang of pain that the anointed of God had been grievously dishonoured and degraded by the enemies of Israel (2Sa 1:20).

Even when we begin to contemplate his new prospects, there was no hurried taking of matters into his own hands, but instead, a calm and reverent inquiring of the Lord (2Sa 2:1). He would do nothing in this crisis of his fortunes, when all which had been so long a hope seemed to be nearing its realization, until his Shepherd should lead him. Curbing his naturally impetuous disposition, refusing to take swift action and subdue his remaining opponents, holding in check the impatient ambitions of his own loyal followers, he waited to hear what *God* had to say. Few men have exercised such admirable self-restraint as David did under the circumstances which confronted him when his long-persecuting oppressor was no longer there to contest the field with him. Blessedly did he fulfill the vow of earlier years, “my strength! upon thee will I wait” see Psa 59:9.

Even before the death of Saul, the strength of David’s forces had been rapidly increased by a constant stream of fugitives from the confusion and misery into which the kingdom had fallen. Even Benjamin, Saul’s own tribe, sent him some of its famous archers—a sure token of the king’s waning fortunes. The hardy men of Manasseh and Gad, “whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains” (1Ch 12:8) sought his standard. While from his own tribe, recruits “day by day there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God” (1Ch 12:22). With such forces, it is evident that he could easily and quickly have subdued any scattered troops of the former dynasty. But he made no such attempt and took no measures whatever to advance any claims to the crown. He preferred God to work out things *for* him, instead of *by* him!

When he was settled at Hebron, he followed the same trustful and patient policy, not merely for a few days or weeks, but for a period of upwards of seven years. The language of the history

seems to denote a disbanding of his army, or at least to their settling down to domestic life in the villages around Hebron, without any thought of winning the kingdom by force of arms. His elevation to the partial monarchy which he at first possessed was not from his own initiative, but was from the spontaneous act of “the men of Judah” who came to him and anointed him “king over the house of Judah” (2Sa 2:4). Then followed a feeble but lingering opposition to David, headed by Saul’s cousin Abner, rallying around the late king’s incompetent son Ishbosheth, whose name significantly means “man of shame.”

The brief narrative which we have of the seven years spent by the still youthful David at Hebron, presents him in a very loveable light. The same gracious temper which had marked his first acts after Saul’s death is strikingly brought out in 2 Samuel 2:2-4. “He seems to have left the conducting of the (defensive) war altogether to Joab, as though he shrank from striking any personal blow for his own advancement. When he did interfere, it was on the side of peace, to curb and chastise ferocious vengeance and dastardly assassination. The incidents recorded all go to make up a picture of rare generosity, of patiently waiting for God to fulfill His purposes, of longing that the miserable strife between the tribes of God’s inheritance should end. He sends grateful messages to Jabesh-Gilead. He will not begin the conflict with the insurgents. The only actual fight recorded is provoked by Abner and managed with unwonted mildness by Joab.

“The generosity of his nature shines out again in his indignation at Joab’s murder of Abner, though he was too meek to avenge it. There is no more beautiful picture in his life than that of his following the bier where lay the bloody corpse of the man who had been his enemy ever since he had known him, and sealing the reconciliation which death even makes in noble souls, by the pathetic dirge he chanted over Abner’s grave (2Sa 3:31). We have a glimpse of his people’s unbounded confidence in him, given incidentally when we are told that his sorrow pleased them, ‘as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people’ (2Sa 3:36). We have a glimpse of the feebleness of his new monarchy as against the fierce soldier who had done so much to make it, in his acknowledgment that he was yet weak (2Sa 3:39)” (Alexander MacLaren, 1826-1929).

The final incident of David’s reign over Judah in Hebron was his execution of summary justice upon the murderers of the poor puppet-king Ishbosheth (2Sa 4:12), upon whose death the whole resistance to David’s power collapsed. Immediately after, the elders of all the tribes came up to Hebron, with the tender of the crown (2Sa 5:1-3). They offered it upon the triple grounds of kinship, of his military service in Saul’s reign, and of the divine promise of the throne. A solemn pact was made, and David was “anointed” in Hebron “king over Israel”—a king not only by divine right, but also a constitutional monarch, chosen by popular election, and limited in his powers. The *evangelical* significance of this event we considered in the preceding article. Other points of interest connected therewith are now to engage our attention.

This crowning of David king over all Israel was, first, the fulfillment of one of the great prophecies of Scripture. “Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father’s children shall bow down before thee” (Gen 49:8). Let it be carefully noted that the clause, “thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies” is placed *between* “thy brethren shall praise thee” and “thy father’s children shall bow down before thee,” and that immediately following this, Judah’s victories over the enemies of God’s people is again pointed out, “Judah is a lion’s whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up” (Gen 49:9).

The above prophecy intimated the exalted position which Judah, when compared with the other tribes, was to occupy. Judah was to be the fore-champion in Israel’s warfare against their enemies, God having empowered him with conquering power over the foes of His kingdom. The

commencement of this in the life of David is plainly intimated in 2 Samuel 5:1-3. David's hand had been "in the neck of Israel's enemies," seen in his memorable victory over Goliath, the Philistine giant. Following which we observe the begun-fulfillment of "thy brethren shall praise thee" in the song of the women, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1Sa 18:7). So also here in 2 Samuel 5, the elders of the eleven tribes "bowed down before him" when they nominated him their king, and that, specifically, in view of the fact that he had triumphantly led out and brought in Israel's army in times past (2Sa 5:2)!

This leads us, in the second place, to contemplate the coronation of David as a blessed foreshadowment of the exaltation of his greater Son and Lord. This is so obvious that there is little need for us to amplify it at much length—though the interested reader would find it profitable to prayerfully trace out for himself other details in it. The life and activities of David are plainly divided into two main parts, though the second part was of very much longer duration than the first. Thus it is also in the mediatorial work of Him whom he pointed to. In the first section of his career, he who was born at Bethlehem (1Sa 16:1) and "anointed" of God (1Sa 16:13), wrought some mighty works (1Sa 17:34-36, 49) which clearly demonstrated that the Lord was with him. For the antitype, see Luke 2:11, Acts 10:38. The fame of David was sung by many, which stirred up the jealousy and enmity of the ruling power (1Sa 18:7-8), for the antitype see Matthew 21:15!

The enmity of Saul against David was exceeding bitter, so that he thirsted for his blood (1Sa 18:29), compare Matthew 12:14. From that time forth, David became an homeless wanderer (1Sa 22:1), compare Matthew 8:20. A little company of devoted souls gathered around him (1Sa 22:2), but the nation as a whole despised and rejected him, compare John 1:11-12. This was the period of his *humiliation*, when the anointed of God suffered privation and persecution at the hands of his enemies. True, he could (as we have seen above) have taken matters into his own hands, and grasped the kingdom by force of arms, but he steadily refused to do so, preferring to meekly and patiently wait *God's* time for him to ascend the throne, compare Matthew 26:52. In these and many other respects, our hero blessedly foreshadowed the character and career of his suffering but greater Son and Lord.

But the time had now arrived when the season of David's humiliation was over, and when he entered into that position of *honour and glory* which God had long before ordained for him, "They anointed David king over Israel" (2Sa 5:3). In his coronation, we have a precious adumbration of the ascension of Christ, and His exaltation unto "the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb 1:3), when He "took upon him the form of a servant" and "made himself of no reputation" was "highly exalted" and given "a name which is above every name" (Phi 2:7-10). As we are told in Acts 5:31, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a *Prince* and a Saviour, for to give repentance to [the spiritual] Israel." The recorded deeds of David after he came to the throne, which will come before us (D.V.) in the articles to follow, also strikingly prefigured the work and triumphs of our exalted and glorified Redeemer.

And now, in the third place, let us inquire, How did the fugitive bear this sudden change of fortune? What were the thoughts of David, what the exercises of his heart, now that this great dignity, which he never sought, became his? The answer to our question is supplied by Psalm 18, which (see the superscription) he spoke "In the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul," that is, when the Lord brought to an end the opposition of Saul's house and followers. In this Psalm, the Holy Spirit has recorded the breathings of David's spirit and graciously permits us to learn of the first freshness of thankfulness and praise which filled the soul of the young king upon his ascension to the throne.

Here we are shown the bright spiritual beginnings of the new monarchy, and are given to see how faithfully the king remembered the vows which as an exile had been mingled with his tears.

“It is one long outpouring of rapturous thankfulness and triumphant adoration, which streams from a full heart in buoyant waves of song. Nowhere else, even in the Psalms—and if not there, certainly nowhere else—is there such a continuous tide of unmingled praise, such magnificence of imagery, such passion of love to the delivering God, such joyous energy of conquering trust. It throbs throughout with the life-blood of devotion. All the terror, and pains, and dangers of the weary years—the black fuel for the ruddy glow—melt into warmth too great for smoke, too equable to blaze. The plaintive notes that had so often wailed from his heart, sad as if the night wind had been wandering among its chords, have all led up to the rushing burst of full-toned gladness. The very blessedness of heaven is anticipated, when sorrows gone by are understood and seen in their connection with the joy to which they have led, and are felt to be the theme for deepest thankfulness” (A. MacLaren).

It is blessed to note that this 18th Psalm is entitled, “A Psalm of David, the *servant* of the LORD,” upon which C. H. Spurgeon remarked, “David, although at this time a king, calls himself ‘the servant of the Lord,’ but makes no mention of his royalty: hence we gather that he counted it a higher honour to be the Lord’s servant than to be Judah’s king. Right wisely did he judge. Being possessed of poetical genius, he *served* the Lord by composing this Psalm for the use of the Lord’s house.” We cannot here attempt a full analysis of its contents, but must glance at one or two of its more prominent features.

The first clause strikes the keynote, “I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.” “That personal attachment to God, which is so characteristic of David’s religion, can no longer be pent up in silence, but gushes forth like some imprisoned stream, broad and full even from its well-head” (A. MacLaren). Scholars have pointed out that the intensity of David’s adoration on this occasion moved him to employ a word which is never used elsewhere to express man’s emotions towards God, a word so strong that its force is but feebly expressed if we render it “*from my heart* do I love thee.” The same exalted spiritual fervour is seen again in the loving accumulation of divine names which follows—no less than eight are used in verse 2!—as if he would heap together in a great pile all the rich experiences of that *God* (which all names utterly fail to express) which he had garnered up in his distresses and deliverances.

In verses 3 and 4, David recalls pathetically the past experiences when, like an animal caught in the nets, those who hunted him so relentlessly were ready to close in upon and seize their prey. In his distress, he says, “I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God” (Psa 18:6). Though it was but the call of one weak solitary voice, unheard on earth, it reached heaven, and the answer shook all creation, “He heard my voice out of his temple....Then the earth shook and trembled” (Psa 18:6-7, etc.). One saint in his extremity put in motion the mighty power of Omnipotence, overwhelming is the contrast between cause and effect. Wonderful as the greatness, equally marvelous is the swiftness of the answer, “*Then* the earth shook.”

It is blessed to note how David ascribes *all* to the power and grace of the Lord. “For *by thee* I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall...It is *God* that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect...Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great...It is *God* that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me...Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name. Great deliverance giveth he to his

king; and showeth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore” (vv. 29, 32, 35, 47, 49, 50).

THE COVENANTS OF GOD

3a. The Adamic

It is of vital importance for a right understanding of much in God’s Word to observe the relation which Adam sustained to his posterity. Adam was not only the common parent of mankind, but he was also their federal head and representative. The whole human race was placed on probation or trial in Eden. Adam acted not for himself alone, but he transacted for all who were to spring from him. Unless this basic fact be definitely apprehended, much that ought to be relatively clear to us will be shrouded in impenetrable mystery. Yea, we go further, and affirm that, until the federal headship of Adam and God’s covenant with him in that office be actually perceived, we are without the key to God’s dealings with the human race, we are unable to discern man’s relation to the divine law, and we appreciate not the fundamental principles upon which the atonement of Christ proceeded.

“Federal headship” is a term which has almost entirely disappeared from current religious literature—so much the worse for our moderns. It is true that the expression itself does not verbally occur in the Scriptures, yet like the words “Trinity” and “the divine incarnation,” it is a necessity in theological parlance and doctrinal exposition. The principle or fact which is embodied in the term “federal headship” is that of *representation*. There have been but two federal heads—Adam and Christ, with each of whom God entered into a “covenant.” Each of them acted on behalf of others, each legally represented a definite people, so much so that all whom they represented were regarded by God as being *in* them. Adam represented the whole human race. Christ represented all those whom the Father had, in His eternal counsels, given to Him.

When Adam stood in Eden as a responsible being before God, he stood there as a federal head, as the legal representative of all his posterity. Hence, when Adam sinned, all for whom he was standing are accounted as having sinned. When he fell, all whom he represented fell. When he died, they died. So too was it with Christ. When He came to this earth, He too, stood in a federal relationship to His own people, and when He became obedient unto death, all for whom He was acting were accounted righteous. When He rose again from the dead, all whom He represented rose with Him. When He ascended on high, they were regarded as ascending with Him. “For as *in* Adam all die, even so *in* Christ shall all be made alive” (1Co 15:22).

The relationship of our race to Adam or Christ divides men into two classes, each receiving nature and destiny from its respective head. All the individuals who comprise these two classes are so identified with their heads that it has justly been said, “There have been but two men in the world and two facts in history.” These two men are Adam and Christ. The two facts are the

disobedience of the former, by which many were made sinners, and the obedience of the latter, by which many were made righteous. By the former came *ruin*, by the latter came *redemption*, and neither ruin nor redemption can be Scripturally apprehended except as they are seen to be accomplished by those representatives, and except we understand the relationships expressed by being “*in Adam*” and “*in Christ*.”

Let it be expressly and emphatically affirmed that what we are here treating of is purely a matter of *divine revelation*. Nowhere but in Holy Scripture do we know anything about Adam or of our relation to him. If it be asked how the federal constitution of the race can be reconciled with the dictates of human reason, the first answer must be, it is not for us *to reconcile* them. The initial inquiry is not whether federal headship be reasonable or just, but is it a fact revealed in the Word of God? If it is, then reason must bow to it and faith humbly receive it. To the child of God the question of its *justice* is easily settled. We know it to be just, because it is a part of the ways of the infinitely holy and righteous God.

Now the fact that Adam *was* the federal head of the human race, that he *did* act and transact in a representative capacity, and that the judicial consequences of his actings *were* imputed to all those for whom he stood, is clearly revealed in God’s Word. In Romans 5, we read, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (v. 12); “through the offence of one many be dead” (v. 15); “the judgment was by one to condemnation” (v. 16); “by one man’s offence death reigned” (v. 17); “by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation” (v. 18); “by one man’s disobedience many were made [legally constituted] sinners” (v. 19). The meaning of these declarations is far too plain for any unprejudiced mind to misunderstand. It pleased God to deal with the human race *as represented in and by Adam*.

Let us borrow a simple illustration. God did not deal with mankind as with a field of corn, where each stalk stands upon its own individual root, but He dealt with it as *a tree*, all the branches of which have one common root and trunk. If you strike with an axe at the root of a tree, the *whole* tree falls—not only the trunk, but also the branches, and even the twigs upon the branches, all wither and die. So it was when Adam fell. God permitted Satan to lay the axe at the root of the tree, and when Adam fell, all his posterity fell with him. At one fatal stroke, Adam was severed from communion with his Maker, and as the result “death passed upon all men.” Here, then, we learn what is the formal ground of man’s judicial condemnation before God. The popular idea of *what* it is which renders man a sinner in the sight of heaven is altogether inadequate and false. The prevailing conception is that a sinner is one who commits and practices sin. It is true that this is the *character* of a sinner, but it certainly is not that which primarily *constitutes* him a sinner. The truth is that every member of our race enters this world a guilty sinner before he ever commits a single transgression. It is not only that he possesses a sinful nature, but he is directly “under condemnation.” We are legally-constituted sinners neither by what we are nor by what we are doing, but by the disobedience of our federal head, Adam. Adam acted not for himself alone, but for all who were to spring from him.

On this point, the teaching of the Apostle Paul is plain and unambiguous. The terms of Romans 5:12-19, as we have shown above, are too varied and distinct to admit of any misconception—that it is on account of their sin in Adam, men, in the first instance, are accounted guilty and treated as such, as well as partake of a depraved nature. The language of 1 Corinthians 15:22 is equally unintelligible except on the supposition that both Adam and Christ sustained a *representative* character, in virtue of which the one involved the race in guilt and ruin, and the other, by His obedience unto death, secured the justification and salvation of all that

believe in Him. The actual condition of the human race, throughout its history, confirms the same. The apostle's doctrine supplies the only adequate explanation of the universal prevalence of sin.

The human race is suffering now for the sin of Adam, or it is suffering for nothing at all. This earth is the scene of a grim and awful tragedy. In it we see misery and wretchedness, pain and poverty, decay and death, on every side. None escape. That "man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward" is an indisputable fact. But what is the explanation of it? Every effect must have a previous cause. If we *are not* being punished for Adam's sin, then, coming into this world, we are "children of wrath" alienated from God, corrupt and depraved, and on the Broad Road which leadeth to destruction *for nothing at all!* Who would contend that this was better, more satisfactory, than the Scriptural explanation of our ruin?

But it will be said, It was unjust to make Adam our federal head. How so? Is not the principle of representation a fundamental one in human society? The father is the legal head of his children during their minority, what he does, binds the family. A business house is held responsible for the transactions of its agents. The heads of a state are vested with such authority that the treaties they make are binding upon the whole nation. This principle is so basic it cannot be set aside. Every popular election illustrates the fact that a constituency will act through a representative and be bound by his acts. Human affairs could not continue, nor society exist without it. Why, then, be staggered at finding it inaugurated in Eden?

Consider the alternative. "The race must have either stood in a full grown man, with a full-orbed intellect, or stood as babies, each entering his probation in the twilight of self-consciousness, each deciding his destiny before his eyes were half-opened to what it all meant. How much better would that have been? How much more just? But could it not have been some other way? There was no other way. It was either the baby or it was the perfect, well-equipped, all-calculating man—the man who saw and comprehended everything. That man was Adam" (George Sayles Bishop, 1836-1914). Yes, Adam, fresh from the hands of his Creator, with no sinful ancestry behind him, with no depraved nature within. A man made in the image and likeness of God, pronounced by Him "very good," in fellowship with heaven. Who could have been a more suitable representative for us?

This has been the principle on which and the method by which God has acted all through. The posterity of Canaan were cursed for the single transgression of their parent (Gen 9). The Egyptians perished at the Red Sea as the result of Pharaoh's wickedness. When Israel became God's witness in the earth it was the same. The sins of the fathers were to be visited upon the children. In consequence of Achan's one sin, the whole of his family were stoned to death. The high priest acted on behalf of the whole nation. Later, the king was held accountable for the conduct of his subjects. One acting on the behalf of others, the one responsible for the many, is a basic principle both of human and divine government. We cannot get away from it. Wherever we look it stares us in the face.

Finally, let it be pointed out that the sinner's salvation is made to depend upon the same principle. Beware, my reader, of quarreling with the justice of this law of representation. This principle wrecked us and this principle alone can rescue us. The disobedience of the first Adam was the judicial ground of our condemnation. The obedience of the last Adam is the legal ground on which God alone can justify the sinner. The substitution of Christ in the place of His people, the imputation of their sins to Him and of His righteousness to them, is the cardinal fact of the Gospel. But the principle of being saved by what another has done is only possible on the ground that we are lost through what another did. The two stand or fall together. If there had been no

covenant of works there could have been no covenant of grace. If there had been no death *in* Adam, there could have been no life *in* Christ.

“By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners” (Rom 5:19). Here is cause for humiliation which few think about. We are members of a cursed race, the fallen children of a fallen parent, and as such we enter this world “*alienated* from the life of God” (Eph 4:18), with nothing in us to prompt unto holy living. O that God may reveal to you, dear reader, your connection with the first Adam, that you may realize your deep need of clinging to the last Adam. The world may deride this doctrine of representation and imputation, but that only evidences it to be of God. If the Gospel (the *genuine* Gospel) were welcomed by all, that would prove it was of human manufacture, for only that is acceptable to fallen man which is invented by fallen man. That the wise of this world scoff at the truth of federal headship, when it is faithfully presented, only goes to manifest its divine origin.

“By the offence of one judgment came upon all men *to condemnation*” (Rom 5:18). In the day that Adam fell, the frown of God came upon all his children. The holy nature of God abhorred the apostate race. The curse of the broken law descended upon all Adam’s posterity. It is only thus we can account for the *universality* of depravity and suffering. The corruption which we inherit from our parents is a great evil, for it is the source of all personal sins. For God to allow this transmission of depravity, is to inflict *a punishment*. But how could God punish all, unless *all* were guilty? The fact that all *do* share in this common punishment proves that *all* sinned and fell in Adam. Our depravity and misery are not, as such, the appointment of the Creator, but are instead the retribution of the Judge.

“By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners” (Rom 5:19). The word “made” in that verse calls for a definition and explanation. It does *not* refer directly and primarily to the fact that we inherit from Adam a corrupt and sinful nature—that we learn from other Scriptures. The term “were made sinners” is a forensic one, and refers to our being *constituted guilty* in the sight of God. A parallel case is found in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “He hath *made* him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.” Clearly those words “made Christ to be sin” cannot refer to any change which our Lord underwent in His nature or character. No, rather the blessed Saviour so took His people’s place before God that He was treated and dealt with as *guilty*, their sins were *not imparted*, but *imputed* to Him.

Again, in Galatians 3:13, we read that Christ was “*made* a curse for us,” as the substitute of God’s elect, He was judicially regarded as beneath the condemnation of the law. Our guilt was legally transferred to Christ. The sins we committed, He was regarded as responsible for—what *we* deserved, He endured. In like manner, Adam’s offspring were “*made* sinners” by their head’s disobedience—the legal consequences of their representative’s transgression were charged to their account. They were judicially constituted guilty, because the guilt of Adam’s sin was charged to them. Hence we enter this world not only with the heritage of a corrupt nature, but “under condemnation.” We are by nature “children of *wrath*” (Eph 2:3), for “the wicked are *estranged* from the womb” (Psa 58:3)—separated from God and exposed to His judicial displeasure.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Carson on Esther (Part Ten)

This book, then, that exhibits the providence of God, is composed in a manner suited to its subject. God is everywhere seen in it, though He is not named. Just so God is every moment manifesting Himself in the works of His providence, though He works unseen to all but the eye of faith. He supports and moves the heavenly bodies, while His name is not expressly written on the sun, moon, or stars, and though no herald voice proclaims Him in the execution of His office. The Christian also has many ways of acknowledging God, without expressly naming Him. The sun, from the time he rises till he sets in silence, preaches the God that made and upholds him. The book of Esther, from the beginning to the end, proclaims the providence of God, though it does not expressly name Him.

But not only is the objection invalid, but every one of the same class is utterly unworthy of respect. A book may disprove its divine origin by what it contains, but in no case by what it does not contain. What is to be expressed in any divine communication, is not for man presumptuously to determine by his own wisdom, but lies entirely with a sovereign God. We may as well say that God would not make the sun or moon without writing His name on it, as that He could not inspire a book that did not contain His name. Vain man will be wise, though he is born as the wild ass's colt. Even in the things of God he must, by his own maxims of wisdom, pronounce on the authenticity of the inspiration of the All-wise!

Another objection alleged to the inspiration of this book is that it is not quoted in the New Testament. Now, who made this a first principle? What authority establishes the dogma that a book of the Old Testament cannot be inspired unless it is quoted in the New? Is it a self-evident truth? By no means. Does the New Testament teach this doctrine? No such thing. Where then has it obtained its authority? In the presumption of man. To be quoted in the New Testament is indeed proof of the inspiration of a book of the Old, and may therefore be used very properly as a confirmation, but not to be quoted is no proof of a want of inspiration. The inspiration of the Old Testament is independent even in the existence of the New. Many books of the Old Testament, indeed, are quoted in the New, but this does not discredit such as are not quoted. To make quotations by the New Testament essential to the recognition of the inspiration of the books of the Old Testament is as unreasonable as to demand the quotation of every chapter and of every verse. It is perfectly sufficient that there is nothing in the book of Esther that contradicts the New Testament. As far as they teach on the same things, they perfectly agree. To the inspiration of the book of Esther there is not one objection that deserves a minute's consideration, and it bears in every page the impression of the finger of God.

The opinion that the settling of the canon is a matter of criticism, and lies fairly open to discussion, is a wicked and pernicious error. It is the suggestion of Satan to upset the authority of the whole Scriptures. It is impossible to deny the inspiration of one book of Scripture on principles that will not overturn any other. If the book of Esther is to be rejected because it does not express the name of God, then any person is equally at liberty to reject any other book, because it wants something that his wisdom thinks an inspired book ought to contain. That an

inspired book must express the name of God, is a principle as arbitrary, and as far from self-evident, as any conceit that the human mind may entertain. If, then, its authority is acknowledged, equal indulgence must be granted to every other demand of human wisdom. If the book of Esther is to be rejected because it is not quoted in the New Testament, then there is not a book in the New Testament that must not be rejected, because there is no inspired authority quoting them, and by consequence, every book of the Old must also be rejected, because the recognition of it in the New will in that case be of no authority. If the books of the New Testament can on sufficient grounds be received as inspired, although the canon is not settled by the quotations of inspired authority, then may the books of the Old Testament likewise. To reject one book, then, must admit principles that will overturn the inspiration of all. The settling of the canon is not a matter of criticism, but of testimony, and however mortifying it may be to the pride of the learned, they must receive it on the same grounds with the illiterate. The man of literature may indeed go a step or two beyond the unlearned. He may examine the books in which the testimony is contained, and with his own eyes he may read the catalogues of Origen and Melito, with any other accessible evidence. But even here he must rest on testimony. He has not seen the original manuscripts, and though he possess the very autographs of the apostles, he must depend on testimony that they *are* really such. The canon of Scripture, then, the critic is not to ascertain by the rules of his art, but he must take it on the authority of testimony, and commence with it as a first principle.

It may appear surprising to some that the Christian public has not been more shocked with the late attempts to shake the authority of the canon, and to displace so great a portion of the Word of God from its high rank. But the reason is obvious, from the quarter from which these attempts have proceeded. Had the reasons that some have alleged for rejecting the book of Esther, the two books of Chronicles, and the Song of Solomon, been urged by professed infidels or noted heretics, they would have been rejected with horror. But when they have been ushered into the world from the pens of reputedly orthodox divines, and for anything I know to the contrary, men of real godliness, the sinfulness of the attempt and the danger of the principle, on which the opinion is founded, have been concealed from general notice. The very grounds of rejection have a show not only of wisdom, but of concern for the honour of God and His Word. Satan appears as an angel of light when he teaches that the book of Esther should be rejected, because it does not express the name of God, and because it is not quoted by the New Testament. What zeal does this manifest for the honour of God! what a high regard for the authority of the New Testament! Baxter says that the Jews were in the habit of casting the book of Esther to the ground before reading it, to express their sense of its deficiency in wanting the name of God, and the thought is quite in the style of Jewish piety, and of the human wisdom of Christians. It is just such a thought as Satan will likely to suggest to mistaken piety. But Satan conceals from them that by their zeal for the honour of God they rob themselves of all the advantages of that book. They do not see that they give up to him all the treasures of the knowledge of Providence that are contained in that precious record. He gives them a bauble, as the Europeans have done to barbarians, and he takes from them the most valuable diamonds. Satan suggests that the book of Esther cannot be a book of Scripture, because it is not quoted in the New Testament. Who would think that the infernal spirit of darkness has such a respect for the writing of the apostles? Arch deceiver! thy respect is affected for the purpose of overturning the writings for which thou dost profess this respect. Though the dupes who are deceived by thee perceive it not, thy keen eye discerns that this principle will overturn the Bible. When thou deceivest the profane and the ungodly, thou wilt employ a Carlisle or a Taylor, but when the children of God are to be robbed of a part of His Word, thou dost prefer an evangelical divine as the deceiver.

It is on this very principle that the grand deceiver has overturned the foundation of all knowledge through the affected wisdom of the philosopher. Perceiving that false first principles lead to every error, Des Cartes resolved to take nothing for granted but the existence of his thoughts. He did not admit even his own existence as a first principle. This must be proved from his thinking. Here he imagined he had a foundation for all knowledge. But in rejecting his own existence as a first principle, and other first principles equally entitled to respect, he laid the grounds of universal skepticism on which Mr. Hume afterwards built with such success. If nothing is self-evident but the existence of individual thoughts, no man has any evidence of the existence of anything but himself. Some of his followers never advanced farther than this. The Egoists believed in their own individual existence, but with matchless fortitude, each of them refused to believe that there is any being in creation but himself.

Now this is just the spirit of modern efforts to rest the authority of the books of Scripture, not on the canon ascertained by testimony, but on their internal evidence. For the authority of a book of Scripture they seek a surer foundation than testimony, however unexceptionally ascertained. They reject the solid foundation on which God Himself has rested the authority of the canon, and have adopted a foundation that sinks from under the whole building. Like Des Cartes, they may themselves adopt many truths, notwithstanding their foundation will not bear them, but others, like the Egoists, may reject almost any part of the divine Word. This wisdom, then, is both dangerous and foolish. In pretending to add strength to the bulwarks of God, it takes away their foundation. To reject a sound first principle is equally injurious to truth as to admit a false one. Either of them lays a foundation for error.

The book of Esther abounds with valuable instructions. To rob the Christian of the edification and comfort which it affords, is to do him the most serious injury. When critics find themselves at a loss in a field in which to exercise their ingenuity, let them indulge their vanity on the writings of the ancient Greeks. Here let them gamble with the many fanatic movements, and approach as near as they choose to the opposite boundaries of credulity and skepticism, but let them cease from the Word of God. Let them not dare to put their unhallowed hand on the ark of JEHOVAH. Let the children of the Most High possess His Word in the utmost extent. Let them possess it without addition. The curse of God is for both him that adds and him that diminishes.

One of the most conspicuous advantages afforded to the Christian by this book is that it gives him a commentary to all the events recorded in history, with respect to the rise and fall of empires, the prosperity and adversity of nations, the progress and persecution of the church of Christ, and the exaltation and degradation of individuals. In reading history, people in general look no farther than to the motives, designs, and tendencies of human action. Some are contented with the knowledge of facts, without attempting to discover their source or to trace the connection of events. But in the book of Esther the Christian may learn to refer every occurrence in the world to the counsels of God, and to behold Him ruling with absolute sway, amidst all the confusion of human agency, over all the purposes and actions of men and devils.

In the afflictions of virtue, in the oppression of the righteous, in the prosperity of the wicked, in the insolence of power, in the persecution of truth, the philosopher finds it difficult to defend his god, and cannot defend him without making him different from the God of the Scriptures. He excuses His supineness by bringing Him forward to reward virtue in another state, by the unavoidable necessity imposed on Omnipotency through the establishment of general laws, from which it is impossible to deviate. But the book of Esther teaches the Christian that the rise, and progress, and triumph of the man of sin, as well as his decline and fall, are according to the purpose of the Almighty—the All-Wise—the eternal. His glory is secured by the exertions of His

enemies, as well as by those of His friends. He raises up Haman and Pharaoh, as well as Esther and Moses.

Such a God is too wonderful for the discovery or the approbation of human wisdom. This is too dazzling a light in which to view the divine character, for any who are not taught of God, and who are not accustomed to submit in the most absolute manner to the decisions of His Word. It is only the eagle can gaze on the sun. Many of those who, in some measure, are taught of God, are too weak-sighted to look on Him in this blaze of light. They prefer to view Him through the dark glasses of some human system of theology. My fellow Christians! I entreat you, as you value the authority of God, as you regard your own edification, study the book of Esther, and see your God *ruling even over sin*. Behold Him in all the wars of conquerors—in all the intrigues of courts—in all the changes of empires—in all the caprices of monarchs—in all the persecutions of truth—as well as in all the progress of the Gospel.

The book of Esther teaches us to see the hand of God, not only in the great events of the world, but in all the transactions of men. It calls on us to see Him in every occurrence of every day in our lives, and to trust in Him for provision, protection, health, comfort, peace, and all the blessings of life. Innumerable dangers are around us every moment. It is only the arm of God can ward them off from us. The most trifling accident might destroy us, as well as an earthquake. It is the watchfulness of Providence, must guarantee our safety. How then is this book calculated to nourish our gratitude, increase our dependence on God, and invigorate our confidence! As we need the All-mighty protection in all things, even when we see no danger, so even when the most terrible disasters threaten, He can defend. From how many evils has He delivered us in the course of our lives! How many wonders of Providence may we recount in our own escapes! Christians, study the book of Esther, and view God on your right hand, and on your left all the day long. See His watchful eye upon you, and His guardian hand around you, both night and day. “He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore” (Psa. 121:3-8).

In Esther’s success we find encouragement to undertake the most dangerous service to which duty calls us. We are indeed to count the cost, and be willing to serve the cause of God at the expense even of life. But in this example, let us see that God is able to preserve us in doing His will, even when danger is most appalling. There may be safety in the midst of danger, when we go forward in the path of duty, but death itself is preferable to disobedience. *If I perish, I perish*, is the spirit in which the people of God ought to encounter the most appalling dangers in doing His will. In this spirit we can die in triumph, or live with joy, and a good conscience.

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

8. Its Instrument

“Being justified freely by his *grace*” (Rom 3:24); “being now justified by his *blood*” (Rom 5:9); “being justified by *faith*” (Rom 5:1). A full exposition of the doctrine of justification requires that each of these propositions should be interpreted in their Scriptural sense, and that they be combined together in their true relations as to form one harmonious whole. Unless these three propositions be carefully distinguished there is sure to be confusion. Unless all the three are steadily borne in mind we are sure to land in error. Each must be given its due weight, yet none must be understood in such a way as to make its force annul that of the others. Nor is this by any means a simple task, in fact none but a real teacher (that is, a spiritual theologian) who has devoted a lifetime to the undivided study of Scriptures is qualified for it.

“The righteousness of God which is *by faith* of Jesus Christ” (Rom 3:22); “A man is justified *by faith* without the deeds of the law” (Rom 3:28); “even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified *by* the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law” (Ga. 2:16). What is the precise place and influence which faith has in the important affairs of justification? What is the exact nature or character of justifying faith? In what particular sense are we to understand this proposition that we are “justified *by faith*”? and what is the connection between that proposition and the postulates that we are “justified *by grace*” and “justified by Christ’s *blood*”? These are matters which call for the utmost care. The nature of justifying faith requires to be closely defined so that its particular agency is correctly viewed, for it is easy to make a mistake here to the prejudice of Christ’s honour and glory, which must not be given to another—no, not to faith itself.

Many would-be teachers have erred at this point, for the common tendency of human nature is to arrogate to itself the glory which belongs alone to God. While there have been those who rejected the unscriptural notion that we can be justified before God by our own works, yet not a few of these very men virtually make a saviour of their own faith. Not only have some spoken of faith as though it were a contribution which God requires the sinner to make toward his own salvation—the last mite which was necessary to make up the price of his redemption. But others (who sneered at theologians and boasted of their superior understanding of the things of God) have insisted that faith itself is what constitutes us righteous before God, He regarding faith as righteousness.

A deplorable example of what we have just mentioned is to be found in the comments made upon Romans 4 by Mr. J. N. Darby (1800-1882), the father of the Plymouth Brethren, “This was Abraham’s faith. He believed the promise that he should be the father of many nations, because God had spoken, counting on the power of God, thus glorifying Him, without calling in question anything that He had said by looking at circumstances; therefore *this* also was counted to him for righteousness. He glorified God according to what God was. Now this was not written for his sake alone—the same *faith* shall be imputed to us also *for righteousness*” (“Synopsis,” vol. 4, p. 133—italics ours). The Christ-dishonouring error contained in those statements will be exposed later on in this article.

“How doth faith justify a sinner in the sight of God? Answer: Faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God, not because of those other graces which do always accompany it, nor of good works that are the fruits of it, nor as if the grace of faith, or any act thereof, were imputed to him for justification; *but only as it is an instrument* by which he receiveth and applieth Christ and His righteousness” (Westminster Confession of Faith). Though this definition was framed upwards of two hundred and fifty years ago, it is far superior to almost anything found in current literature on the subject. It is more accurate to speak of faith as the “instrument” rather than as the *condition*, for a “condition” is generally used to signify that for the sake whereof a benefit is conferred. Faith is neither the ground nor the substance of our justification, but simply *the hand* which receives the divine gift proffered to us in the Gospel.

What is the precise place and influence which faith has in the important affair of justification? Romanist answer, It justifies us *formally*, not relatively—that is, upon the account of its own intrinsic value. They point out that faith is never alone, but “worketh by love” (Gal 5:6), and therefore its own excellency merits acceptance at God’s hand. But the faith of the best is weak and deficient (Luk 17:5), and so could never satisfy the law, which requires a flawless perfection. If righteousness was given as a reward for faith, its possessor would have cause for boasting, expressly contrary to the apostle in Romans 3:26-27. Moreover, such a method of justification would entirely frustrate the life and death of Christ, making His great sacrifice unnecessary. It is not faith as a spiritual *grace* which justifies us, but as an instrument—the *hand* which lays hold of Christ.

In connection with justification, faith is *not* to be considered as a virtuous exercise of the heart, nor as a principle of holy obedience, “Because faith, as concerned in our justification, does not regard Christ as King, enacting laws, requiring obedience, and subduing depravity, but as a Substitute, answering the requirements of the divine law, and as a Priest expiating sin by His own death on the cross. Hence, in justification we read of ‘precious faith...through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ’ (2Pe 1:1) and of ‘faith in His blood’ (Rom 3:25), and believers are described as ‘*receiving* the atonement’ and ‘*receiving* the gift of righteousness’ see Rom 5:11, 17. Therefore it is evident that faith is represented as having an immediate regard to the vicarious work of Christ, and that it is considered *not* under the notion of exercising virtue or of performing a duty, but of receiving a free gift” (Abraham Booth, 1734-1806).

What is the relation of faith to justification? The Arminian answer to the question, refined somewhat by the Plymouth Brethren, is, that the *act* of believing is imputed to us for righteousness. One error leads to another. Mr. Darby denied that Gentiles were ever under the law, hence he denied also that Christ obeyed the law in His people’s stead, and therefore as Christ’s vicarious obedience is not reckoned to their account, he had to seek elsewhere for their righteousness. This he claimed to find in the Christian’s own faith, insisting that their act of believing is imputed to them “for righteousness.” To give his theory respectability, he clothed it in the language of several expressions found in Romans 4, though he knew quite well that the Greek afforded no foundation whatever for that which he built upon it.

In Romans 4 we read “his faith is counted *for* righteousness” (v. 5), “faith was reckoned to Abraham *for* righteousness” (v. 9), “it was imputed to him *for* righteousness” (v. 22). Now in each of these verses, the Greek preposition is “eis” which *never* means “in the stead of,” but always signifies “towards, in order to, with a view to.” It has the uniform force of “unto.” Its exact meaning and force is unequivocally plain in Romans 10:10, “with the heart man believeth *unto* (“eis”) righteousness,” that is, the believing heart reaches out toward and lays hold of Christ Himself. “This passage (Rom 10:10) may help us to understand what justification by faith is, for

it shows that righteousness there comes to us when we embrace God's goodness offered to us in the Gospel. We are then, for this reason, made just, because we believe that God is propitious to us through Christ" (John Calvin, 1509-1564).

The Holy Spirit has used the Greek prepositions with unerring precision. Never do we find Him employing "eis" in connection with Christ's satisfaction and sacrifice in our room and stead, but only "anti" or "huper," which means *in lieu of*. On the other hand, "anti" and "huper" are *never* used in connection with our believing, for faith *is not* accepted by God *in lieu of* perfect obedience. Faith must either be the ground of our acceptance with God, or the means or instrument of our becoming interested in the true meritorious ground, namely, the righteousness of Christ. It *cannot* stand in *both* relations to our justification. "God justifieth, not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ" (Westminster Catechism).

That faith itself cannot be the substance or ground of our justification is clear from many considerations. The "righteousness of God (i.e., the satisfaction which Christ rendered to the law) is revealed from faith *to* faith" (Rom 1:17) and so cannot be faith itself. Romans 10:10 declares, "with the heart man believeth *unto* righteousness," so that righteousness must be a distinct thing from believing. In Jeremiah 23:6, we read "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS," so faith cannot be our righteousness. Let not Christ be dethroned in order to exalt faith. Set not the servant above the master. "We acknowledge no righteousness but what the obedience and satisfaction of Christ yields us. His blood, not our faith. His satisfaction, not our believing it, is the matter of justification before God" (John Flavel, 1630-1691). What alterations are there in our faith! what minglings of unbelief at all times! Is *this* a foundation to build our justification and hope upon?

Perhaps some will say, Are not the words of Scripture expressly on Mr. Darby's side? Does not Romans 4:5 affirm "faith is counted for righteousness"? We answer, Is the *sense* of Scripture on his side? Suppose I should undertake to prove that David was cleansed from guilt by the "hyssop" which grows on the wall—*that* would sound ridiculous. Yes, nevertheless, I should have the express *words* of Scripture to support me, "Purge me *with hyssop*, and I shall be clean" (Psa 51:7). Yet clear as those words read, they would not afford me the least countenance imaginable from *the sense* and spirit of God's Word. Has the *hyssop*—a worthless shrub—any kind of fitness to stand in the stead of the sacrificial blood and make an atonement for sin? No more fitness has *faith* to stand in the stead of Christ's perfect obedience, to act as our justifying righteousness, or procure our acceptance with God!

An apology is really due many of our readers, for wasting their time with such puerilities, but we ask them to kindly bear with us. This magazine goes to quite a number of the followers of Mr. Darby, and we hope it may please God to use this article to expose one of his many grievous errors. For "grievous" *this* error most certainly is. His teaching that the Christian's faith, instead of the vicarious obedience of Christ, is reckoned for righteousness (Mr. W. Kelly, his chief lieutenant, wrote "his [Abraham's] faith in God's word as that which he exercised and which was accounted *as* righteousness"—see article 5) makes God guilty of a downright lie, for it represents Him as giving to faith a *fictitious* value—the believer has no righteousness, so God regards his poor faith *as* "righteousness."

"And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6). The one point to be decided here is, was it Abraham's faith itself which was in God's account taken for righteousness (horrible idea!), or was it the righteousness of God in Christ which Abraham's faith prospectively laid hold of? The comments of the apostle in Romans 4:18-22 settle the point

decisively. In these verses, Paul emphasizes the natural impossibilities which stood in the way of God's promise of a numerous offspring to Abraham being fulfilled (the genital deadness both of his own body and Sarah's), and on the implicit confidence he had (notwithstanding the difficulties) in the power and faithfulness of God that He *would* perform what He promised. Hence, when the apostle adds, "therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" (v. 22), that "therefore" can only mean, Because through faith he completely *lost sight of nature and self*, and realized with undoubting assurance the sufficiency of the divine arm and the certainty of its working.

Abraham's faith, dear reader, was nothing more and nothing else than *the renunciation of all virtue and strength in himself*, and a hanging in childlike trust upon God for what *He* was able and willing to do. Far, very far, indeed, was his faith from being a mere substitute for a "righteousness" which he lacked. Far, very far was God from accepting his faith in lieu of a perfect obedience to His law. Rather was Abraham's faith the acting of a soul which found *its* life, its hope, its all *in the Lord Himself*. And *that* is what justifying faith is—it is "simply the instrument by which Christ and His righteousness are received in order to justification. It is emptiness filled with Christ's fulness—impotency lying down upon Christ's strength" (John L. Girardeau, 1825-1898)).

*The best obedience of my hands
Dares not appear before Thy throne;
But faith can answer Thy demands,
By pleading what my Lord has done.*

What is the relation of faith to justification? Antinomians and hyper-Calvinists answer, Merely that of comfort or assurance. Their theory is that the elect were actually justified by God before the foundation of the world, and all that faith does now is to make this *manifest* in their conscience. This error was advocated by such men as W. Gadsby, J. Irons, James Wells, J.C. Philpot. That it originated not with these men is clear from the fact that the Puritans refuted it in their day. "By faith alone we obtain and receive the forgiveness of sins; for notwithstanding any antecedent act of God concerning us in and for Christ, *we do not actually receive* a complete soul-freeing discharge until we believe" (John Owen, 1616-1683). "It is vain to say I am justified only in respect to the court of mine own conscience. The faith that Paul and the other apostles were justified by, was their believing on Christ that they *might be* justified (Gal 2:15-16), and not a believing they were justified already; and therefore it was not an act of assurance" (Thomas Goodwin, vol. 8, 1600-1680).

How are we justified by faith? Having given a threefold negative answer—not by faith as a joint cause with works (Romanists), not by faith as an act of grace in us (Arminians), not by faith as it receives the Spirit's witness (Antinomians). We now turn to the positive answer. Faith justifies only as an instrument which God has appointed to the apprehension and application of Christ's righteousness. When we say that faith is the "instrument" of our justification, let it be clearly understood that we do not mean faith is the instrument *wherewith* God justifies, but the instrument *whereby* we receive Christ. Christ has merited righteousness for us, and faith in Christ is that which renders it meet in God's sight the purchased blessing be assigned. *Faith unites to Christ*, and being united to Him we are possessed of all that is in Christ, so far as is consistent with our capacity of receiving and God's appointment in giving. Having been made one with Christ in spirit, God now considers us as one with Him in law.

We are justified *by* faith, and not *for* faith—not because of what faith *is*, but because of what it *receives*. “It hath no efficacy of itself, but as it is the band of our union with Christ. The whole virtue of cleansing proceeds from Christ the object. We receive the water with our hands, but the cleansing virtue is not in our hands, but in the water, yet the water cannot cleanse us without our receiving it. Our receiving it unites the water to us and is a means whereby we are cleansed. And therefore is it observed that our justification by faith is always expressed in *the passive*, not in the active. We are *justified* by faith, not that faith *justifies* us. The efficacy is in Christ’s blood, the reception of it is in our faith” (Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680).

Scripture knows no such thing as a justified unbeliever. There is nothing meritorious about believing, yet it is necessary in order to justification. It is not only the righteousness of Christ *as imputed* which justifies, but also *as received* (Rom 5:11, 17). The righteousness of Christ is not mine until I accept it as the Father’s gift. “The believing sinner is ‘justified by faith’ only instrumentally, as he ‘lives by eating’ only instrumentally. Eating is the particular act by which he receives and appropriates food. Strictly speaking, he lives by bread alone, not by eating or the act of masticating. And strictly speaking, the sinner is justified by Christ’s sacrifice alone, not by his act of believing in it” (William Shedd, 1820-1894). In the application of justification faith is not a builder, but a beholder, not an agent, but an instrument. It has nothing to do, but all to believe, nothing to give, but all to receive.

God has not selected faith to be the instrument of justification because there is some peculiar virtue in faith, but rather because there is *no merit* in it—faith is self-emptying—“Therefore it is of faith, *that it might be by grace*” (Rom 4:16). A gift is seen to be a gift when nothing is required or accepted of the recipient, but simply that he *receive* it. Whatever other properties faith may possess, it is simply *as receiving Christ* that it justifies. Were we said to be justified by repentance, by love, or by any other spiritual grace, it would convey the idea of something good in us being the consideration on which the blessing was bestowed, but justification *by faith* (correctly understood) conveys no such idea.

“Faith justifies in no other way than as it introduces us into a participation of the righteousness of Christ” (John Calvin). Justifying faith is a looking away from self, a renouncing of my own righteousness, a laying hold of Christ. Justifying faith consists, first, of a knowledge and belief of the truth revealed in Scripture thereon. Second, in an abandonment of all pretense, claim, or confidence in our own righteousness. Third, in a trust in and reliance upon the righteousness of Christ, laying hold of the blessing which He purchased for us. It is the heart’s approval and approbation of the method of justification proposed in the Gospel—by Christ alone, proceeding from the pure grace of God, and excluding all human merits. “*In the LORD* have I righteousness and strength” (Isa 45:24).

None will experimentally appreciate the righteousness of Christ until they have been experimentally stripped by the Spirit. Not until the Lord puts us in the fire and burns off our filthy rags, and makes us stand naked before Him, trembling from head to foot as we view the sword of His justice suspended over our heads, will any truly value “the best robe.” Not until the condemning sentence of the law has been applied by the Spirit to the conscience does the guilty soul cry, “Lost, lost!” see Rom 7:9-10. Not until there is a personal apprehension of the requirements of God’s law, a feeling sense of our total inability to perform its righteous demands, and an honest realization that God would be just in banishing us from His presence forever, is the necessity for a precious Christ perceived by the soul.

TO A STRICKEN SOUL

My dear Brother: Greetings in the precious name of Him who, in the supreme crisis of His life said, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (Joh 18:11). Those words were uttered by the Lord Jesus on the night of His betrayal—the cross and all it entailed was fully before His view. This sublime utterance of the Saviour’s exhibits His absolute submission unto His Father’s will, the total absence of resistance and murmuring. The words He uttered on that dark, dark night have been placed on record for our instruction, for He has left us “an example” that we should “follow his steps” (1Pe 2:21). As we read these words “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” they should be turned into humble and earnest prayer, that we may be permitted to enter more into the spirit of Christ, that divine grace may be given us so that we shall be enabled to meekly acquiesce unto whatever our all-wise God may appoint.

It is in *heart-submission* to God’s providential dealings with us that true religion largely consists. By nature, man is born “like a wild ass’s colt” (Job 11:12). He wants his own way in everything, and chafes and kicks when his will is crossed and his plans are thwarted. But where a divine work of grace is wrought in the soul, this spirit of rebellion against God is subdued and the love of God is shed abroad in the heart. It is true the old spirit of insubordination is not entirely cast out, yea, it often makes its evil presence felt, for “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit” (Gal 5:17). But the Christian strives against that hostile influence, turns to the Lord for help, and begs Him *to still* the storm going on within, and to bring him into submission.

Yours of April 30 to hand. My heart goes out to you in sympathy in this dark hour, and I feel my helplessness to comfort you. The loss you have sustained is far greater than any human creature can make up—your suffering too acute for any fellow-mortal to alleviate. I may endeavour to pour into your sorely-wounded heart something of “the balm of Gilead” (Jer 8:22), but only the great Physician can give any efficacy to the same. I can do little more than point you to Him who alone can “bind up the broken-hearted” (Isa 61:1). Now is the time for you to *make free with Him*, for He is a “Friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (Pro 18:24). “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1Pe 5:7). Unburden yourself to Him, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15).

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God” (Phi 4:6). Observe well, dear Brother, the words, “With thanksgiving”—that should never be absent from our prayers even amid our acutest sorrows. *You* have much cause for “thanksgiving,” even amid your sobs and groans it is your privilege and duty to own God’s great goodness to you. First, in having favoured you with one who was such a faithful wife and devoted mother to your children—that was “of the LORD,” and *His* hand should be duly acknowledged. It was purely of His distinguishing mercy that you were not plagued with

a contentious, nagging, undutiful wife, such as thousands of men have. Own, then, unto the God of all grace His goodness, for a “prudent wife is from the LORD” (Pro 19:14).

Second, you should present unfeigned “thanksgiving” unto God that He spared your beloved wife unto you for so many years. This, too, is entirely of His good pleasure. A parent, a wife, a child, is *loaned* to us for a season, and the One who gives decides for how long. Often the wife is removed from the husband quite early, often her life is taken in child-bearing. *You* have been highly favoured, and instead of dwelling exclusively on her *removal* from you, seek, dear Brother, to praise God for *sparing* her to you for so many years! It was a signal mercy and blessing that she remained until her children attained their majority. God might have called her years ago and left you with motherless babes on your hands!

Third, if as your letter denotes, you have good ground to conclude your dear wife was one of the high favourites of heaven—an elect, regenerated, and redeemed soul, trusting only in the merits of Christ for her acceptance with God—then you have abundant cause for “thanksgiving” that she has been removed from this wilderness of woe and translated to the Paradise of bliss! Think, then, not only of *your great loss*, but of *her immeasurable gain*! She is now done with sin and suffering forever. She is with the spirits of just men made perfect. She is in the immediate presence of the Lamb! Would you, if you could, call her back from heaven itself to this sad world?

Fourth, what “thanksgiving” should ascend from your heart in the assurance that you have *not* parted to meet no more! It was thus that David found comfort when his dear child was taken from him, “I shall go to him” (2Sa 12:23). Only for a brief season at most will you be separated from your loved one. Ere long the call will come for you to join her in that place where partings are no more. You shall be united with her again, not a few brief years, but *forever*! Let, then, this blissful prospect cheer your drooping heart. Dwell not on the *brief* period of separation, but on the *eternal* dwelling together on High.

But you are not in heaven yet. No, God sees fit to leave you on earth a little longer. Why? To teach your heart some needed lessons, to bring good out of apparent evil, to make this sorrowful loss a real enrichment to your soul. *This* too is among the “all things” which work together for good to them that love God. If the Spirit of God is pleased to *sanctify* this affliction unto you, it will prove a real blessing in disguise. It is your duty and privilege *to ask* Him so to do—to beg Him to *bless* to you the chastening rod. May I suggest one or two lines of meditation which, if pursued by you and blessed to you by God, *will* enable you to improve this experience.

1. Learn anew *the terribleness of sin*. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12). Yes, had sin never entered this world, no graves had ever been dug in it. Every funeral should be a forceful reminder to us of what the Fall has brought in! Every funeral ought to beget in us a deeper hatred of sin. It was *sin* which necessitated the death of God’s beloved Son. Then how we should loathe it, seek grace to resist its evil solicitations, and follow hard after its opposite—holiness.

2. See now the great importance of *holding with a light hand* all God’s temporal mercies. The best of them are only loaned us for a season and we know not how early we shall be called to relinquish them. It is the part of wisdom for us to recognize and remember this while they *are* in our hands, not to grasp them too tightly, nor to look upon them as ours to enjoy forever down here. Holy Writ bids us to “rejoice with trembling” (Psa 2:11), for that which delights my heart

this morning may be taken from me before the shades of night fall. The more I live with this fact before me, the less shall I feel the loss when it comes!

3. Endeavour to get your heart *more weaned from this perishing world*. “Set your affection on things above, *not on things on the earth*” (Col 3:2). But we are slow to heed this exhortation and often God has to use drastic means to bring us to a compliance with it. It is for our own good as well as His glory that we do so. It is only the heavenly things that abide, then let us seek grace to have our hearts more and more set upon *them*.

*Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.*

4. Seek to demonstrate now to your fellows *the reality of true religion*. The test of a soldier is not while he is on parade, but when he enters the battle. So it is spiritually. In seasons of prosperity even the worldling is contented and happy, but in times of adversity it becomes evident that he knows nothing of the source of real and lasting joy. Only the real child of God is enabled to say, “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; *blessed be the name of the LORD*” (Job 1:21). Earnestly seek supernatural help from above, dear Brother, that you may be enabled to manifest before your fellows the *sufficiency* of divine grace to strengthen and support—to show you *do* have a peace and comfort which the Christless are strangers to.

Now, dear Brother, I have snatched several hours from a busy life to try and send you a few lines both of comfort and counsel. May it please the God of all grace to bless them to you. Read, and re-read what I have written, and above all turn it into definite prayer. Write me again when you feel like so doing. Sorrow not as others who have no hope. Doubt not the Lord’s goodness. Look forward to the future and it will nerve you for the duties of the present. Assuring you again of my heart-felt sympathy, and of my poor prayers, I am, Yours by God’s abounding mercy, A.W. Pink. Psalm 55:22.

The above is a copy of a letter which was sent to one who had suddenly been plunged into the deep waters of bereavement. We felt that perhaps its contents might be pertinent to the cases of others of our readers who have lately been called on by God to give up loved ones. May it also speak to those Christian husbands who still have their wives with them, and move them to treat their partners with that love, sympathy, patience, gentleness, considerateness, which is their due.

OVER-RIGHTEOUS

“Be not righteous over much” (Ecc 7:16). Some of our readers may be surprised to discover that there *is* such a statement as this in Holy Writ, and at first glance consider it an exhortation we do not need. Yet on second thought they should perceive that their hasty conclusion was wrong, for there can be nothing in the imperishable Word of God which is superfluous, and no precept which we can dispense with without suffering loss. Even in this day of abounding lawlessness, of rapidly increasing moral laxity, when there is such an urgent need for pressing the righteous claims of God upon one another, the Christian requires to give careful heed to this word, “Be not righteous over much.” It is a question of sound interpretation, of rightly understanding the

meaning and application of this divine injunction. First, let us briefly point out what our text does not mean.

“Be not righteous over much” (Ecc 7:16). Those words have often been quoted in the past by empty professors against those children of God whose conscientiousness and piety condemned their looseness. They have said, “I do not feel that such carefulness and preciseness are required of us. You are altogether too punctilious over trifles. Why make yourself, and all you come into contact with, miserable? what need is there for so much denying of self, separation from the world, and acting differently from other people?” They argue, “Christ did everything *for* us which God requires of us.” Anything which made real demands upon them, which called for the mortification of the flesh, for the laying aside of “every weight” which would hinder from running the race God has set before His people, they counted as “fanaticism,” “puritanic,” being “righteous over much.” And *their* tribe is not extinct! But such is obviously a perversion of our text. We cannot love God too much, nor keep His precepts too diligently.

What, then, is the force of these words, “Be not righteous over much”? First, let it be duly observed that our text occurs in the *Old Testament*. The Lord God knew the temper of the Jews, their proneness to lean upon their own works and trust in the sufficiency of them to secure their acceptance before Him. Therefore did He place this word on record to warn them against indulging in the spirit of self-destruction, against pretending unto a greater righteousness than they actually had. In this very same chapter, only two or three verses later, He tells them plainly, “There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (v. 20). Thus the righteousness of Another is absolutely indispensable if any sinner is to find acceptance with the thrice Holy God. Beware, then, of thinking more highly of yourself than you ought to think and being proud in your own conceits. The need for such a word, and their utter disregard of it, was plainly evidenced by the self-righteous Pharisees of Christ’s day, who trusted in their own performances and despised and rejected Him.

But the truly regenerated soul has been delivered from this fatal tendency of the unrenewed heart. He has been supernaturally enlightened and convicted by the Spirit of Truth. He has been shown how impossible it is *for him* to meet the high requirements of God, and has been made to feel that his best doings are but “filthy rags” in God’s sight. What, then, is the legitimate application of this exhortation unto himself, “Be not righteous over much”? Answer—by assuming duties to which *God* has not called us, by undertaking austerities which *God* has not enjoined. We read of “the commandments and doctrines *of men*” with *their* “touch not; taste not; handle not” (Col 2:21-22), and to be brought under bondage to *them*, is being “righteous *over much*,” for it is going beyond what God Himself has prescribed for us.

The Jewish rabbis and scribes invented a vast number of traditions and ceremonies over and above what God commanded, supposing that by observing the same they were *holier* than others and even condemned the Lord Jesus because He declined to observe their rules, see Mark 7:2, 5—and let it be duly observed that Christ and His disciples refused to heed *their* scruples, though He knew they would be “offended” or hurt! The same principle is operative among the poor Papists, with their invention of “works of supererogation,” the “celibacy” of their “priests,” their “Lenten fasts,” etc. are examples. Nor is the same evil absent among Protestants. Many of them have invented laws and rules, demanding that Christians totally abstain from some of the “all things” which God has given us richly “to *enjoy*” (1Ti 6:17), though not to abuse, compliance therewith is being “righteous” *over much*!

“Be not righteous over much” (Ecc 7:16). This word has a manifold application to Christians today. Be not too rigorous in standing up for your “rights,” but “in love *serve* one another.” Refuse not to help the beast out of the pit, simply because he falls into one on the Sabbath day! Let your zeal in “service” be regulated by the rules of Holy Writ. Insist not upon your full “pound of flesh,” having received mercy of God, exercise mercy towards others. Beware of paying more attention to the outward forms of religion than to the cultivation of the heart. “There may be overdoing in well doing” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Some have wrecked their constitutions by over-study, over-fasting, and by refusing lawful means. Nothing is required of us but what *God* has enjoined *in His Word*.



November

THE HOLY SPIRIT

23. The Spirit Comforting (Part 1)

The saving work of the Spirit in the heart of God's elect is a gradual and progressive one, conducting the soul step by step in the due method and order of the Gospel to Christ. Where there is no self-condemnation and humiliation there can be no saving faith in the Lord Jesus, "Ye...repented not afterward, *that ye might believe him*" (Mat 21:32) was His own express affirmation. It is the burdensome sense of sin which prepares the soul for the Saviour, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are *heavy laden*" (Mat 11:28). Without conviction there can be no contrition and compunction. He that sees not his wickedness and guilt never mourns for it. He that feels not his filthiness and wretchedness never bewails it.

Never was there one tear of true repentance seen to drop from the eye of an unconvicted sinner. Equally true is it that without illumination there can be no conviction, for what is conviction but the application to the heart and conscience of the light which the Spirit has communicated to the mind and understanding, Acts 2:37. So, likewise, there can be no effectual illumination until there has been a divine quickening, for a dead soul can neither see nor feel in a spiritual manner. In this order, then, the Spirit draws souls to Christ, He brings them from death unto life, shines into their minds, applies the light to their consciences by effectual conviction, wounds and breaks their hearts for sin in compunction, and then moves the will to embrace Christ in the way of faith for salvation.

These several steps are more distinctly discerned in some Christians than in others. They are more clearly to be traced in the *adult* convert, than in those who are brought to Christ in their youth. So too they are more easily perceived in such as are drawn to Him out of a state of *profaneness* than those who had the advantage of a pious education. Yet in them, too, after conversion, the exercises of their hearts—following a period of declension and backsliding—correspond thereto. But *in this order* the work of the Spirit is carried on, ordinarily, in all, however it may differ in point of clearness in the one and in the other. God is a God of order both in nature and in grace, though He be tied down to no hard and fast rules.

By His mighty work of illumination and conviction, with the humiliation which is wrought in the soul, the Spirit effectually weans the heart forever from the comfort, pleasure, satisfaction, or joy that is to be found in sin, or in any creature, so that his soul can never be quiet and contented,

happy or satisfied, till it finds the comfort of God in Christ. Once the soul is made to feel that sin is the greatest of all evils, it sours for him the things of the world, he has lost his deep relish for them forever, and nothing is now so desirable unto him as the favour of God. All creature comforts have been everlastingly marred and spoiled, and unless he finds comfort in the Lord there is none for him anywhere.

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her” (Hos 2:14). When God would win His Church’s heart to Him, what doeth He? He brings her into “*the wilderness*,” that is, into a place which is barren or devoid of all comforts and delights, and then and there He “speaks comfort to her.” Thus too He deals with the individual. A man who has been effectually convicted by the Spirit is like a man condemned to die, what pleasure would be derived from the beautiful flowers as a murderer was led through a lovely garden to the place of execution! Nor can any Spirit-convicted sinner find contentment in anything till he be assured of the favour of Him whom he has so grievously offended. And none but *God* can “speak comfortably” to one so stricken.

Though God acts as a sovereign, and does not always shine in the same conspicuous way into the hearts of all His children, nevertheless, He brings them all to *see light* in His light, to know and feel that there can be no salvation for them but in the Lord alone. By the Spirit’s powerful illuminating and convicting operations, the sinner is made to realize the awful disparity there is between God and himself, so that he feebly cries, “How can a poor wretch like me ever stand before such a holy God, whose righteous law I have broken in so many ways, and whose ineffable majesty I have so often insulted?” By that light, the convicted soul eventually is made to feel its utter inability to help itself, or take one step toward the obtainment of holiness and happiness. By that light, the quickened soul both sees and feels there can be no access to God, no acceptance with Him, save through the Person and blood of Christ, but how to get at Christ the stricken soul knows not.

“And I will give her her vineyards *from thence*, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope” (Hos 2:15), such is the comforting promise of God to the one whom He proposes to “allure” or win unto Himself. First, He hedges up the sinner’s way with “thorns” (Hos 2:6), piercing his conscience with the sharp arrows of conviction. Second, He effectually battles all his attempts to drown his sorrows and find satisfaction again in his former lovers (v. 7). Third, He discovers his spiritual nakedness and makes all his mirth to cease (vv. 10-11). Fourth, He brings him into the “wilderness” (v. 14), making him feel his case is desperate indeed. And then, when all hope is gone, when the poor sinner feels there is no salvation for him, “a door *of hope*” is opened for him even in “the valley of Achor” or “trouble,” and what is that “door of hope” but the *mercy* of God!

It is by putting into his mind thoughts of God’s mercy that the Spirit supports the fainting heart of the convicted sinner from sinking beneath abject despair. Now it is that the blessed Spirit helps his infirmities with “groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom 8:26) and in the midst of a thousand fears he is moved to cry, “God be merciful *to me* a sinner” (Luk 18:13) But “we must through *much* tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22)—true alike of the initial entrance into the kingdom of grace and the ultimate entrance into the kingdom of glory. The Lord heard the “groaning” of the poor Hebrews in Egypt, and “had respect unto them” (Exo. 2:23-25), nevertheless, He saw it was good for them to pass through yet sorer trials before He delivered them. The deliverer was presented to them and hope was kindled in their hearts (Exo. 4:29-31), yet the time appointed for their exodus from the house of bondage had not yet arrived.

And *why was* the deliverance of the Hebrews delayed after Moses had been made manifest before them? Why were they caused to experience yet more sorely the enmity of Pharaoh? Ah, the Lord would make them to feel their *impotency* as well as their wretchedness, and would exhibit more fully *His* power over the enemy. So it is very often (if not always) in the experience of the quickened soul. Satan is now permitted to rage against him with increased violence and fury (Zec 3:1). The devil accuses him of his innumerable iniquities, intensifies his remorse, seeks to persuade him that he has committed the unpardonable sin, assures him he has transgressed beyond all possibility of divine mercy, and tells him his case is hopeless. And, my reader, were the poor sinner left to himself, the devil would surely succeed in making him do as Judas did!

But, blessed be His name, the Holy Spirit does not desert the convicted soul, even in its darkest hour, He secretly upholds it and grants at least temporary respites, as the Lord did the Hebrews in Egypt. The poor Satan-harassed soul is enabled “*against hope*” to “believe *in hope*” (Rom 4:18) and to cry, “Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die” (Psa 79:11). Yet before deliverance is actually experienced, before that peace which passeth all understanding is communicated to his heart, before the redemption “which is in Christ Jesus” becomes his conscious portion, the soul is made to feel its complete impotency to advance one step toward the same, that it is entirely dependent upon the Spirit for that faith which will enable him to lay hold of Christ.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

83. The Demands of Faith (12:1)

Our present verse is a call to constancy in the Christian profession. It is an exhortation unto steadfastness in the Christian life. It is a pressing appeal for making personal holiness our supreme business and quest. In substance our text is parallel with such verses as Matthew 16:24, Romans 6:13, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Philippians 3:12-14, Titus 2:12, 1 Peter 2:9-12. This summarization of the Christian’s twofold duty is given again and again in the Scriptures, the duty of mortification and of vivification, the putting off of the “old man” and the putting on of the “new man” (Eph 4:22-24). Analyzing the particular terms of our text, we find there is, first, the duty enjoined, to “run the race that is set before us.” Second, the obstacles to be overcome, “lay aside every weight” etc. Third, the essential grace which is requisite thereto, “patience.” Fourth, the encouragement given, the “great cloud of witnesses.”

The opening “Wherefore” in our text looks back to 10:35-36, where the apostle had urged, “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.” That exhortation had been followed by a lengthy proof of the efficacy of persevering faith to enable its possessors to do whatever God commands, however difficult; to endure whatever God appoints, however severe; to obtain what He promises, however seemingly unattainable. All of this had

been copiously illustrated in Chapter 11, by a review of the history of God's people in the past, who had exemplified so strikingly and so blessedly the nature, the trials, and the triumphs of a spiritual faith. Having affirmed the *unity* of the family of God, the oneness of the Old and New Testament saints, assuring the latter that God has provided some better thing for us, the apostle now repeats the exhortation unto steadfast perseverance in the path of faith and obedience.

“*Wherefore* seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, *let us*” (Heb 12:1). Here the apostle applies the various illustrations given in the preceding chapter, making use of them as a grand motive to perseverance in the Christian faith and state. “If all the saints of God lived, suffered, endured, and conquered by faith, shall not we also? If the saints who lived before the incarnation, before the redemption was accomplished, before the High Priest entered the heavenly sanctuary, trusted in the midst of discouragements and trials, how much more ought we who know the name of Jesus, who have received the beginning, the installment of the great Messianic promise?” (Adolph Saphir, 1831-1891). Herein we are shown that only then do we read the Old Testament narratives unto profit when we draw from them the incentives to practical godliness.

In Hebrews 11, we have had described at length many aspects and characteristics of *the life of faith*. There we saw that a life of faith is an intensely practical thing, consisting of very much more than day-dreaming, or being regaled with joyous emotions, or even resting in orthodox views of the truth. By faith, Noah built an ark, Abraham separated from his idolatrous neighbors and gained a rich inheritance, Moses forsook Egypt and became leader of Israel's hosts. By faith, the Red Sea was crossed, Jericho captured, Goliath slain, the mouths of lions were closed, the violence of fire was quenched. A spiritual faith, then, is not a passive thing, but an active, energetic, vigorous, and fruitful one. The *same* line of thought is continued in the passage which is now before us, the *same* branch of truth is there in view again, only under a figure—a figure very emphatic and graphic.

“Let us *run* with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1). Here the Christian is likened unto an athlete and his life unto the running of a race. This is one of a number of figures used in the New Testament to describe the Christian life. Believers are likened to shining lights, branches of the vine, soldiers, strangers and pilgrims. The last-mentioned more closely resembling the figure employed in our text, but with this difference, travelers may rest for awhile and refresh themselves, but the racer must *continue* running or he ceases to be a “racer.” The figure of the race occurs frequently, both in the Old and New Testament, Psalm 119:32, Song of Solomon 1:4, 1 Corinthians 9:24, Philippians 3:14, 2 Timothy 4:7. Very solemn is that word in Galatians 5:7, “ye *did* run well.” The Lord, in His mercy, grant that *that* may never be said of writer or reader.

The principal thoughts suggested by the figure of the “race” are rigorous self-denial and discipline, vigorous exertion, persevering endurance. The Christian life is not a thing of passive luxuriation, but of active “*fighting* the good fight of faith!” (1Ti 6:12). The Christian is not called to lie down on flowery beds of ease, but to run a race, and athletics are strenuous, demanding self-sacrifice, hard training, the putting forth of every ounce of energy possessed. I am afraid that in this work-hating and pleasure-loving age, we do not keep this aspect of the truth sufficiently before us, we take things too placidly and lazily. The charge which God brought against Israel of old applies very largely to Christendom today, “Woe to them that are *at ease* in Zion” (Amos 6:1), to be “at ease” is the very opposite of “running the race.”

The “race” is that life of faith and obedience, that pursuit of personal holiness to which the Christian is called by God. Turning from sin and the world in penitence and trust to Christ is not the finishing-post, but only the starting-point. The Christian race begins at the new birth and ends not till we are summoned to leave this world. The prize to be run for is heavenly glory. The ground to be covered is our journey through this life. The track itself is “set before us,” marked out in the Word. The rules to be observed, the path which is to be traversed, the difficulties to be overcome, the dangers to be avoided, the source and secret of needed strength, are all plainly revealed in the Holy Scriptures. If we lose, the blame is entirely ours—if we succeed, the glory belongs to God alone.

The prime thought suggested in the figure of running the race set before us is not that of speed, but of self-discipline, whole-hearted endeavour, the calling into action of every spiritual faculty possessed by the new man. In his helpful commentary, John Brown (1784-1858) pointed out that a race is *vigorous* exercise. Christianity consists not in abstract speculations, enthusiastic feelings, or specious talk, but in directing all our energies into holy actions. It is a *laborious* exertion, the flesh, the world, the devil are like a fierce gale blowing against us, and only intense effort can overcome them. It is a *regulated* exertion, to run around in a circle is strenuous activity, but it will not bring us to the goal. We must follow strictly the prescribed course. It is *progressive* exertion, there is to be a growth in grace, an adding to faith of virtue, etc. (2Pe 1:5-7), a reaching forth unto those things which are before.

“Let us *run* with patience the race that is set before us.” We only “run” when we are very anxious to get to a certain place, when there is some attraction stimulating us. That word “run,” then, presupposes the heart eagerly set upon the goal. That “goal” is complete deliverance from the power of indwelling sin, perfect conformity to the lovely image of Christ, entrance into the promised rest and bliss on High. It is only as *that* is kept steadily in view, only as faith and hope are in real and daily exercise, that we shall progress along the path of obedience. To look back will cause us to halt or stumble. To look down at the roughness and difficulties of the way will discourage and produce slackening, but to keep the prize in view will nerve to steady endeavour. It was thus our great Exemplar ran, “Who for the JOY *that was set before him*” (Heb 12:2).

But let us now consider, secondly, the means prescribed, “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.” That might be tersely expressed in several different forms, let us relinquish those things which would impede our spiritual progress. Let us endeavour with might and main to overcome every hindering obstacle. Let us attend diligently unto the way or method which will enable us to make the best speed. While sitting at our ease, we are hardly conscious of the weight of our clothes, the articles held in our hands, or the cumbersome objects we may have in our pockets. But let us be aroused by the howlings of fierce animals, let us be pursued by hungry wolves, and methinks that none of us would have much difficulty in understanding the meaning of those words, “Let us lay aside every *weight!*” (Heb 12:1).

“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us” (Heb 12:1). While no doubt each of these expressions has a definite and separate force, yet we are satisfied that a certain school of writers err in drawing too sharp and broad a line of distinction between them, for a careful examination of their contention will show that the very things they consider to be merely “weights,” are, in reality, *sins*. The fact is that in most quarters there has been, for many years past, a deplorable lowering of the standard of divine holiness, and numerous infractions of God’s righteous laws have been wrongly termed “failures,” “mistakes,” and “minor blemishes,” etc. Anything which minimizes the reality and enormity of sin is to be steadfastly resisted. Anything which tends to excuse human “weaknesses” is to be rejected. Anything which reduces that

standard of absolute perfection which God requires us to constantly aim at—*every* missing of which is a *sin*—is to be shunned.

“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us” (Heb 12:1) is parallel with, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross” (Mat 16:24), and “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (2Co 7:1). In other words, this dehortation is a calling upon the Christian to “mortify the deeds of the body” (Rom 8:13), to “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1Pe 2:11). There are two things which racers discard, all unnecessary burdens and long flowing garments which would entangle them. Probably there is a reference to both of these in our text, the former being considered under “weights,” or those things we voluntarily encumber ourselves with, but which should be dropped. The latter, “the sin which doth so easily beset us” referring to inward depravity.

“Let us lay aside every weight” is a call to the sedulous and daily mortification of our hearts to all that would mar communion with Christ, it is parallel with “*denying* ungodliness and worldly lusts” (Ti 2:12). Everything which requires us to take time and strength away from God-appointed duties, everything which tends to bind the mind to earthly things and hinders our affections from being set upon things above, is to be cheerfully relinquished for Christ’s sake. Everything which impedes my progress in running the race which God has set before me is to be dropped. But let it be carefully recognized that our text makes *no* reference to the dropping of *duties* which we have no right to lay aside. The performing of real and legitimate duty is never a hindrance to the spiritual life, though from a wrong attitude of mind and the allowance of the spirit of *discontent*, they often become so.

Many make a great mistake in entertaining the thought that their spiritual life is being much hindered by the very things which should, by divine grace, be a real help to them. Opposition in the home from ungodly relatives, trials in connection with their daily work, the immediate presence of the wicked in the shop or office, *are* real trials (and God intends they *should* be—to remind us we are still in a world which lieth in the wicked one, to exercise our graces, to prove the sufficiency of His strength), but they need not be hindrances or “weights.” Many erroneously suppose they would make much more progress spiritually if only their “circumstances” were altered. This is a serious mistake and a murmuring against God’s providential dealings with us. *He* shapes our “circumstances” as a helpful discipline to the soul, and only as we learn to rise above circumstances, and walk with God in them, are we running “the race that is set before *us*” (Heb 12:1). The *person* is the same no matter what “circumstances” he may be in!

While the “weights” in our text have no reference to those duties which God requires us to discharge—for *He* never calls us to anything which would draw us away from communion with Himself, yet they *do* apply in a very real sense unto a multitude of cares which many of God’s people *impose upon themselves*—cares which are a grievous drag upon the soul. The artificial state in which many people now live, which custom, society, the world, imposes, *does* indeed bind many heavy burdens on the backs of their silly victims. If we accept that scale of “duties” which the fashion of this world imposes, we *shall* find them “weights” which seriously impede our spiritual progress, spending valuable time in reading newspapers and other secular literature in order to “keep up with the times,” exchanging “social calls” with worldlings, spending money on all sorts of unnecessary things so as to be abreast of our neighbors, are “weights” burdening many, and those “weights” are *sins*.

By “weights” then, may be understood every form of intemperance or the immoderate and hurtful use made of any of those things which God has given us “richly to *enjoy*” see 1Ti 6:17.

Yes, to “enjoy” be it noted, and not only to *use*. The Creator has placed many things in this world—like the beautiful flowers and the singing birds—for our pleasure, as well as for the bare supply of our bodily needs. This should be borne in mind, for there is a danger here, as every where, of lopsidedness. We are well aware that in this age of fleshly indulgence the majority are greatly in danger of erring on the side of laxity, yet in avoiding this sin, others are in danger of swinging to the other extreme and being “righteous over much” (Ecc 7:16), adopting a form of monastic austerity, totally abstaining from things which Scripture in nowise prohibits.

Each Christian has to decide for himself, by an honest searching of Scripture and an earnest seeking of wisdom from God, *what* are the “weights” which hinder *him*. While on the one hand, it is wrong to assume an haughty and independent attitude, refusing to weigh in the balances of the sanctuary the conscientious scruples and prejudices of fellow-Christians, on the other hand, it is equally wrong to suffer any to lord it over our consciences and deprive us of our Christian liberty. “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” It is not the lawful use of God’s creatures, but the intemperate abuse of them which Scripture condemns. More die from over eating than over drinking. Some constitutions are injured as much by coffee as by whisky. Some are undermining their health by a constant round of exertions. Others enervate themselves by spending too much time in bed.

The Greek word for “weights” is “tumor or swelling,” so that an excrescence, a superfluity, is what is in view. A “weight” is something which we are at liberty to cast aside, but which instead we choose to retain. It is anything which retards our progress, anything which unfits us for the discharge of our God-assigned duties, anything which dulls the conscience, blunts the edge of our spiritual appetite, or chokes the spirit of prayer. The “cares of this world” weigh down the soul just as effectually as does a greedy grasping after the things of earth. The allowance of the spirit of envy will be as injurious spiritually as would an attendance at the movies. Fellowshiping a Christ-dishonouring “church” quenches the Spirit as quickly as would seeking diversion at the dance hall. The habit of gossiping may do more damage to the spiritual life than the excessive smoking of tobacco.

One of the best indications that I *have* entered the race is the discovery that certain things, which previously never exercised my conscience are a hindrance to me, and the further I “run,” the more conscious shall I be of the “weights.” And the more determined I am, by God’s grace, to reach the winning post, the more readily shall I drop them. So many professing Christians never seem to have any “weights,” and we never see them *drop* anything. Ah, the fact is, they have never entered the race. O to be able to say with Paul, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phi 3:8). When this is true of us, we shall not find it difficult, but rather easy to obey that injunction, “Go from the presence of a foolish man, [or woman] when thou perceivest not in him the *lips* of knowledge” (Pro 14:7), and so with many other Scriptural exhortations.

“And the sin which doth so easily beset [Greek, “encompass”] us” (Heb 12:1). As we have already pointed out, the writer regards the “weights” as external temptations which have to be resisted, evil habits which are to be dropped, and “the sin” as referring to indwelling corruption, with a special reference (as the whole context suggests) to the workings of *unbelief*, compare Hebrews 3:13. It is true that each of us has some special form of sin to which we are most prone, and that he is more sorely tempted from one direction than another, but we think it is very clear from all which precedes our text that what the apostle has particularly in mind here is that which most seeks to hinder the exercise of *faith*. Let the reader ponder John 16:8-9.

“This is confirmed by the experience of all who have been exercised in this case, who have met with great difficulties in, and have been called to suffer for, the profession of the Gospel. Ask of them what they have found in such cases to be their most dangerous enemy, what hath had the most easy and frequent access unto their minds, to disturb and dishearten them, of the power thereof they have been most afraid. They will all answer with one voice, it is the evil of their own unbelieving hearts. This hath continually attempted to entangle them, to betray them, in taking part with all outward temptations. When this is conquered, all things are plain and easy unto them. It may be some of them have had their particular temptations which they may reflect upon, but any other evil by sin, which is *common unto them all*, as this *is*, they can fix on none” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

But *how* is the Christian to “lay aside” indwelling sin and its particular workings of unbelief? This injunction is parallel with Ephesians 4:22, “That ye put *off* concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.” And how is *that* to be done? By heeding the exhortation of Romans 6:11-12, “Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.” In other words, by faith’s recognition of my legal oneness with Christ and by drawing from His fullness. Indwelling sin is to be “laid aside” by daily mortification (Rom 8:13), by seeking grace to resist its solicitations (Ti 2:11-12), by repenting, confessing, and forsaking the effects of its activities (Pro 28:13), by diligently using the means which God has provided for holy living, Galatians 5:16.

“Run *with patience* the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1). Perseverance or endurance is the prime prerequisite for the discharge of this duty. The good-ground hearer brought forth fruit “with patience” (Luk 8:15). We are bidden to be “followers of them who through faith *and patience* inherit the promises” (Heb 6:12). The “race” appointed is a lengthy one, for it extends throughout the whole of our earthly pilgrimage. The course is narrow, and to the flesh, rough. The racer often becomes disheartened by the difficulties encountered. But “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal 6:9).

But how is this needed “patience” to be acquired? A twofold answer is given, the second part of which will be before us in the next article. First, by heeding the encouragement which is here set before us, “*Wherefore* seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, *let us* lay aside....*let us* run.” The reference is to the heroes of faith mentioned in the previous chapter, they depose a testimony for God, and speak unto future generations to be constant as they were. They witness to how noble a thing life may be when it is lived by faith. They witness to the faithfulness of God who sustained them, and enabled them to triumph over their foes, and overcome their difficulties. In likening these numerous witnesses unto a “cloud,” there is no doubt a reference unto the cloud which guided Israel in the wilderness, they *followed* it all the way to Canaan! So must we follow the noble example of the Old Testament saints in their faith, obedience, and perseverance.

“*Wherefore* seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, *let us*” (Heb 12:1). This is mentioned as an incentive, to console and assure us we are not alone. As we look around at the empty profession on every side, and behold the looseness and laxity of so many who bear the name of Christ, Satan seeks to make us believe that we are wrong, too “strict,” and rebukes us for our “singularity.” No doubt he employed the same tactics with Noah, with Abraham, with Moses, but they heeded him not. Nor should we. We are *not* “singular”, if faithful to Christ we are following “the footsteps of the flock” (Song 1:8). Others before us have trod the

same path, met with the same hindrances, fought the same fight. *They* persevered, conquered, and won the crown, then “*let us* run.” That is the thought and force of the opening words of our text.

“We who have still to walk in the narrow path which alone leads to glory are encouraged and instructed by the cloud of witnesses, the innumerable company of saints, who testified amid the most varied circumstances of suffering and temptation, that the just live by *faith*, and that faith is the victory which overcometh the world. The memory of those children of God, whose lives are recorded for our learning and consolation, animates us, and we feel upheld as it were by their sympathy and by the consciousness, that although few and weak, strangers and pilgrims on earth, we belong to a great and mighty, nay, a victorious army, part of which has already entered into the land of peace” (Adolph Saphir).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

35. His Capturing Zion

In 2 Samuel 5:6-9, a brief record is given of David wresting the stronghold of Zion out of the hands of the Canaanites, and of his making it the capital of his kingdom. This, it is to be noted, is the first thing recorded of our hero after all the tribes of Israel had made him their king. By noting that order we obtain the key to the typical significance of the incident which is now to be considered by us. In the previous article, we pointed out that the coronation of David, after the season of his humiliation, was a beautiful foreshadowing of the exaltation of his Son and Lord, the enthronement on high of that blessed One who had been, in the main, despised and rejected by men on the earth. It therefore follows that the noble exploits of David after he came to the throne, strikingly prefigured the work and triumphs of our ascended and glorified Redeemer. It is thus, by looking beneath the mere historical upon the pages of the Old Testament, that we discover “in the volume of the book” it is written of *Christ*.

The long-cherished desire of David’s heart—implanted there by God Himself—had been accomplished, and he was now the head and governor of Israel. His real work had only just commenced, his most glorious achievements were still to be accomplished. His being crowned king over all Israel was but preparatory unto the royal conquests he was to make. His previous exploits only served to manifest his qualification for the honoured position and the important work which God had appointed him. So it was with the Antitype. The enthronement of the Mediator at the right hand of the Majesty on high was but the introduction to the stupendous undertaking which God had assigned Him, “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet” (1Co 15:25)—a very plain intimation that His “reign” has already commenced. The life-work, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, simply laid the foundation upon which His royal conquests are now being achieved.

It is a great and serious mistake made by many to suppose that the Lord Jesus is now *inactive*, and to regard His being “seated” as denoting a state of inertia—such Scriptures as Acts 7:55 and

Revelation 2:1 ought at once to correct such an idea. The word “sat” in Scripture marks an end *and a beginning*, the process of preparation is ended, and the established order is begun—cf. Genesis 2:2, Acts 2:3. We say again that the real work of Christ (His atonement but laying the foundation thereof) began only after He was invested with “all power [i.e. “authority”] in heaven and in earth” see Mat 28:18. This was plainly announced in the Messianic Psalms, after God has set His King upon His holy hill of Zion, He was to ask of Him and the heathen would be given Him for His inheritance, and He would reign over them with a “rod of iron” (Psa 2). “*Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies,*” was the Father’s word to Him (Psa 110).

To His chosen servants the Lord Jesus declared “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Mat 28:20). On the day of Pentecost Peter declared, “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, *he* [Jesus] hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Act 2:33). Later, we are told, “they went forth, and preached every where, *the Lord working with them*, and confirming the word with signs following” (Mar 16:20). There is much in the book of Revelation which makes known to us the various activities in which the ascended Saviour is engaged, into which we cannot enter. But sufficient has here been produced to show that the King of saints is now wielding His mighty scepter to good effect.

Most blessedly was that which has been before us above typed out by the crowned David. Upon his ascension to the throne, he was far from indulging in ease or self-luxuriation. It was now that his best achievements were accomplished. In that section of 2 Samuel, which we are entering, we behold David capturing the stronghold of Zion, vanquishing the Philistines, providing a resting-place for the holy ark, and being concerned in building a temple for the worship of JEHOVAH. So blessed is each of these incidents, so rich is their typical and spiritual import, that we purpose, the Lord enabling, to devote an article unto the separate consideration of each of them. May the Spirit of truth graciously undertake for both writer and reader, giving us eyes to see and hearts to appreciate the “wondrous things” hidden away in this portion of God’s Holy Word.

“And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites” (2Sa 5:6). “If Salem, the place which Melchizedek was king of, was Jerusalem (as seems probable from Psalm 76:2), it was famous in Abraham’s time; Joshua in his times found it the chief city of the south part of Canaan, Joshua 10:1, 3. It fell to Benjamin’s lot (Jos 18:28), but joined close to Judah’s (Jos 15:8). The children of Judah had taken it (Jdg 1:8), but the children of Benjamin suffered the Jebusites to dwell among them (Jdg 1:21); and they grew so upon them that it became a city of Jebusites (Jdg 19:11). Now the very first exploit David did after he was anointed king over all Israel, was to gain Jerusalem out of the hands of the Jebusites; which, because it belonged to Benjamin, he could not well attempt till that tribe, which long adhered to Saul’s house, submitted to him” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

“And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither” (2Sa 5:6). The wording of the second half of this verse appears rather ambiguous, and we believe the translation given in the “Companion Bible” is to be preferred, “thou shalt not come in hither, for the blind and the lame shall drive thee away.” It was the language of utter contempt. The Jebusites were so assured of the impregnability of their stronghold that they considered the feeblest of their men would be quite sufficient to defend it against any attack of David and his army.

The “Jebusites” were Canaanites who inhabited the country surrounding Jerusalem, and who occupied the fortress of Zion. The tribe of Judah had once failed to drive them out (Jos 15:63), and later the children of Benjamin met with no more success (Jdg 1:21). So secure did they now deem themselves that when David purposed its capture, they met him with insulting ridicule. In this we have an illustration of the fact that the enemies of God are often most confident of their strength when the day of their fall is most imminent. Thus also it frequently appears in the history of the salvation of God’s elect, their case seems to be most hopeless immediately before the hand of divine mercy snatches them as brands from the burning. Thus it was with the dying thief, delivered at the eleventh hour; with Saul of Tarsus, as he was persecuting the church; with the Philippian jailor, as he was on the point of committing suicide. Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.

“Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David” (2Sa 5:7). The literal or material “Zion” was a steep hill which lay just outside Jerusalem, to the south west, on which had been built a fortress to protect the city. It had two heads or peaks, Moriah, on which the temple was afterwards erected, and the other on which was built the future residence of the kings of Israel. So steep and inaccessible was Zion that, like a smaller Gibraltar, it had remained in the hands of Israel’s foes. But undeterred by the natural difficulties and unmoved by the contemptuous confidence of the Jebusites, David succeeded in wresting it from the enemy, and became the founder of that Jerusalem which existed from that time onwards.

“Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David” (2Sa 5:7). Previously, he had reigned for seven years over Judah “in Hebron” (2Sa 5:5), but now that he had been anointed king over all Israel he cast his eyes toward Jerusalem, as a preferable metropolis, and a more suitable seat of his extending empire. But as long as the hill of Zion was occupied by the military Jebusites, they would retain their command of the lower city. His first step, therefore, was, by the help of God, to dispossess the enemy of their stronghold. There David henceforth dwelt, as a conqueror, as in a castle (1Ch 11:7). There he fixed his royal abode, and there he swayed his scepter over the whole land of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba.

“So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward” (2Sa 5:9). Millo seems to have been the town hall, or statehouse, a place of public convention, compare 2 Kings 12:20, 2 Chronicles 32:5. Around Millo, David erected such buildings as became his capital or seat of government, for the reception of the court which he kept. “And David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him” (2Sa 5:10). The tide of fortune had turned, and the once despised fugitive now waxed great in power and reputation, in wealth and honour, subduing his enemies, and enlarging his dominion. But all his success and prosperity was entirely owing to JEHOVAH showing Himself strong on his behalf, without His enablement, none of us can accomplish anything good, John 15:5.

Now there would be little or no difficulty in our perceiving the typical significance of the above were it not that so many of our minds have been blinded by the errors of modern “dispensationalism.” A careful study of the connections in which “Zion” is found in the Psalms and Prophets makes it clear that “Zion” was the name by which the Old Testament church was usually called. “For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed” (Psa 132:13-17). Let the dubious (and also the interested) reader ponder such verses as Psalms 74:2; 87:5; 102:13; 133:3; Isaiah 51:16.

The Old Testament church was designated “Zion” after the mount on which the Temple was built, whither the tribes of Israel went up to worship JEHOVAH, who dwelt between the cherubim. This name was duly transferred to the New Testament church, which is grafted into the Old, as the teaching upon the “olive” tree in Romans 11 shows, and as the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 2:19-22 and 3:6 expressly states. Such passages as Romans 11:26 (note carefully it is “*out of Sion*” and *not* “unto Sion”), Hebrews 12:22, 1 Peter 2:6, Revelation 14:1, make it plain that the New Testament church is denominated “Sion,” for the church is now God’s abode upon earth, His “temple” (2Co 6:16), His “city” (Eph 2:19), His “Jerusalem” (Gal 4:26—“which is above” is not to be understood astronomically, but means “which *excels*”). Thus, all that is spoken of “Zion,” of “the city of God,” of “Jerusalem” in the Old Testament in a *spiritual* way belongs unto Christians now, and is for their faith to appropriate and enjoy.

The history of Jerusalem and Zion (for they are inseparably connected) accurately foreshadowed what is found spiritually in the antitype. The first reference to the same in Scripture presents that city as being under the benign sceptre of Melchizedek (Gen 14:18), so, originally, the church was blest with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph 1:3). But, next, we see this city no longer in subjection to the servant of God, but fallen into the hands of the heathen, so the church apostatised in Adam, God’s elect sinking to the natural level of the non-elect. Zion now became inhabited by a race who were under the curse of God (Gen 9:25), so, in consequence of the Fall, God’s elect were by nature “the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph 2:3). For centuries Zion refused to be subject unto the people of God (Jdg 1:21), so the Gentiles were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel” etc. (Eph 2:11-12).

But eventually, Zion was subdued and captured by David, and made his royal residence, the Temple also being erected upon one of its mounts. Thus the stronghold of the enemy was converted into a habitation of God and became the throne of His government upon earth. Wondrous figure was this of Christ’s conquest of the *Gentile church* (Act 15:14) unto Himself, wresting it out of the hand of the enemy, bringing it into subjection unto Himself, and setting up His throne in the hearts of its individual members. Announcement to this effect was made by the Saviour when He declared, in view of His immediate death (Joh 12:32), “Now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (Joh 12:31). Satan was to be dethroned and driven from his dominion, so that Christ would “draw” unto Himself many of those over whom the devil had reigned (Eph 2:2). It is to be noted that the tense of the verb there denotes that the “casting out” of Satan would be as *gradual* as the “drawing” (Alford).

At the cross, the Lord Jesus “spoiled principalities and powers,” and at His ascension He “made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Col 2:15 and cf. Eph 4:8). At Calvary, Satan’s hold over the world was broken, “the prince of this world is judged” (Joh 16:11). Then it was that the “strong man” (the devil) was “overcome” by One stronger than himself, his armour being taken from him, and his “spoils” (captives) divided (Luk 11:21-22). And a *manifestation* of this fact is made every time an elect soul is delivered “from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col 1:13). Christ’s frequent casting out of demons from the bodies of men during the days of His flesh presaged His delivering the souls of His redeemed from the dominion of Satan during this Gospel era.

That which our present type sets forth is not the Lord Jesus paying the ransom-price for the purchase of His people (particularly, those among the *Gentiles*), but His actual redeeming or delivering them from the power of the enemy. As David’s capture of Zion *followed* his coronation, so that work his conquest prefigured pointed to the victorious activities of Christ *after* His ascension. It is that which was foretold in Psalm 110:1-3. First, “Sit thou at my right hand.”

Second, “The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength [the Gospel in the power of the Spirit] out of Zion.” Third, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” One by one those whom the Father gave to Christ are subdued by His grace, made willing to throw down the weapons of their warfare against His Son, and His throne is set up in their hearts, 2 Corinthians 10:5.

It is beautiful to note that the meaning of the word Zion is “sunny” or “shone upon,” as facing the south, basking in the rays of the warm sun. So the spiritual Zion, delivered by Christ (through His post-ascension activities) from the dominion of Satan, has been brought into the unclouded favour of God. The type is completed by what we read of in 2 Samuel 5:11, “And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house.” In the sending of those messengers to David by *Hiram*, proffering to build him a house, we have the foreshadowment of Christ’s being acknowledged by the *Gentiles* (cf. Isa 60:3), and their being built into His spiritual house (Eph 2:22; 1Pe 2:5).

THE COVENANTS OF GOD

3b. The Adamic (Continued)

In the preceding article, we pointed out at some length that when Adam stood in Eden as a responsible being before his Creator, he stood there as the *Federal Head* of our race, that he legally transacted on the behalf of all his posterity, that in the sight of the divine law we were all so absolutely identified with him as to be accounted “in Adam.” Hence what he did, all are regarded as having done—when he sinned, we sinned—when he fell, we fell—when he died, we died. The language of Romans 5:12-19 and 1 Corinthians 15:22 is so plain and positive on this point as to leave no valid room for any uncertainty. Having viewed, then, the *representative* office or position which Adam occupied, we turn to consider the covenant which God made with him at that time. But before so doing, let us observe how admirably equipped Adam was to fill that eminent office and transact for all his race.

It is exceedingly difficult, if not altogether impossible in our present state for us to form any adequate conception of the most excellent and glorious endowment of man in his first estate. Negatively, he was entirely free from sin and misery. Adam had no evil ancestry behind him, no corruption within him, nothing in his body to distress him. Positively, he was made in the image and likeness of God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, endued with a wisdom and holiness to which Christians are as yet, in themselves, strangers. He was blest with unclouded communion with God, placed in the fairest of environments, given dominion over all creatures here below, and graciously provided with a suitable helpmate. Fair as the morning was that blissful heritage into which Adam was estated. Made “upright” (Ecc 7:29) and endowed with full ability to serve, delight in, and glorify his Creator.

Though pronounced by God Himself, “very good” (Gen 1:31) on the day of his creation, Adam was, nevertheless, a *creature*, and as such, subject unto the authority of the One who had

given him being. God governs all rational beings by law, as the rule of their obedience to Him. To that principle there is no exception, and in the very nature of things cannot be, for God must enforce His rights as Lord over all. Angels (Psa 103:20), unfallen man, fallen men, redeemed men, are subject to the moral government of God. Even the beloved Son, when He became incarnate, was “made under the law” (Gal 4:4). Moreover, in the case of Adam his character was not yet *confirmed*, and therefore, like the angels, he must be placed on probation, subjected to trial, to see whether or no he would render allegiance to the Lord his Maker.

Now the law which God gave to Adam, under which He placed him, was threefold, natural, moral, and positive. By the first, we mean that subjection to his Creator—acting for His honour and glory—was constituted the very law of his being. Being created in the image and likeness of God, it was his very *nature* to delight himself in the Lord, and reproduce (in his creature measure) God’s righteousness and holiness. Just as the animals are endowed with a nature of instinct which prompts them to choose and do that which makes for their well-being, so man in his pristine glory was endued with a nature which prompted him to do that which is pleasing unto God, and that which promoted his own highest interests—the remains of which appear in fallen man’s rationality and conscience.

By the “moral” law which was given to Adam by God, we mean that he was placed under the requirements of the ten commandments, the summary of which is “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself.” Nothing less than that was due unto Adam’s Maker, and nothing short of it became him as an upright creature. By “positive” law, we mean that God also placed certain restrictions upon Adam which had never occurred to him from either the light of nature or from any moral considerations, instead, they were sovereignly appointed by God and were designed as a special *test* of Adam’s subjection to the imperial will of his King. The term “positive law” is employed by theologians not as antithetical to “negative,” but in contrast from those laws which are addressed to our *moral* nature, prayer is a “moral” duty, baptism is a “positive” ordinance.

This threefold law under which Adam was placed may be clearly discerned in the brief records of Genesis 1 and 2. The marriage between Adam and Eve illustrates the first, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen 2:24), any infraction of the marital relationship is a violation of the very law of *nature*. The institution and consecration of the Sabbath exemplifies the second, “And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work” (Gen 2:3), a procedure that would be inexplicable except as furnishing the ground for a like procedure on the part of man, for otherwise the hallowing and benediction spoken of must have lacked both a proper subject and a definite aim—in every age man’s observance of the holy Sabbath has been made the supreme test of his *moral* relation to the Lord. The command for Adam to care for the garden (“dress it and keep it,” Gen 2:15) demonstrates the third, even in the unfallen state man was not to be idle and shiftless.

From the above it is plainly evident that there was the distinct recognition of and outward revelation to Adam of those three great branches of duty which appertain to man in every possible condition of mortal existence, and which unitedly comprehend every obligation upon man in this life, namely, what he owes to God, what he owes to his neighbor, and what he owes to himself—those three embrace everything. The sanctification of the Sabbath, the institution of marriage, and the command to dress and keep the garden were revealed as outward ordinances, covering the three classes of duties, each of supreme importance in its own sphere, the spiritual, the moral, and

the natural. Those intrinsic elements of divine law are immutable, they preceded the covenant of works, and would have remained had the covenant been kept—as they have survived its breach.

But there was need for something of a still more specific kind to test man's adherence to the perfect rectitude incumbent upon him, for in Adam humanity was on trial, the whole race not only having been potentially created in him, but being federally represented by him. "The question, therefore, as to its proper decisiveness, must be made to turn on conformity to an ordinance at once reasonable in its nature and specific in its requirements—an ordinance which the simplest should understand and respecting which no uncertainty could exist whether it had been broken or not. Such in the highest degree was the appointment respecting the tree of knowledge of good and evil, forbidden of God to be eaten on pain of death—an appointment positive in its character, in a certain sense arbitrary, yet withal perfectly natural" (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874, "The Revelation of Law in Scripture").

Adam was now subjected to a simple and specific test as to whether the will of God was sacred in his eyes. Nothing less than perfect conformity of heart and unremitting obedience in act to the whole revealed will of God could be required of man. The command not to eat of the fruit of a certain tree was now made the decisive test of his general obedience. The prohibitory statute was a "positive" precept. It was not sinful *per se* to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but only so because God had forbidden it. It was, therefore, a more suitable test of faith and obedience than a "moral" statute would have been, submission being required for no other reason than the sovereign will of God. At the same time let it be clearly observed that disobedience of that "positive" precept certainly involved defiance of the "moral" law, for it was a failure to love God with all the heart, it was contempt of divine authority, it was coveting that which God had forbidden.

On the basis of the threefold constitution under which God had placed Adam—amenable to natural, moral, and positive law; on the basis of his threefold responsibility—to perform the duty which he owed unto God, unto his neighbour, unto himself; and on the basis of the threefold equipment with which he had been endowed—created in the image of God, pronounced "very good," indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and thus fully furnished to discharge his responsibility, God entered into a solemn compact with him. Clothed in dignity, intelligence, and moral excellence, Adam was surrounded on every side by exquisite beauty and loveliness. The occupant of Eden was more a being of heaven, than of earth, an embodiment of wisdom, purity, and uprightness. God Himself deigned to visit and cheer him with His presence and blessing. In body perfectly sound, in soul completely holy, in circumstances blissfully happy.

The ideal fitness of Adam to act as the head of his race, and the ideal circumstances under which the decisive test was to be made must forever shut every fair and honest mouth against objecting to the arrangement God proposed to Adam, and the fearful consequences which his sad failure have brought down upon us. It has been well said, "Had we been present—had we and all the human race been brought into existence at once—and had God proposed to us that we should choose one of our number to be our representative that he might enter into covenant with him on our behalf—should we not, with one voice, have chosen our first parent for this responsible office? Should we not have said, 'He is a perfect man and bears the image and likeness of God,—if any one is to stand for us let him be the man.' Now,—since the angels who stood for themselves, fell—why should we wish to stand for ourselves. And if it be reasonable that one stand for us—why should we complain, when God has chosen the same person for this office, that *we* would have chosen, had we been in existence, and capable of choosing ourselves?" (George Sayles Bishop, 1836-1914).

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17). The contracting parties in this covenant were God and Adam. First, God as supreme Lord, prescribing what was equitable. God as *goodness* itself, promising communion with Himself—in which man’s happiness principally lies—while treading the path of obedience and doing that which was well-pleasing to his Maker. But God also as *justice* itself, threatening death upon rebellion. Second, Adam considered both as man and as the head and representative of his posterity. As man, he was a rational and responsible being, endowed with sufficient powers to fulfill all righteousness, standing not as a feeble babe, but a fully developed man—a fit and fully qualified subject for God to enter into covenant with him. As head of the race, he was now called upon to transact in the nature and strength with which the Creator had so richly furnished him.

Yet it is clear that the covenant of works proceeded on the assumption that man in his original condition—though “made upright”—was *capable of* falling, just as the covenant of grace proceeds on the assumption that man, though fallen and depraved, is—through Christ—capable of being restored. “God made man male and female, with righteousness and true holiness, having the law of God in their hearts, and power to fulfill it; and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their will, which was subject to change” (Westminster Confessions of Faith). In the closing words of that quotation some light is cast upon that mysterious question, How could a sinless creature *first sin*? How could one made “upright” fall? How could one whom God Himself had pronounced “very good” give ear to the devil, apostatize, and drag down himself and his posterity to utter ruin?

While in our present state perhaps it is not possible for us to fully solve this profound problem, yet it is our conviction that we may perceive the direction in which the solution lies. In the first place, Adam was *mutable* or subject to change. Necessarily so, for mutability and creaturehood are correlative terms. There is only One “with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam 1:17). The essential attributes of God are incommunicable, for the Deity to bestow omniscience, omnipotence, or immutability on others would not be to bring into existence creatures, but would be raising up *Gods*, equal with Himself. Therefore, while Adam was a perfect creature, he was but a *creature*, mutable and not immutable. And being mutable, he was subject to change either for the better or for the worse, and hence, liable to fall.

In the second place, Adam was constituted a *responsible* being, a moral agent, being endowed with a free will, and therefore he was capable both of obedience and disobedience. Moreover, though the first man was endowed with both natural and spiritual wisdom amply sufficient for all his needs, leaving him entirely without excuse if he made a false and foolish choice, nevertheless, he was but *fallible*, for infallibility pertains unto God alone, as Job 4:18 more than hints. And therefore being fallible, Adam was capable of erring, though to do so was culpable to the highest degree. Mutability and fallibility are the conditions of existence of every *creature*, and while they are not blemishes, yet they are potential dangers, which can only be prevented from working ruin by the creature constantly looking to the Creator for His upholding grace.

In the third place, as a responsible being, as a moral agent, as one who was endowed with free will, Adam had necessarily to be *placed on probation*, submitted to a real test of his fealty unto God, before he was *confirmed*, or given an abiding standing in his creature perfections. Because Adam was a *creature*, mutable and fallible, he was entirely *dependent* upon his Creator, and therefore he must be put upon trial to show whether or no he would assert his *independency*, which would be open revolt against his Maker and the repudiation of his creaturehood. Every creature must necessarily come under the moral government of God, and for free agents that

necessarily implies and involves two possible alternatives—subjection or insubordination. The absolute dominion of God over the creature, and the complete dependence and subjection of the creature to God, holds good in every part of the universe and throughout all ages. The inherent poison in every error and evil is the rejection of God’s dominion, of man’s dependence upon his Maker, or the assertion of his independency.

Being but mutable, fallible and dependent, the noblest and highest creature of all is *liable* to fall from his fair estate, and can only be preserved therein by the sovereign power of his Creator. Being endowed with free will, man was capable both of obedience and disobedience. Had He so pleased, God could have upheld Adam, and that *without* destroying his accountability or infringing upon his liberty, but unless Adam had been left to *his own* creature wisdom and strength there had been no *trial* of his responsibility and powers. Instead, God offered to man the opportunity of being confirmed as a holy and happy creature, secured on the condition of his own personal choice, so that his probation being successfully closed, he had been granted a firm standing before God. But God permitted Adam to disobey, to make way for the more glorious obedience of Christ—suffered the covenant of works to be broken that the far better covenant of grace might be administered.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Carson on Esther (Part Eleven)

If times of trouble are before us—if God is about to call His people to suffer for His sake, let us in the book of Esther alleviate our sorrow with the consideration that God rules in the storm. He can disperse the darkest clouds. He can preserve us in the midst of the thunderbolts. So He can give us peace and joy in the most violent death. Is it not consolation that persecution is by *His* appointment, and that in the end it will turn out for His glory as well as our good?

Even persecution may be commissioned to benefit the Church of God. It may effect what prosperity has kept far away. It may bring Christians into one body, as they have the one Lord. Their common sufferings will tend to unite them and the afflictions of the house of God will tend to its purification. The millions who are Christians only in name, and who now by their union with the people of God defile the temple, and cramp the exertions of believers, may then take their proper place. The interests, the prejudices, and the habits of Christians combine to keep them in ignorance of the nature of Christ’s kingdom, and of the laws and institutions with which He has furnished them. When worldly temptations seek to deceive, Christians may become more tractable, and what they did not learn in the time of their peace, they may soon learn in a time of danger. A man may learn at the stake what he could not see in the pulpit.

The consideration that the whole course of affairs on earth is directed by the overruling hand of Providence, as it is kept so conspicuously before our eyes in this book, may be highly useful to Christians in regulating their zeal in the cause of God. The mountains that lie in the way of the

Gospel appear so impassable that any means that promise to facilitate the passage is sometimes eagerly employed, *without reference to the authority of divine appointments*. The end is made to sanctify the means. Evil is done that good may come. Means are employed that God hath not ordained—that God hath forbidden. Any means are supposed warrantable, if it appears that the thing cannot otherwise be effected. It is to this baneful principle that the union of the church with the world owes its origin. The nations of the earth, in all their sins, are made a sort of Christians by name, and the enjoyment of the ordinances appointed only for the people of God. In all the worshipping assemblies in Christendom, separate the disciples, and what a poor figure will they make in the eyes of the world! How would they support the Gospel! To act on this principle would, in the opinion of many, be to banish Christianity from the earth. However reluctant some may be to desecrate the ordinances of Christ, they think they *must* do it, or suffer Satan to triumph over Christ. They complain of the decay of religion—they pray for better times—they strive to breathe life into the dry bones—they warn sinners of their danger, but still they give *them* the ordinances of Christ, for they cannot work without them. *Numbers are necessary for the existence of a sect*, and Christ's ordinances must be misapplied *in order to promote the system*.

Now I intreat Christians who act on this principle, to consider what an affront it casts on the Head of the Church. Who is it that governs the world? Has the Lord Jesus given up to the devil the power He received from His Father after His resurrection? Does He not still hold all power in heaven and on earth? Does not the book of Esther show that His providence extends to all events? May they not learn here that their Lord directs the actions even of His enemies to fulfill His will? Look here, and behold a few scattered Jews defending themselves, and destroying their enemies in all the provinces of the Persian empire. In the cause of God, then, *let them employ no means but such* as are sanctioned by the appointment of Christ. Let the ark of God itself fall, rather than put a hand to it contrary to divine authority.

It is from the same principle that such an eagerness is always discovered to enlist the authority of kings and rulers in the cause of Christ, although they themselves may give all the weight of their example to the kingdom of Satan. Christians in general seem to think that there is no hope of protection for Christianity from civil rulers unless they are nominally embodied in their ranks. For the sanction of power they barter the ordinances of Christ. In the book of Esther let them learn that their Lord is the King of kings, and Lord of lords—that *He rules in the midst of His enemies* (Psa 110:2)—and that He can make the most tyrannical princes the protectors of His people when He pleases. Ahasuerus, who had by an irreversible decree doomed to destruction the whole people of God, was, *without* any conversion to God, *without any proselytism to Judaism*, made the most zealous friend that ever appeared in favour of the house of Abraham. He not only with the utmost zeal co-operated for their deliverance from the intended destruction, but gave up to them, to the immense injury of his kingdom, all their enemies in his dominions. He gave them unlimited authority to kill their enemies and spoil their substance. The kings of the earth are the ministers of God, as such they ought to be honored, *but give them not the throne of the Lord Jesus Christ*. If they are not Christians by being born again through faith in the great propitiation made on the cross, and walk in newness of life, *let them not be called Christians*—give them not the ordinances of the house of God.

In the book of Esther, the conductors of the various religious societies ought to take a lesson. I am afraid there are few of them that do not need it. The craft, the management, the bartering of the Christian name with Neologians and heretics for co-operation, money, and countenance, that some of them have employed, would induce one to think that *they consider the Lord Jesus Christ to be dethroned*, and that His friends must work without Him till the restoration. I rejoice in all

the good done by any of them. I wish I could convince them that they will do the more good *the more closely they abide by* the means afforded by the Head of the Church. Jesus rules on the earth as well as in heaven, and those who honour Him He will honour to do His will. What have the Samaritans to do in building the temple of God? Has Christ lost command over the treasures of the earth, that we must have recourse to the bounty of Satan? He will give us his contribution, no doubt, but he will have a niche in the edifice in which a statue must be worshipped. It would be more pleasant for me to be bandying compliments with the religious world, than to incur their displeasure by acting as their censor. But wholesome admonition is better than praise. Though the generality may despise it, some Christians may receive benefit. They may be led to see that in the propagation of the Gospel, the Lord Jesus has no need of the countenance or co-operation of His enemies. The book of Esther will teach them that He can effect His purposes, even through those ignorant of Him, without embodying them among His disciples.

In the book of Esther, the Christian may see the union of two things apparently irreconcilable—the free agency of man and the overruling appointment of God. Philosophers have exhausted their ingenuity in endeavouring to fathom this abyss, but their line has proved too short. Some have erred with respect to both sides of the question. They have held that actions are not free, and that they are necessary in such a sense as to render man inexcusable in guilt. On this foundation some ground the duty of charity. If a man sins under a necessity of this kind, there is no propriety in blaming him for his conduct. In the book of Esther, we may see that man's actions are his own, yet that they are, in another point of view, the appointment of God. We see here that man is accountable and blamable when he sins, yet we see that these very sinful actions are the appointment of God to effect His own purposes.

The philosophers who contend for the freedom of human actions, generally deny the eternal decrees of God, because their wisdom cannot reconcile these two things with one another. And must not the penetration of philosophers fathom the deep things of God? Proud worms! can nothing be true of God, but what your minds can penetrate?

In reading the writings of philosophers on this subject, nothing can be more evident than that one party has proved that men act freely, and that the other proves as clearly that the foreknowledge of God implies the certainty of all actions as they are foreknown. In so far each is right on his own side, but wrong as to the other. They will fight as long as the devil has use for the discussion, for on their own principle, the dispute can never be settled. The human mind is not able to fathom the subject. They are struggling to grasp infinity. They are both right, and both wrong. Truth lies between them, each of them has a hold of its skirt, but neither of them entirely possesses it. It cannot be seized, except it is believed without being comprehended. This removes it altogether out of the road of the philosopher, for he cannot receive anything for which he cannot account.

While the philosophers dispute, and under the specious name of lovers of wisdom, prove themselves fools, let the Christian, from the book of Esther behold *the freedom of human actions in union with divine appointment*. Let him not affect to strut in the buskins of the schools and pretend to explain what on this subject he receives *on the authority of God*. Let him receive it because the Word of God exhibits it, not because his wisdom can fathom the depth of the divine counsels. The most illiterate man of God, who receives with meekness what the Scriptures lay before him, is, with respect to the deepest subjects of philosophy, a greater philosopher than any of the mere sons of science. They may seize truth by the garment and tear away a shred, but the Christian, believing the divine testimony, possesses the substance.

I am sorry to be obliged to remark that Christians too generally affect the philosopher on this subject. They have separated what God has joined together because they could not comprehend the union, and, from prepossession in favour of one part of truth, have been led to give up or explain away the other. Some, out of zeal for the doctrine of the freedom of the human will, have, in opposition to the clearest testimony of Scripture, denied the decrees of God. While others, from a false zeal for the honour of the divine counsels, have denied the freedom of human action. Both of them, inconsistently with their character as Christians, act on the same principle of unbelief with the philosopher. *They deny what they cannot comprehend.* Like infidels, they assume it as a first principle, that nothing is to be received as truth that is not comprehensible to the mind of man.

When will Christians cease from their own wisdom? when will they in all things submit to the testimony of God? when will they practically admit that God may know, and therefore call upon them to believe what *they* cannot comprehend? Will man never cease to make himself equal with God? will the Christian never learn that he is nothing? Disciple of Jesus, go to the book of Esther and acquaint yourself with the deepest point of philosophy. There see the solution of the question that has occupied the wise from the very cradle of philosophy, but which philosophy has never solved—which it is not capable of solving, or any other principle than submission to the testimony of God. Degrade not your Master, my fellow Christians, by modeling His doctrine according to the profane speculations of the schools. If any man will be really wise, let him become a fool in the estimation of the world, that he may be wise in the estimation of his God.

Let us read the book of Esther, and in the view of the overruling government of God, let us console ourselves in contemplating the melancholy prospect of this world in which the counsels of nations in every age are conducted by the enemies of God. We hear much of Christian nations and Christian rulers, but where is the nation in which the counsels of the ungodly do not prevail? where is the government that is conducted strictly on Christian principles? Statesmen, it is true, seek to manage Christianity like every other state engine, and therefore affect to support it. But where is the assembly of legislators, in which it is visible that the Lord God is feared as He ought to be feared? This is a gloomy subject for the contemplation of the man of God. But let him turn his eye to the book of Esther, and behold the Lord God Omnipotent reigning and working His will by the very instruments employed by Satan to defeat His purposes. God rules even in the counsels of the ungodly. God will glorify Himself even by the very empire of Satan.

It is a heart-rending thing to reflect on the sin and misery that prevail in this world. Let us relieve ourselves, in some measure, by this consideration, that God has done all things according to the counsel of His own will. Is the Almighty disappointed in His work of creation? has Satan prevailed over Him because of his strength? or will any real dishonour attach to God by the rebellion of men and angels? Impossible—away with the accursed thought! These clouds before my eyes are dark and lowering—I cannot penetrate that gloom—I see nothing but confusion and wretchedness. The very glory of this world is vanity. Its highest enjoyments are unsatisfying. But though I cannot see through this dreadful darkness, I will look beyond it by the eye of faith. *God reigns and all things therefore must issue in the glory of His name and the happiness of His people.*—Alexander Carson, 1853.

N.B. We highly commend the above series of articles (which began in the January issue) to the attention of thoughtful readers, and would urge the student to re-read them. Mr. Carson preserved the balance of truth to an extent that very few writers did, happily he was not bound by any human system or creed, nor was he the slave of any sect or party. Much in these articles is

highly illuminating, and all is most timely for the day in which our lot is cast. They honour God by giving Him His rightful place, may His blessing rest upon them.

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

9. Its Evidence

In Romans 3:28, the apostle Paul declared, “that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,” and then produces the case of Abraham to prove his assertion. But the apostle James, from the case of the same Abraham, draws quite another conclusion, saying, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jam 2:24). This is one of the “contradictions in the Bible” to which infidels appeal in support of their unbelief. But the Christian, however difficult he finds it to harmonize passages apparently opposite, knows there cannot be any contradiction in the Word of *God*. Faith has unshaken confidence in the inerrancy of Holy Writ. Faith is humble too and prays, “That which I see not teach thou me” (Job 34:32). Nor is faith lazy. It prompts its possessor unto a reverent examination and diligent investigation of that which puzzles and perplexes, seeking to discover the subject of each separate book, the scope of each writer, the connections of each passage.

Now the design of the apostle Paul in Romans 3:28 may be clearly perceived from its context. He is treating of the great matter of a sinner’s justification before God. He shows that it cannot be by works of the law, because by the law all men are condemned, and also because if men were justified on the ground of their own doings, then boasting could not be excluded. Positively he affirms that justification is by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. His reasoning will appear the more conclusive if the whole passage (Rom 3:19-28) be read attentively. Because the Jews had a high regard of Abraham, the apostle proceeded to show in the fourth chapter of Romans that Abraham was justified in that very way—apart from any works of his own, by faith alone. By such a method of justification the pride of the creature is strained and the grace of God is magnified.

Now the scope of the apostle James is very different, his epistle was written to counteract quite another error. Fallen men are creatures of extremes, no sooner are they driven out of the false refuge of trusting to their own righteousness, than they fly to the opposite, and no less dangerous error of supposing that, since they cannot be justified by their own works, that there is no *necessity* whatever for good works, and no *danger* from ungodly living and unholy practice. It is very clear from the New Testament itself that very soon after the Gospel was freely proclaimed, there arose many who turned the grace of God into “lasciviousness,” that this was not only quickly espoused in theory, but soon had free course in practice. It was therefore the chief design of the apostle James to show the great wickedness and awful danger of unholy practice and to assert the imperative necessity of good works.

The apostle James devoted much of his epistle to the exposing of any empty profession. In his second chapter, particularly, he addresses himself unto those who rested in a *notion* which they called “faith,” accounting an intellectual assent to the truth of the Gospel sufficient for their salvation, though it had no spiritual influence upon their hearts, tempers, or conduct. The apostle shows their hope was a vain one, and that *their* “faith” was not a whit superior to that possessed by the demons. From the example of Abraham he proves that justifying faith is a very different thing from the “faith” of empty professors, because it enabled him to perform the hardest and most painful act of obedience, even the offering up of his only son upon the altar, which act took place many years after he had been justified by God, and which act *manifested* the reality and nature of his faith.

From what has been said above, it should be very evident that the “justification” of which Paul treats is entirely different from the “justification” with which James deals. The doctrine of the former is that nothing renders any sinner acceptable to God but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The doctrine of the latter is that such a faith is not solitary, but accompanied with every good work, and that where good works are absent, justifying faith cannot exist. James is insistent that it is not enough to *say* I have justifying faith, I must *give proof* of the same by exhibiting those fruits which love toward God and love toward men necessarily produce. Paul writes of our justification before God, James of our justification before men. Paul treats of the justification of *persons*—James, of the justification of our *profession*. The one is by faith alone, the other is by a faith which worketh by love and produces obedience.

Now it is of first importance that the above-mentioned distinctions should be clearly grasped. When Christian theologians affirm that the sinner is justified by faith *alone*, they do not mean that faith *exists alone* in the person justified, for justifying faith is always *accompanied* by all the other graces which the Spirit imparts at our regeneration. Nor do they mean that nothing else is required in order to our receiving forgiveness from God, for He requires repentance and conversion as well as faith (Act 3:19). No, rather do they mean that there is nothing else in sinners themselves to which their justification is in Scripture ascribed, nothing else is required of them or exists in them which stands in *the same relation* to justification as their faith does, or which exerts any casual influence or any efficacy of instrumentality *in producing* the result of their being justified (Condensed from William Cunningham, 1810-1861).

On the other hand, that faith which justifies is not an idle and inoperative principle, but one that purifies the heart (Act 15:9) and works by love (Gal 5:6). It is faith which can easily be distinguished from that mental faith of the empty professor. It is *this* which the apostle James insists so emphatically upon. The *subject* of this epistle is not salvation by grace and justification by faith, but the *testing* of those who claim to have faith. His design is not to show the *ground* on which sinners are accepted before God, but to make known that which *evidences* a sinner’s having been justified. He insists that the tree is known by its fruits, that a righteous person is one who walks in the paths of righteousness. He declares that the man who is not a *doer* of the Word, but a “hearer *only*,” is self-deceived, deluded. When God justifies a man, He sanctifies him too, the two blessings are inseparable, never found apart.

Unless the subject and scope of James’ epistle be clearly seen, the apprehension of many of its statements can only issue in God-dishonouring, grace-repudiating, soul-destroying error. To this portion of the Word of God, more than any other, have legalists appealed in their opposition to the grand truth of justification by grace, through faith, without works. To the declarations of this epistle have they turned to find support for their Christ-insulting, man-exalting, Gospel-repudiating error of justification by human works. Merit-mongers of all descriptions cite James 2

for the purpose of setting aside all that is taught elsewhere in Scripture on the subject of justification. Romanists, and their half-brothers the Arminians, quote, “Ye see then how that *by works* a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jam 2:24), and suppose that ends all argument.

We propose now to take up James 2:14-26 and offer a few comments thereon. “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” (Jam 2:14). Observe carefully that the apostle does not here ask, “What doth it profit a man though he *hath faith* and have not works?”—such a supposition is nowhere countenanced by the Word of God, it were to suppose the impossibility for wherever *real* faith exists, good works necessarily follow. No, instead he asks, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man (*not* “one of you”!) *say* he hath faith?” Professing to be a Christian when a man is not one, may secure a standing among men, improve his moral and social prestige, obtain membership in a “church,” and promote his commercial interests, but can it *save* his soul?

It is not that those empty professors who call themselves Christians are all (though many probably are) conscious hypocrites, rather are they deceived souls, and the tragic thing is that in most places there is nothing in the preaching which is at all calculated to *un-deceive* them. Instead, there is only that which bolsters them up in their delusion. There is a large class in Christendom today who are satisfied with a bare profession. They have heard expounded some of the fundamentals of the Christian faith, and have given an intellectual assent thereto, and they mistake *that* for a saving knowledge of the truth. Their minds are instructed, but their hearts are not reached, nor their lives transformed. They are still worldly in their affections and ways. There is no real subjection to God, no holiness of walk, no fruit to Christ’s glory. Their “faith” is of no value at all, their profession is vain.

“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” (Jam 2:14). By noting the emphasis upon the word “say,” we perceive at once that James is arguing against those who substituted a theoretical belief of the Gospel for the whole of evangelical religion, and who replied to all exhortations and reproofs by saying, “We are not justified by our works, but by faith alone.” He therefore begins by asking what profit is there in professing to be a believer, when a man is devoid of true piety? The answer is, none whatever. To merely *say* I have faith when I am unable to appeal to any good works and spiritual fruits as the *evidence* of it, profits neither the speaker nor those who listen to his empty talk. Ability to prate in an orthodox manner about the doctrines of Christianity is a vastly different thing from justifying faith.

“If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” (Jam 2:15-16). Here the apostle shows by an opposite illustration the utter worthlessness of fair talking which is unaccompanied by practical deeds, notice the “*say* unto them, depart in peace” etc. What is the use and value of feigning to be charitable when the *works* of charity are withheld? None whatever, empty bellies are not filled by benevolent words, nor are naked backs clothed by good wishes. Nor is the soul saved by a bare profession of the Gospel.

“Faith which worketh by *love*” (Gal 5:6). The first “fruit of the spirit,” that is of the new nature in the regenerated soul, is “*love*” (Gal 5:22). When faith has truly been wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, that faith is manifested in *love*—love toward God, love toward His commandments (Joh 14:23), love toward the brethren, love toward our fellow-creatures. Therefore in *testing* the “faith” of the empty professor, the apostle at once *puts to the proof* his

love. In showing the pretense of his *love*, he proves the worthlessness of his “faith.” “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1Jo 3:17)! Genuine love is *operative*, so is genuine faith.

“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (Jam 2:17). Here the apostle applies the illustration he has employed to the case before him, proving the worthlessness of a lifeless and inoperative “faith.” Even our fellow-men would promptly denounce as valueless a “love” which was gushing in words but lacking in works. Unregenerate people are not deceived by those who talk benignly to the indigent, but who refuse to minister unto their needs. And think you, my reader, that the omniscient God is to be imposed upon by an empty profession? Has He not said, “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say?” (Luk 6:46).

That “faith” which is only of the lips and is not confirmed by evidence in the life is useless. No matter how clear and sound may be my head-knowledge of the truth, no matter how good a talker upon divine things I am, if my walk is not controlled by the precepts of God, then I am but “sounding brass and a tinkling symbol.” “Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” It is not a living and fruitful faith, like the faith of God’s elect, but a thing which is utterly worthless—“dead.” It is “alone,” that is, divorced from love to God and men and every holy affection. How could our holy Lord approve of *such* a “faith”? As works without faith are “dead” (Heb 9:14), so a “faith” which is without “works” is a dead one.

“Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works, show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works” (Jam 2:18). Here the true Christian challenges the empty professor, You claim to be a believer, but disgrace the name of Christ by your worldly walk, so do not expect the real saints to regard you as a brother till you display your faith in the good works of a holy life. The emphatic word in this verse is “show”—proof is demanded, demonstrate your faith to be genuine. Actions speak louder than words, unless our profession can endure *that* test, it is worthless. Only true holiness of heart and life vindicates a profession of being justified by faith.

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (Jam 2:19). Here the apostle anticipates an objection, I do *actually* believe in the Lord! Very well, so also do the demons, but what is the fruit of their “believing”? does it influence their hearts and lives, does it transform their conduct Godward and manward? It does not. Then what is their “believing” worth! “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (Jam 2:20), “vain” signifies “empty,” exposing the *hollowness* of one who claims to be justified by faith yet lacks the evidence of an obedient walk.

“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?” (Jam 2:21-22). The faith which reposes on Christ is not an idle, but an active and fruitful principle. Abraham had been justified many years before (Gen 15:6), the offering up of Isaac (Gen 22) was the open attestation of his faith and the manifestation of the sincerity of his profession. “By works was faith *made perfect*” means, in actual obedience it reaches its designed end, the purpose for which it was given is realized. “Made perfect” also signifies *revealed* or made known.

“And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God” (Jam 2:23). The “Scripture” here is God’s testimony to Abraham in Genesis 15:6, that testimony was “fulfilled” or verified when Abraham gave the supreme demonstration of his obedience to God. Our being informed *here* that

Abraham was “called the *friend* of God” is in beautiful accord with the tenor of the whole of this passage, as is clear from a comparison with John 15:14, “Ye are my friends, *if ye do* whatsoever I command you.”

“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jam 2:24). In the “ye see then,” the apostle draws his “conclusion” from the foregoing. It is by “works,” by acts of implicit obedience to the divine command, such as Abraham exercised—and not by a mere “faith” of the brain and the lips—that we *justify* our profession of being believers, that we *prove* our right to be regarded as Christians.

“Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?” (Jam 2:25). Why bring in the case of Rahab? Was not the example of Abraham conclusive and sufficient? First, because “*two* witnesses” are required for the truth to be “established”—cf. Romans 4:3, 6. Second, because, it might be objected Abraham’s case was so exceptional that *it* could be no criterion to measure others by. Very well, Rahab was a poor Gentile, a heathen, a harlot, yet she too was justified by faith (Heb 11:31), and later *demonstrated* her faith by “works”—receiving the spies at the imminent risk of her own life.

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (Jam 2:26). Here is the summing up, a breathless carcass and a worthless faith are alike useless as unto all the ends of natural and spiritual life. Thus the apostle has conclusively shown the worthlessness of the garb of orthodoxy when worn by lifeless professors. He has fully exposed the error of those who rest in a bare profession of the Gospel—as if *that* could save them, when the temper of their minds and the tenor of their lives was diametrically opposed to the holy religion they professed. A holy heart and an obedient walk are the scriptural *evidence* of our having been justified by God.

“Being justified freely by his *grace*” (Rom 3:24), “being now justified by his *blood*” (Rom 5:9).

DIVINE GUIDANCE

Part One

In the September issue we published an article upon “Divine Guidance” by the late John Newton, which dwelt more upon the negative side of the subject. In a footnote we suggested there was a need for an amplification of the positive aspect, and expressed our purpose of writing thereon. We here take up our pen to redeem that promise, as the Holy Spirit may be graciously pleased to help us therein. There are few subjects, bearing upon the practical side of the Christian life, that believers are more exercised about than that they may be “led of the Lord” in all their ways, yet when some important decision has to be made, they are often at a stand to know *how* “the Lord’s mind” is to be obtained. We have read quite a number of tracts and booklets on this

subject, but they were so general and vague that we obtained little or no light and help from them. This we find has been the experience of many others, and there certainly exists a real need today for some clear and definite article thereon.

For some years past the writer has been convinced that one thing which has contributed not a little unto the shrouding of this subject in mystery in the minds of many is the loose and misleading terms which are generally employed by those referring thereto. While expressions are used as, "Is this according to God's will?" "Do I have the prompting of the Holy Spirit?" "Were you led of the Lord in that?" Simple minds will continue to be perplexed and never arrive at any certainty. So commonly are these expressions now used in religious circles, that probably quite a number of our readers will be surprised at our challenging of them. Let it be said that we certainly do not condemn such expressions as erroneous, rather do we wish to point out that they are too intangible for most people until they are more definitely defined.

What alternative, then, have we to suggest? This, in connection with every decision we make, every plan we form, every action we execute, let the question be put, *Is this in harmony with God's Word?* Is it what the Scriptures enjoin? Does it square with the Rule which God has given us to walk by? Is it in accord with the "example" which Christ has left us to follow? If it be in harmony with God's Word, then it *must* be "according to God's will," for His will is revealed *in* His Word. If I am doing that which the Scriptures enjoin, then I *must be* "prompted by the Holy Spirit," for He never moves any one to act contrary thereto. If my conduct squares with the Rule of Righteousness (the precepts and commands of the Word), then I *must be* "led of the Lord," for He leads only into the "paths of righteousness" (Psa 23:1, 3). A great deal of mystical vagueness and puzzling uncertainty will be removed if the reader substitutes for, "Is this according to God's will?" the simpler and more tangible "Is this according to God's Word?"

God, in His infinite condescension and transcendent grace, has given us His Word for this very purpose, that we need not stumble along blindly, ignorant of what is pleasing or displeasing to Him, but that we might *know* His "mind." That divine Word is given to us not simply for information, but for the regulation of our conduct, to enlighten our minds, to mold our hearts, to direct all our conduct. That divine Word supplies us with an unerring *chart* by which to steer through the dangerous sea of life, which if we sincerely and diligently follow, will deliver us from disastrous rocks and submerged reefs, and direct us safely to the heavenly harbour. In that Word is all the instructions we can need for every problem, every emergency we may be called upon to face. That Word has been given to us "That the man of God may be perfect, *thoroughly* furnished unto *all* good works" (2Ti 3:17). O how thankful and joyful we should be that the Triune God has favoured us with such a Word!

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa 119:105). The metaphor which is here used is taken from a man walking along a difficult and dangerous road on a dark night, in urgent need of a lantern to show him where to plant his feet, so that he may be able to journey along safely and comfortably, avoiding injury and destruction. The same figure is used again in the New Testament. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place" (2Pe 1:19). The "dark place" is this world, and it is only as we *take heed* to the Word, to the "light" God has given us that we shall be enabled to perceive and avoid the broad road which leadeth to destruction, and discern that narrow way which alone leadeth unto life.

It is to be duly observed that the above verse plainly intimates that God has placed His Word in our hands for an intensely practical purpose, namely, for the directing of our *walk*, the

regulating of our deportment. This at once shows us what is to be the first and principal use we are to make of this divine gift. It would do a traveler little good to diligently scrutinize the mechanism of a lamp, or stand admiring its beautiful design, rather he is to take it up and make a practical *use* of the same. Many today are zealous in reading “the letter of Scripture,” and many are charmed with the evidences of its divine authorship, but how few appear to realize the primary purpose for which God has given the Scriptures, how few are making a *practical use* of them—ordering the details of their lives by its rules and regulations. They eulogize the Lamp, but they walk not by its light.

Our first need and task as little children was to learn to walk. The milk we received from our mothers was but a means to an end, to nourish the infant’s life, to strengthen its limbs so that they should be put to a practical use. So it is spiritually. When we have been born again and fed by the Spirit on the pure milk of the Word, our first need and task is to *learn to walk*, to walk as becometh the children of God, and this can be learned only as we ascertain our Father’s will as it is revealed in Holy Writ. By nature we are in total ignorance of His will for us and of what promotes our highest interests. It is a solemn and very humbling fact that man is the only creature born into this world devoid of intelligence as to how to act, and needing to be taught what is evil and what is good for him.

All the lower orders of creation are endowed with an instinct which moves them to act discreetly, to avoid that which is harmful, and to follow that which is good. But not so man. Animals and birds require not to be taught which herbs and berries are poisonous and which are not, they need no curb placed upon them not to over eat or over drink—you cannot even force a horse or a cow to gorge and make itself sick. Even plants turn their faces to the light and open their mouths to catch the falling rain. But fallen man has not even the instinct of the brutes, and usually has to learn by painful experience what is harmful and injurious. And as it has been well said, “Experience keeps an expensive school”—her fees are high. Alas that so many only discover this when it is too late, when they have wrecked their constitutions beyond repair, life’s temporal interest beyond recovery.

It may be said in the answer to the above, But man is endowed with a *conscience*. True, and how far does it serve him till enlightened by the Word and convicted by the Spirit! Man’s understanding has been so darkened by sin, and folly is so bound up in his heart from childhood (Pro 22:15), that until he is instructed he knows not what God requires of him, nor what makes for his own highest good. That is why God has given us His Word, to make known what He justly demands of us, to inform us of those things which destroy the soul, to reveal the baits which Satan uses to capture and slay so many, to point out the highway of holiness which alone leadeth unto heaven (Heb 12:14), to acquaint us with those rules which *must* be observed if we are to enter and walk that highway.

Our first duty, then, and our first aim, must be to take up the Scriptures so as to ascertain what is God’s revealed will for us, what are the paths He forbids us to walk in, what are the ways which are pleasing in His sight. Many things are prohibited in the Word which neither our reason nor our conscience would discover. For example, we learn that “that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luk 16:15); that “the friendship of the world is enmity with God” (Jam 4:4); that “he that hasteth with his feet sinneth” (Pro 19:2). Many things are also there commanded which can only be known by acquainting ourselves with its contents. For example, “Lean not unto thine own understanding” (Pro 3:5); “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help” (Psa 146:3); “Love your enemies, bless them

that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Mat 5:44).

The above are but samples of hundreds of others. Now it is obvious that God’s Word cannot be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path unless we are familiar with its contents, and particularly, until we are informed upon the *practical rules* which God has given us to walk by. Hence it should be equally obvious that the first need of the Christian is not to delve into the intricacies and mysteries of Scripture, study the prophecies, nor even entertain himself with the wonderful types therein, but rather to concentrate on that which will instruct him as to the kind of conduct which will be *pleasing to the Lord*. The Holy Scriptures are given us, primarily, not for our intellectual gratification, nor for emotional admiration, but for life’s regulation. Nor are the precepts and commands, the warnings and encouragements contained therein, simply for our information, they are to be reduced to practice, they require *unqualified obedience*.

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt *meditate* therein day and night, that thou mayest observe *to do* according to all that is written therein: for *then* thou shalt make thy way *prosperous*, and then thou shalt have good success” (Jos 1:8). God will be no man’s debtor, in keeping His commands there is “great reward” (Psa 19:11). Part of that “reward” is a deliverance from being deceived by the false appearances of things, from forming erroneous estimates, from pursuing a foolish policy. Part of that “reward” is the acquiring of wisdom so that we choose that which is good, act prudently, and follow those paths which make for righteousness, peace, and joy. He who treasures up in his heart the divine precepts and diligently seeks to walk by their rule will escape those evils which destroy his fellows.

“If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world” (Joh 11:9). To “walk in the day” means to be in communion with Him who is light, to conduct ourselves according to His revealed will. Just so far as the Christian walks in the path of duty as it is defined for him in the Word, will he walk surely and comfortably, by the light of that Word the way is plain before him, and he is preserved from falling over the obstacles by which Satan seeks to trip him up. “But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him” (Joh 11:10). Here is the solemn contrast, he who walks according to the dictates of his lusts, following the counsel and example of the ungodly, falls into the snares of the devil, and perishes. There is “no light” in such an one, for he is not regulated by the Sun of Righteousness.

“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Joh 8:12). It is one thing to have “life,” it is another thing to enjoy the “*light of life*”—that is only obtained by *following Christ*. Notice carefully the tense of the verb, it is not “he that follows me,” occasionally and spasmodically, but “he that *followeth* me,” which signifies a steady and continuous course of action. And the promise to *such* a one is, “he shall not walk in darkness.” But what does it mean to “follow” Christ? First and foremost, to be *emptied of self-will*, for “even Christ pleased not himself” (Rom 15:3). This is absolutely essential—self-will and self-pleasing *must* be *mortified* if I am to be delivered from walking in darkness.

The unchanging order is made known by Christ in Matthew 16:24, “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” Christ cannot be followed until self is denied and the cross accepted as the distinguishing mark of discipleship. What does it mean to “deny self”? It means to repudiate our own goodness, to renounce our own wisdom, to have no confidence in our own strength, to completely set aside our own will and wishes, that we “should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them” (2Co 5:15). What does it mean to “take up our cross”? It signifies a

readiness to endure the world's hatred and scorn, to voluntarily surrender our lives unto God, to use all our faculties unto His glory. The "cross" stands for unreserved and loving obedience to the Lord, for of Him it is written that "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It is only as self with all its lustings and interests is denied, and as the heart is dominated by the spirit of Calvary, that we are prepared *to* "follow" Christ.

And what is signified *by* "follow" Christ? This, to take His "yoke" upon us (Mat 11:29) and live in complete subjection to Him. It is to yield fully to His Lordship, to obey His commands, and thus truly *serve* Him. It is seeking to do only those things which are pleasing in His sight. It is to emulate the "example" which He has left us, and *He* was in *all things* subject to the Scriptures. And as we "follow" Him, we "shall not walk in darkness", no, we shall be in happy fellowship with Him who is the "true light." For our encouragement—for they were men of like passions with us—it is recorded of Caleb and Joshua "they have *wholly* followed the LORD" (Num 32:12), having put their hand to the plow, they looked not back. Consequently, instead of perishing in the wilderness with their disobedient fellows, they entered the promised land.

Thus the great business, the life-task of the Christian, is to regulate his life by and conform his conduct to the precepts of the written Word and the example left us by the incarnate Word. As he does so, in proportion as he does so, he is emancipated from the darkness of his natural mind, freed from the follies of his corrupt heart, delivered from the mad course of this world, and escapes the snares of the devil. "Through knowledge shall the just be delivered" (Pro 11:9). Yes, great is the "reward" of keeping God's commandments, "*Then* shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path. *When* wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; *Discretion shall preserve thee*, understanding shall keep thee" (Pro 2:9-11).

(Continued in the December issue).



December

THE HOLY SPIRIT

24. The Spirit Comforting (Part 2)

One would naturally suppose that the good news of a free Saviour and a full salvation would readily be embraced by a convicted sinner. One would think that, as soon as he heard the glad tidings, he could not forbear exclaiming, in a transport of joy, “This is the Saviour I want! *His* salvation is every way suited to my wretchedness. What can I desire more? Here will I rest.” But as a matter of fact this is not always the case, yea, it is rarely so. Instead, the stricken sinner, like the Hebrews in Egypt after Moses had been made manifest before them, is left to groan under the lash of his merciless taskmasters. Yet this arises from no defect in God’s gracious provision, nor because of any inadequacy in the salvation which the Gospel presents, nor because of any distress in the sinner which the Gospel is incapable of relieving, but because the workings of self-righteousness hinder the sinner from seeing the fullness and glory of divine grace.

Strange as it may sound to those who have but a superficial and non-experimental acquaintance with God’s truth, awakened souls are exceedingly backward from receiving comfort in the glorious Gospel of Christ. They think they are utterly unworthy and unfit to come to Christ just as they are, in all their vileness and filthiness. They imagine some meetness must be wrought in them before they are qualified to believe the Gospel, that there must be certain holy dispositions in their hearts before they are entitled to conclude that Christ will receive them. They fear that they are not sufficiently humbled under a sense of sin, that they have not a suitable abhorrence of it, that their repentance is not deep enough—that they must have fervent breathings after Christ and pantings after holiness before they can be warranted to seek salvation with a well-grounded hope of success. All of which is the same thing as hugging the miseries of unbelief in order to obtain permission *to* believe.

Burdened with guilt and filled with terrifying apprehensions of eternal destruction, the convicted sinner, yet experimentally ignorant of the perfect righteousness which the Gospel reveals for the justification of the ungodly, strives to obtain acceptance with God by his own labours, tears, and prayers. But as he becomes better acquainted with the high demands of the law, the holiness of God, and the corruptions of his own heart, he reaches the point where he utterly despairs of being justified by his own strivings. “What *must* I do to be saved?” (Act 16:30) is now his agonized cry. Diligently searching God’s Word for light and help, he discovers that

“faith” is the all-important thing needed, but exactly what faith is, and how it is to be obtained, he is completely at a loss to ascertain. Well-meaning people, with more zeal than knowledge, urge him *to* “believe,” which is the one thing above all others he desires to do, but finds himself utterly *unable* to perform.

If saving faith was nothing more than a mere mental assent to the contents of John 3:16, then any man could make himself a true believer whenever he pleased—the supernatural enablement of the Holy Spirit would be quite unnecessary! But *saving* faith is very much more than a mental assenting to the contents of any verse of Scripture; and when a soul has been *divinely* quickened and awakened to its awful state by nature, it is made to realize that no creature-act of faith, no resting on the bare letter of a text by a “decision” of his own will, can bring pardon and peace. He is now made to realize that “faith” is a “*divine gift*” (Eph 2:8-9), and not a creature work, that it is wrought by “the *operation of God*” (Col 2:12), and not by the sinner himself. He is now made conscious of the fact that if ever he is to be saved, the same God who invites him to believe (Isa 45:22), yea, who commands him to believe (1Jo 3:23), must also *impart* faith to him (Eph 6:23).

Cannot you see, dear reader, that if a saving belief in Christ was the *easy* matter which the vast majority of preachers and evangelists of today *say* it is, that the work of the Spirit would be *quite unnecessary*! Ah, is there any wonder that the mighty power of the Spirit of God is now so rarely witnessed in Christendom?—He has been grieved, insulted, quenched, not only by the skepticism and worldliness of “Modernists,” but equally so by the creature-exalting freewillism and self-ability of man “to receive Christ as his personal Saviour” of the “Fundamentalists”!! Oh how very few today *really* believe those clear and emphatic words of Christ, “No man *can* come to me, *except* the Father which hath sent me [by His Spirit] *draw* him” (Joh 6:44).

Ah, my reader, when GOD truly takes a soul in hand, He brings him to *the end of himself*. He not only convicts him of the worthlessness of his own *works*, but He convinces him of the impotency of his *will*. He not only strips him of the filthy rags of his own self-righteousness, but He empties him of all self-sufficiency. He not only enables him to perceive that there is “no good thing” in him (Rom 7:18), but he also makes him feel he is “*without* strength” (Rom 5:6). Instead of concluding that *he* is the man whom God will save, he now fears that he is the man who *must* be lost forever. He is now brought down into the very dust and made to feel that he is no more able to savingly believe in Christ than he can climb up to heaven.

We are well aware that what has been said above differs radically from the current preaching of this decadent age, but we will appeal to the experience of the Christian reader. Suppose you had just suffered a heavy financial reverse and were at your wits’ end to know how to make ends meet—bills are owing, your bank has closed, you look in vain for employment, and are filled with fears over future prospects. A preacher calls and rebukes your unbelief, bidding you lay hold of the promises of God. *That* is the very thing which you *desire* to do, but *can* you by an act of your own will? Or a loved one is suddenly snatched from you—your heart is crushed, grief overwhelms you. A friend kindly bids you to “sorrow not even as others who have no hope.” Are you able by a “personal decision” to throw off your anguish and rejoice in the Lord? Ah, my reader, if a mature Christian can only “cast all his care” upon the Lord *by the Holy Spirit’s gracious enablement*, do you suppose that a poor sinner who is yet “in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity” can lay hold of Christ by a mere act of his own will?

Just as to trust in the Lord with all his heart, to be anxious for nothing, to let the morrow take care of its own concerns, is the *desire* of every Christian, but “*how to perform* that which is good” he “finds *not*” (Rom 7:18) until the Holy Spirit is pleased to graciously grant the needed

enablement, so the one supreme yearning of the awakened and convicted sinner *is* to lay hold of Christ, but until the Spirit draws him *to* Christ, he finds he has no power to go out of himself, no ability to embrace what is proffered him in the Gospel. The fact is, my reader, that the heart of a sinner is as naturally indisposed for loving and appropriating the things of God as the wood which Elijah laid on the altar was to ignite, when he had poured so much water upon it, as not only to saturate the wood, but also to fill the trench round about it (1Ki 18:32-33)—a *miracle* is required for the one as much as it was for the other.

The fact is that if souls were left to themselves—to their own “free will”—after they had been truly convicted of sin, *none* would ever savingly come to Christ! A further and distinct operation of the Spirit is still needed to actually “draw” the heart to close with Christ Himself. Were the sinner left to himself, he would sink in abject despair. He would fall victim to the malice of Satan. The devil is far more powerful than we are, and never is his rage more stirred than when he fears he is about to lose one of his captives, *see* Mark 9:20. But blessed be His name, the Spirit does not desert the soul when His work is only half done—He who is “the Spirit of life” (Rom 8:2) to quicken the dead, He who is “the Spirit of truth” (Joh 16:13) to instruct the ignorant, is also “the spirit *of faith*” (2Co 4:13) to enable us to savingly believe.

And *how* does the Spirit work faith in the convicted sinner’s heart? By effectually testifying to him of the sufficiency of Christ for his every need, by assuring him of the Saviour’s readiness to receive the vilest who comes to Him. He effectually teaches him that no good qualifications need to be sought, no righteous acts performed, no penance endured in order to fit us for Christ. He reveals to the soul that conviction of sin, deep repentings, a sense of our utter helplessness, are *not* grounds of acceptance with Christ, but simply a consciousness of our spiritual wretchedness, rendering relief in a way of *grace* truly welcome. Repentance is needful not as inducing Christ to give, but as disposing us to receive. The Spirit moves us to come to Christ in the very character in which alone He receives sinners—as vile, ruined, lost. Thus, from start to finish “Salvation is *of the LORD*” (Jon 2:9)—of the Father in ordaining it, of the Son in purchasing it, *of the Spirit* in applying it.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

84. The Object of Faith (12:2)

The verse which is now to engage our attention continues and completes the important exhortation found in the one which was before us in the last article. The two verses are so closely related that only the requirements of space obliged us to separate them. The latter supplies such a blessed sequel to the former that it will be necessary to present a summary of our comments thereon. We saw that the Christian life, the life of faith and obedience, is presented under the figure of a “race,” which denotes that so far from its being a thing of dreamy contemplation or abstract speculation, it is one of activity, exertion, and progressive motion, for faith without works is dead. But the “race” speaks not only of activity, but of *regulated* activity, following the

course which is “set before us.” Many professing Christians are engaged in multitudinous efforts which God has never bidden them undertake—that is like running round and round in a circle. To follow the appointed track means that our energies be directed by the precepts of Holy Writ.

The order presented in Hebrews 12:1 is the negative before the positive—there must be the “laying aside” of hindering weights, before we “run” the race set before us. This order is fundamental and is emphasized all through Scripture. There must be a turning from the world, before there can be a real turning unto the Lord (Isa 55:7). Self must be denied before Christ can be followed (Mat 16:24). There must be a putting off the old man, before there can be any true putting on of the new man (Eph 4:22-24). There has to be a “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,” before we can “live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world” (Ti 2:12). There has to be a “cleansing of ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,” before there can be any “perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1). We must “be not conformed to this world,” before we can be “transformed by the renewing of our mind,” so that we may “*prove* what is that good, and acceptable and perfect, will of God” (Rom 12:2-3).

Before the plants and flowers will flourish in the garden, weeds must be rooted up, otherwise all the labours of the gardener will come to naught. As the Lord Jesus taught so plainly in the parable of the sower, where the “thorns” are permitted to thrive, the good seed, the Word is “choked” (Mat 13:22), and it is very searching and solemn to note, by a careful comparison of the three records of it, that Christ interpreted this figure of the “thorns” more fully than any other single detail. He defined those choking “thorns” as “the *cares* of this world, and the *deceitfulness* of riches, and the lusts of *other* things” (Mar 4:19), and *pleasures* of this life. If those things fill and rule our hearts, our relish for spiritual things will be quenched, our strength to perform Christian duties will be sapped, our lives will be fruitless, and we shall be merely cumberers of the ground—the garden of our souls being filled with briars and weeds.

Hence it is that the *first* call in Hebrews 12:1 is, “Let us lay aside every weight” (Heb 12:1). “Inordinate care for the present life, and fondness for it, is a dead weight for the soul, that pulls it down when it should ascend upwards and pulls it back when it should press forwards” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). It is the practical duty of *mortification* which is here inculcated, the abstaining from those fleshly lusts “which war against the soul” (1Pe 2:11). The racer must be as lightly clad as possible if he is to run swiftly—all that would cumber and impede him must be relinquished. Undue concern over temporal affairs, inordinate affection for the things of this life, the intemperate use of any material blessings, undue familiarity with the ungodly, are “weights” which prevent progress in godliness. A bag of gold would be as great a handicap to a runner as a bag of lead!

It is to be carefully noted that the laying aside of “every weight” *precedes* “and the sin which doth so easily beset us” (Heb 12:1), which has reference to indwelling corruption. Each Christian imagines that he is very anxious to be completely delivered from the power of indwelling sin. Ah, but our hearts are very deceitful and ever causing us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. A criterion is given in this passage by which we may gauge the sincerity of our desires—our longing to be delivered from indwelling evil is to be measured by our willingness and readiness to *lay aside the “weights.”* I may think I am earnestly desirous of having a beautiful garden, and may go to much expense and trouble in purchasing and planting some lovely flowers, but if I am too careless and lazy to diligently fight the weeds, what is my desire worth? So, if I disregard that word, “make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof” (Rom 13:14), how sincere is my desire to be delivered from “the flesh!”

“And let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1). For this two things are needed—speed and strength—“rejoiceth as a *strong* man to run a race” (Psa 19:5)—the one being opposed to sloth and negligence, the other to weakness. These are the prime requisites—strength in grace, diligence in exercise. Speed is included in the word “run,” but how is the strength to be obtained? This “race” calls for both the doing and suffering for Christ, the pressing forward toward the mark set before us, the progressing from one degree of strength to another, the putting forth of our utmost efforts, the enduring unto the end. Ah, who is sufficient for such a task? First, we are reminded of those who have preceded us, many, a “great cloud,” and *their* faith is recorded for our instruction, their victory for our encouragement. Yet that is not sufficient. Their cases afford us a motive, but they do not supply the needed power. Hence, we are next told:

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2). “The cloud of witnesses is not the object on which our heart is fixed. They testify of faith, and we cherish their memory with gratitude, and walk with a firmer step because of the music of their lives. Our eye, however, is fixed, not on many, but on One; not on the army, but the Leader; not on the servants, but the Lord. We see Jesus only, and from Him we derive our true strength, even as He is our light of life” (Adolph Saphir, 1831-1891). In all things Christ has the pre-eminence. He is placed here not among the other “racers,” but as One who, instead of exemplifying certain characteristics of faith, as they did, is the “author and finisher” of faith in His own person.

Our text presents the Lord as the supreme example for racers, as well as the great object of their faith, though this is somewhat obscured by the rendering of the A.V. Our text is *not* referring to Christ begetting faith in His people and sustaining it to the end, though that is a truth plainly enough taught elsewhere. Instead, He is here viewed as the One, who Himself began and completed the whole course of faith, so as to be Himself the one perfect example and witness of what faith is. It was because of “the joy set before him” (Heb 12:1)—steadily and trustfully held in view—that *He* ran His race. *His* “enduring of the cross” was the most complete trial and most perfect exemplification of faith. In consequence, He is now seated at the right hand of God, as both the pattern and object of faith, and His promise is “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Rev 3:21).

It is to be duly noted that the little word “our” is a supplement, being supplied by the translators. It may without detriment, and with some advantage, be omitted. The Greek word for “author” does not mean so much one who “causes” or “originates,” as one who “takes the lead.” The same word is rendered “*Captain* of their salvation” in Hebrews 2:10, and in Acts 3:15, the “*Prince* of life.” There its obvious meaning is Leader or Chief, one going in advance of those who follow. The Saviour is here represented as the Leader of all the long procession of those who had lived by faith, as the great pattern for us to imitate. Confirmation of this is found in the Spirit’s use of the personal name “Jesus” here, rather than His title of office—“Christ.” Stress is thereby laid upon His humanity. The man Jesus was so truly made like unto His brethren in all things that the life which He lived was the life of faith.

Yes, the life which Jesus lived here upon earth was a life of faith. This has not been given sufficient prominence. In this, as in all things, He is our perfect model. “By faith He walked, looking always unto the Father, speaking and acting in filial dependence on the Father, and in filial reception out of the Father’s fullness. By faith He looked away from all discouragements, difficulties, and oppositions, committing His cause to the Lord, who had sent Him, to the Father,

whose will He had come to fulfill. By faith He resisted and overcame all temptation, whether it came from Satan, or from the false Messianic expectations of Israel, or from His own disciples. By faith He performed the signs and wonders in which the power and love of God's salvation were symbolized. Before He raised Lazarus from the grave, He, in the energy of faith, thanked God, who heard Him always. And here we are taught the nature of all His miracles—He trusted in God. He gave the command, 'Have faith in God,' out of the fullness of His own experience" (A. Saphir).

But let us enter into some detail. *What is a life of faith?* First, it is a life *lived in complete dependence upon God*. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him" (Pro 3:5-6). Never did any so entirely, so unreservedly, so perfectly cast himself upon God as did the man Christ Jesus, never was another so completely yielded to God's will. "I live by the Father" (Joh 6:57) was His own avowal. When tempted to turn stones into bread to satisfy His hunger, He replied, "Man shall not live by bread alone" (Mat 4:4). So sure was He of God's love and care for Him, in face of all contrary appearances, He held fast to His trust and waited for Him. So patent to all was His absolute dependence upon God, that the very scorers around the cross turned it into a bitter taunt—"He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him" (Psa 22:8).

Second, a life of faith is a life *lived in communion with God*. And never did another live in such a deep and constant realization of the divine presence as did the man Christ Jesus. "I have set the LORD *always* before me" (Psa 16:8) was His own avowal. "He that sent me is *with* me" (Joh 8:29) was ever a present fact to His consciousness. He could say, "I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly" (Psa 22:10). "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there *prayed*" (Mar 1:35). From Bethlehem to Calvary, He enjoyed unbroken and unclouded fellowship with the Father, and after the three hours of awful darkness was over, He cried "Father, into thy hands I commit my Spirit."

Third, a life of faith is a life *lived in obedience to God*. Faith worketh by love (Gal 5:6), and love delights to please its object. Faith has respect not only to the promises of God, but to His precepts as well. Faith not only trusts God for the future, but it also produces present subjection to His will. Supremely was this fact exemplified by the man Christ Jesus. "I do always those things that please him," (Joh 8:29) He declared. "I must be about my Father's business" (Luk 2:49) characterized the whole of His earthly course. Ever and anon we find Him conducting Himself "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled" (Joh 19:28). He lived by *every* Word of God. At the close He said, "I have [kept] my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (Joh 15:10).

Fourth, a life of faith is a life *of assured confidence in an unseen future*. It is a looking away from the things of time and sense, a rising above the shows and delusions of this world, and having the affections set upon things above. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1), enabling its possessor to live now in the power and enjoyment of that which is to come. That which enthralls and enchains the ungodly had no power over the perfect Man, "I have overcome the world," (Joh 16:33) He declared. When the devil offered Him all its kingdoms, He promptly answered, "Get thee hence, Satan" (Mat 4:10). So vivid was Jesus' realization of the unseen, that, in the midst of earth's engagements, He called Himself "the Son of man which *is* in heaven" (Joh 3:13).

“And so, dear brethren, this Jesus in the absoluteness of His dependence upon the Father, in the completeness of His trust in Him, in the submission of His will to that supreme command, in the unbroken communion which He held with God, in the vividness with which the unseen ever burned before Him, and dwarfed and extinguished all the lights of the present, and in the respect which He had ‘unto the recompense of the reward,’ nerving Him for all pain and shame, has set before us all the example of a life of faith, and is our pattern as in everything, in this too.

“How blessed it is to feel, when we reach out our hands and grope in the darkness for the unseen hand, when we try to bow our wills to that divine will; when we seek to look beyond the mists of ‘that dim spot which men call earth,’ and to discern the land that is very far off; and when we endeavour to nerve ourselves for duty and sacrifice by bright visions of a future hope, that on this path of faith too, when He ‘putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them’(Joh10:4), and has bade us do nothing which He Himself has not done! ‘I will put my trust in him’(Heb 2:13). He says first, and then He turns to us and commands, ‘Believe in God, believe also in me’”(Joh 14:1). (Alexander Maclaren, 1826-1929, to whom we are indebted for much of this article).

Alas, how very little real Christianity there is in the world today! Christianity consists in being conformed unto the image of God’s Son. “Looking unto Jesus” constantly, trustfully, submissively, lovingly—the heart occupied with, the mind stayed upon Him—that is the whole secret of practical Christianity. Just in proportion as I am occupied with the example which Christ has left me, just in proportion as I am living upon Him, and drawing from His fullness, am I realizing the ideal He has set before me. In Him is the power, from Him must be received the strength for running “with patience” or steadfast perseverance, the race. Genuine Christianity is a life lived in communion with Christ, a life lived by faith, as His was. “For to me to live is Christ” (Phi 1:21). “Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God” (Gal 2:20)—Christ living in me and through me.

There are four things said in our text about the Saviour’s life, each of which we need to ponder carefully. First, *the motive or reason which prompted Jesus to do and suffer*, wherein He is presented as our example and encouragement, “who for the joy that was set before him” (Heb 12:2). Here is made known to us what was the final moving cause in His mind which sustained the Saviour to a persevering performance of duty, and of the endurance of all the sufferings that duty entailed. Various definitions have been given of that “joy,” and probably all of them are included within its scope. The glory of God was what the Redeemer preferred above all things, Hebrews 10:5-9, but that glory was inseparably bound up with the personal exaltation of the Redeemer, and the salvation of His Church following the accomplishment of the work given Him to do. This was “set before him” in the everlasting covenant.

Thus the “joy” that was set before Jesus was the doing of God’s will, and His anticipation of the glorious reward which should be given Him in return. Hebrews 12:2 sustains the figure used in the previous verse. It is as the model Racer our Saviour is here viewed. At the winning-post hung a crown, in full view of the racers, and this was ever before the eye of the Captain of our salvation, as He pursued the course appointed Him by the Father. He steadily kept before Him the cheering and blissful reward. His heart laid hold of the Messianic promises and prophecies recorded in Holy Writ. He had in steady prospect that satisfaction with which the travail of His soul would be fully compensated. By faith Abraham looked forward to a “city” (Heb 11:10), by faith Isaac anticipated “things to come” (Heb 11:20), by faith Moses “had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Heb 11:26), and by faith Jesus lived and died in the enjoyment of that which was “set before Him.”

Second, He “endured the cross.” Therein we have *the Commander’s example to His soldiers* of heroic fortitude. Those words signify far more than that He experienced the shame and pain of crucifixion. They tell us that He stood steadfast under it all. He endured the cross not sullenly or even stoically, but in the highest and noblest sense of the term—with holy composure of soul. He never wavered or faltered, murmured or complained, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (Joh 18:11)! And He has left us an example that we should “follow his steps” (1Pe 2:21), and therefore does He declare, “If any man will come after *me*, let him deny himself, and take up *his* cross” (Mat 16:24). Strength for this task is to be found by “looking unto Jesus,” by keeping steadily before faith’s eye the crown, the *joy* awaiting us.

Third, “despising the shame.” Therein we see *the Captain’s contempt of whatever sought to bar His progress*. We scarcely think of associating this word “despising” with the meek and lowly Jesus. It is an ugly term, yet there are things which deserve it. The Saviour viewed things in their true perspective. He estimated them at their proper worth. In the light of the joy set before Him, He regarded hardship, ignominy, persecution, sufferings from men, as trifles. Here, too, He has left us “an example.” But alas, instead of scorning it, *we* magnify and are intimidated by “the shame.” How many are ashamed to be scripturally baptized and wear His uniform. How many are ashamed to openly confess Christ before the world. Meditate more upon the reward, the crown, the eternal joy—that outweighs all the little sacrifices we are now called upon to make.

Fourth, “and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Here we witness *the Captain’s triumph*, His actual entrance into the joy anticipated, His being crowned with glory and honour. His “sitting down” denoted three things. First, *rest* after finished work, the race run. Second, being invested with *dominion*. He now occupies the place of supreme sovereignty, Matthew 28:18, Philippians 2:10. Third, being intrusted with the prerogative of *judgment*, John 17:2, Acts 17:30. And what have these three things to do with us, His unworthy followers? Much indeed—eternal rest is assured the successful racer, Revelation 14:13. A place on Christ’s throne is promised the overcomer, Revelation 3:21. Dominion too is the future portion of him who vanquishes this world, Revelation 2:26-27. Finally, it is written, “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” (1Co 6:3). “Joint-heirs with Christ; *if so be that we suffer with him*, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom 8:17).

One other word in our text yet remains to be considered, “looking unto Jesus the *author* [Captain] and *finisher* [Perfecter] of our faith” (Heb 12:2). We have already seen from the other occurrences of this term (in its various forms) in our epistle, that it is a very full one. Here, we believe, it has at least a twofold force. First, Completer—Jesus is the *first* and the *last* as an example of confidence in and submission unto God. He is the most complete model of faith and obedience that can be brought before us. Instead of including Him with the heroes of faith in chapter eleven, He is here distinguished from them, as being above them. He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending. As there was none hitherto who could be compared with Him, so there will be none hereafter. “Author and Finisher” or “Captain and Completer” means Jesus is beyond all comparison.

The fact that we are bidden to be looking unto Jesus *as* “the Leader and Finisher of faith” also denotes that He perfects our faith. How? First, by His grace flowing into us. We need something more than a flawless Model set before us. Who can in his own strength imitate the perfect Man? But Christ has not only gone before His own, He also dwells in their hearts by faith, and as they yield themselves to His control (and only so) does He live *through* them. Second, by *leading us* (Psa 23:3) along the path of discipline and trial, drawing our hearts away from the things of earth, and fixing them upon Himself. He often makes us lonesome here that we may seek *His*

companionship. Finally, by actually conducting us to glory. He will “come again” (Joh 14:3) and conform us to His image.

“Looking unto Jesus.” The person of the Saviour is to be the “mark” on which the eyes of those who are pressing forward for the prize of the high calling of God are to be fixed. Be constantly “looking” to Him, trustfully, submissively, hopefully, expectantly. He is the fountain of all grace (Joh 1:16). Our every need is supplied by God “according to his riches in glory *by Christ Jesus*” (Phi 4:19). Then seek the help of the Holy Spirit that the eye of faith be steadfastly fixed on Christ. He has declared, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” then let us add, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb 13:5-6). Salvation is by grace, *through faith*. It is through “faith” we are saved, not only from hell, but also from this world (1Jo 5:4), from temptation, from the power of indwelling sin—by coming to Christ, *trusting* in Him, drawing from *Him*.

What are the things which *hinder* us running? An active devil, an evil world, indwelling sin, mysterious trials, fierce opposition, afflictions which almost make us doubt the love of the Father. Then call to mind the “great clouds of witnesses” (Heb 12:1). They were men of like passions with us, they encountered the same difficulties and discouragements, they met with the same hindrances and obstacles. But they ran “with patience,” they overcame, they won the victor’s crown. How? By “looking unto Jesus,” see Hebrews 11:26. But more—look away from difficulties (Rom 4:19), from self, from fellow-racers, unto Him who has left us an example to follow, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, so that *He is able* to succour the tempted, strengthen the weak, guide the perplexed, supply our every need. Let the heart be centered in and the mind stayed upon HIM.

The more we are “looking unto Jesus” the easier will it be to “lay aside every weight.” It is at this point so many fail. If the Christian denies self of different things *without an adequate motive (for Christ’s sake)*, he will still secretly hanker after the things relinquished. Or ere long return to them, or become proud of his little sacrifices and become self-righteous. The most effective way of getting a child to drop any dirty or injurious object, is to proffer him something better. The best way to make a tired horse move more quickly, is not to use the whip, but to turn his head toward *home*! So, if our hearts be occupied with the sacrificial love of Christ for us, we shall be “constrained” thereby to drop all which displeases Him, and the more we dwell upon the joy set before us, the more strength shall we have to run “with patience the race that is set before us.”

THE LIFE OF DAVID

36. His Victory over the Philistines

“But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David” (2Sa 5:17). The civil war in Israel, which had continued for several years, having been brought to an end, and the whole nation being now united under the

government of David, he had thereby become much more powerful. Probably hearing, too, of David's capture of Jerusalem (2Sa 5:7) and of the friendship shown him by Hiram king of Tyre (2Sa 5:11), the Philistines now thought it was high time to bestir themselves and put an end to his prowess. Accordingly they assembled a great army against him, but were overthrown, though not annihilated.

The typical significance of the above (by which we mean its prophetic and dispensational foreshadowings) points to much that is recorded in the Book of Acts, which, in turn, presages that which was to obtain more or less throughout the whole of this Christian era. As soon as the kingdom of Christ had been set up in the world, it was vigorously attacked by the powers of darkness, which, by the combined forces of Jews and Gentiles, sought to overthrow it. Definite proof of this is found in Acts 4, where we read of the arrest of Peter and John, their being summoned before the Sanhedrin, being threatened by them, and subsequently released. On returning to their own company and reporting their experiences, they all "with one accord" quoted from the second Psalm, which some—probably with good reason—conclude was written by David just after his victory over the Philistines.

That part quoted from the second Psalm was, "Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the LORD, and against his Christ" (Act 4:25-26). This is a clear intimation from the Spirit Himself that the substance of these verses is by no means to be restricted unto the opposition made by the powers of evil (through their human emissaries) against Christ personally during the days of His flesh, but include also Christ mystical, His church, and is a prophetic intimation of the continuous enmity of the serpent against the woman's seed, i.e., Christ and His people. But as the remainder of the second Psalm shows, all such opposition will prove futile, for "He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1Co 15:25).

In this article, however, we do not propose to develop at length the prophetic application of David's victories over the Philistines, but rather shall we endeavour to concentrate upon the spiritual and practical bearings of the same. Surely *this* is what our poor hearts stand most in need of in this "cloudy and dark day" (Eze 34:12)—that which, under God's blessing, will better equip us to fight the good fight of faith, that which will instruct and encourage for running the race that is set before *us*. There is a "time" and "season" for everything. While it is our happy privilege to admire and study the handiwork of God in creation, yet neither the pleasure of beholding the beautiful flowers nor investigating the mystery of the planets would be in order if an enemy were at our doors, and we were called upon to defend our lives. The same principle applies to concentrating upon one or more of the many different departments of Scripture study.

It was to carry forward the conquest of Canaan—begun by Joshua, but long interrupted, see Judges 1:21-36—that God had raised up David. "And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you: now then do it: for the LORD hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies" (2Sa 3:17-18). Chief among Israel's enemies were the Philistines. They had long been a serious menace to God's people, and eventually succeeded in slaying Saul and his sons, 1 Samuel 31:1-6. But now the time had come for God to stain their pride, fight against them, and overthrow their forces. "The triumphing of the wicked is short" (Job 20:5), so discovered Pharaoh, Haman, Rabshakeh, Nero, and so shall it be with those who now oppose the Lord and His people.

“But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David” (2Sa 5:17). First of all let us behold and admire here the providential dealings of God, “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things” (Rom 11:36). Nothing happens by chance in this world, and the actions of the wicked are just as truly controlled, yea, and directed, by the Governor of this world, as are those of the righteous. It was of the Lord that these Philistines threatened Israel at this time, and therein we may perceive His grace toward His servant. They were the enemies of JEHOVAH, and belonged to the people He had commanded Israel to destroy. But to take the initiative against them, David might feel was the height of ingratitude, for on two occasions the Philistines had given him protection when sorely persecuted by Saul (1Sa 27:1-3; 28:1-2). By God’s moving the Philistines to take the initiative, David’s scruples were subdued.

Though David had ascended the throne of Israel, this did not deter his former enemies, rather did it excite their jealousy and stirred them up to come against him. Therein we may find an illustration of Satan’s ways against the saints. Whenever an advance step is taken for God, or whenever honour is put upon the true King and Christ is given His proper place in our arrangements, the enemy is on hand to oppose. Let Abraham return unto “the place of the altar” and at once there is strife between his herdsmen and those of Lot (Gen 13:4-7). Let Joseph receive a divine revelation in a dream, and immediately the cruel envy of his brethren is stirred against him (Gen 37). Let Elijah triumph over the false prophets upon Carmel, and Jezebel threatens his life. Many such cases are also found in the Book of Acts. These are recorded for *our* instruction. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

Let, then, the attack of the Philistines upon David right after his coronation warn *us* against finding security in any spiritual prosperity we may have been blest with. High altitudes are apt to make the head dizzy. No sooner had David made Zion his own city, and that to the glory of the Lord, than the Philistines came up against him. The very next words after the boastful, “LORD, by thy favour thou hast made *my* mountain to stand *strong*,” are, “Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled” (Psa 30:7). Our “strength” is to maintain a conscious *weakness* (2Co 12:10). Every spiritual advance needs to be accompanied by watchfulness and prayer. “Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off” (1Ki 20:11)!

“The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim” (2Sa 5:18). The valley of Rephaim was but a very short distance from Jerusalem. No doubt the Philistines expected to make themselves masters of that strategic city before David had time to complete the fortification of it. In the words “spread themselves” indication is given that their force was a large one, “*all* the Philistines” (2Sa 5:17) probably denotes that their five principalities (1Sa 6:16-18) were here combined together. Little did they realize that they were rushing onward to their destruction, for they knew not the might of David’s scepter nor the power of JEHOVAH who had exalted him. The Philistines were unaware of the fact that the living God was *for* David, as He had not been for Saul.

Let us now consider David’s response unto the threatening presence of the Philistine hosts. “And David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand?” (2Sa 5:19). This is very blessed, accentuated by the final clause in verse 17, which is in marked contrast from what is recorded in verse 18. In the one we read, “and David heard of it, and *went down* to the hold.” In the other, we are told that the Philistines “came and *spread themselves* in the valley of Rephaim.” In sharp antithesis from the self-confident Pharisees, David took a lowly place and evidenced his dependence upon God. Instead of accepting their challenge and immediately engaging them in battle, David turned to the Lord and

inquired *His* will for him. O that writer and reader may cultivate this spirit more and more. It is written “In all thy ways *acknowledge him*,” and the promise is, “and he shall direct thy paths” (Pro 3:6).

“And David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand?” (2Sa 5:19). Not as the mighty man of valour did he impetuously rush ahead, but as the man submissive to his God did the king here act—most probably it was through Abiathar, by means of the Urim and Thummin in his ephod, that the Lord’s mind was sought. His inquiry was twofold—concerning his duty and concerning his success, “his conscience asked the former, his prudence the latter” (Matthew Henry). His first concern was to make sure he had a divine commission against the Philistines. In view of 2 Samuel 3:18, his duty seemed clear, but the question was, Is it *God’s* time for me to act *now*? His second concern was whether the Lord would prosper his efforts, for he realized that victory was entirely dependent upon God—unless *He* delivered the Philistines into his hand, all would be in vain.

“And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand” (2Sa 5:19). He who has said, “Seek ye *my* face” will not mock that soul who sincerely and trustfully responds with, “my *heart* said unto thee, thy face, LORD, will I seek” (Psa 27:8). Gods of wood and stone, the idols of earthly fame and material wealth, will fail their devotees in the hour of need, but the living God will not disappoint those who are subject unto Him and seek His aid in the time of emergency. The Lord is ever “very *present* help in trouble” (Psa 46:1), and the sure promise is “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (Jam 4:8). The divine ordering of our ways, the directing of our steps, is urgently needed by all of us, nor will it be withheld if sought after the appointed order.

“And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand” (2Sa 5:19). This also is recorded for *our* instruction and comfort. Then let us earnestly seek faith to appropriate the same and make it *our own*. Those words were graciously spoken by the Lord to encourage and nerve David for battle. We too are called upon *to fight* —“fight the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12). Yes, and it is only as *faith* is in exercise, only as the divine promises are actually *laid hold of* (expectantly *pleaded* before God), that we shall fight with good success. Has not God said *to us* He will “bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom 16:20). How *that* ought to animate us for the conflict! If we lay hold of that promise we shall be able to exclaim, “I therefore so run, *not as uncertainly*; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air” (1Co 9:26).

“And David came to Baal-perazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters” (2Sa 5:20). Here, too, David has left a noble example for us to follow, and the more closely we do so, the more will God be honored, and the more will further successes be assured for us. Having obtained mercy to be dependent, David found grace to be humble, and ascribed the victory unto its true author, “*The LORD* hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me”—as when a swollen river bursts its banks and carries all before it. In every forward step, in every resistance of temptation, in every success in service, learn to acknowledge, “yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1Co 15:10). May writer and reader be delivered from the self-praising, boastful, Laodicean spirit of this evil age, saying, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory” (Psa 115:1).

“And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them” (2Sa 5:21). No doubt the Philistines had expected both protection and help from their idols, but they failed them in the hour of need. Equally vain and impotent will prove any visible or material thing in which we put

our trust. Now they were unwilling to preserve such gods as were unable to preserve them, God can make men sick of those things that they have been most fond of, and compel them to desert what they doted upon, and cast even the idols of silver, and gold to the moles and bats, Isaiah 2:20 (Matthew Henry.) In *burning* the idols of the Philistines, David not only made clean work of his victory, but *obeyed* God's order in Deuteronomy 7:5, "ye shall...burn their graven images with fire."

"And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim" (2Sa 5:22). Yes, even though we have the promise, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jam 4:7), there is no assurance given that he will not return. He departed from the Saviour only "for a season" (Luk 4:13), and thus it is with His followers. Yet let not his return to the attack discourage us. It is but a summons to renewed waiting upon God, seeking *fresh* strength from Him daily, hourly. "And when David inquired of the LORD, he said" (2Sa 5:23). On this second occasion also David sought divine guidance. Even though he had been successful in the first battle, he realized that further victory depended entirely upon the Lord, and for that he must be completely subject to Him.

"Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines" (2Sa 5:23-24). This is very striking. Here was the same enemies to be met, in the same place, and under the same Lord of hosts, and yet God's answer now is the very opposite of the previous one. Then it was, "Go up," now it is "Go not up," but make for their rear—circumstances may seem identical to human sight, yet on each occasion God is to be sought unto, trusted and obeyed, or victory cannot be ensured. A real test of obedience was this for David, but he did not argue or decline to respond. Instead, he meekly bowed to the Lord's will. *Here* is the man "after God's own heart"—who waited upon the Lord, and acted by His answer when it was given. Nor did he lose by it, "For then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines" (2Sa 5:24). God is ready to do still greater things when we own what He has already done for us!

"And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer" (2Sa 5:25). "David observed his orders, waited God's motions, and stirred then, and not till then" (Matthew Henry). Complete success was granted him. God performed His promise and routed all the enemy's forces. How that should encourage *us*! "When the kingdom of the Messiah was to be set up, the apostles, who were to beat down the devil's kingdom, must not attempt anything till they receive the promise of the Spirit, who 'came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind' (Act 2:2), which was typified by this 'sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees,' and when they heard that, they must bestir themselves, and did so. They went forth conquering and to conquer" (Matthew Henry).

THE COVENANTS OF GOD

3c. The Adamic (Continued)

Before entering into detail upon the nature and terms of the compact which God made with Adam, it may be well to obviate an objection which some are likely to make against the whole subject, namely, that since the mere *word* “covenant” is not to be found in the historical account of Genesis, therefore to speak of the Adamic Covenant is naught but a “theological invention.” There is a certain class of people, posing as ultra-orthodox, who imagine they have a reverence and respect for Holy Writ as the final court of appeal which surpasses that of their fellows. They say, Show me a passage which expressly states God made a “covenant” with Adam, and that will settle the matter, but until you can produce a verse with the exact term “Adamic Covenant” in it, I shall believe no such thing.

Our reason for referring to this paltry quibble is because it illustrates a very superficial approach to God’s Word which is becoming more and more prevalent in certain quarters, and which stands badly in need of being corrected. Words are only counters or signs after all (different writers use them with varying latitude, as is sometimes the case in Scripture itself), and to be unduly occupied with the *shell* often results in a failure to obtain the kernel within. Some Unitarians refuse to believe in the tri-unity of God, merely because no verse be found which categorically affirms there are “three persons in the Godhead” or where the *word* “Trinity” is used. But what matters the absence of the mere *word* itself, when three distinct divine persons are clearly delineated in the Word of truth! For the same reason others repudiate the fact of the “total depravity” of fallen man, which is the height of absurdity when Scripture depicts him as corrupt in *all* the faculties of his being.

Surely I need not to be *told* that a certain person has been born again if all the evidences of regeneration are clearly discernible in his life. And if I am furnished with a full description of his immersion, the mere *word* “baptism” does not make it any more sure and definite to my mind. Our first search, then, in Genesis, is not for the term “covenant,” but to see whether or not we can trace the outlines of a solemn and definite pact between God and Adam. We say this not because the word itself is never associated with our first parents—for elsewhere it is—but because we are anxious that certain of our readers may be delivered from the evil mentioned above. To dismiss from our minds all thoughts of an Adamic Covenant simply because the *term* itself occurs not in Genesis 1 to 5 is to read those chapters very superficially and miss much which lies only a little beneath their surface.

Let us now remind ourselves of the essential elements of a “covenant.” Briefly stated, any covenant is a mutual agreement entered into by two or more parties, whereby they stand solemnly bound to each other to perform the conditions contracted for. Amplifying that definition, it may be pointed out that the terms of a covenant are—first, there is a stipulation of something to be done or given by that party proposing the covenant. Second, there is a restipulation by the other party of something to be done or given in consideration. Third, those stipulations must be lawful and right, for it can never be right to engage to do wrong. Fourth, there is a penalty included in

the terms of agreement, some evil consequence to result to the party who may and shall violate his engagement, that penalty being added as a security.

A “covenant” then is a disposition of things, an arrangement concerning them, a mutual agreement about them. But again we would remind the reader that words are but arbitrary things, and we are never safe in trusting to a single term, as though from it *alone* we could collect the right knowledge of the thing. No, our inquiry is into the thing itself. What are the matters of *fact* to which these terms are applied? Was there any moral transaction between God and Adam wherein the above-mentioned four principles were involved? Was there any proposition made by God to man of something to be done by the latter? any stipulation of something to be given by the former? any agreement of both? any penal sanction? To such interrogations every accurate observer of the contents of Genesis 1 to 3 must answer affirmatively.

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17). Here are all the constituent elements of a covenant. First, there are the contracting parties, the Lord God and man. Second, there is a stipulation enjoined, which man (as he was duty bound) engaged to perform. Third, there was a penalty prescribed, which would be incurred in case of failure. Fourth, there was by clear and necessary implication a reward promised, to which Adam would be entitled by his fulfillment of the condition. Finally, the “tree of life” was the divine “*seal*” or ratification of the covenant, as the rainbow was the seal of the covenant which God made with Noah. Later, we shall endeavour to furnish clear proof of each of these statements.

“We here have, in the beginning of the world, distinctly placed before us, as the parties to the covenant, the Creator and the creature, the Governor and the governed. In the covenant itself, brief as it is, we have concentrated all those primary, anterior, and eternal principles of truth, righteousness, and justice, which enter necessarily into the nature of the great God, and which must always pervade His government, under whatever dispensation. We have a full recognition of His authority to govern His intelligent creatures, according to these principles, and we have a perfect acknowledgment on the part of man, that in all things he is subject, as a rational and accountable being, to the will and direction of the infinitely wise and benevolent Creator. No part of a covenant therefore, in its proper sense, is wanting” (R. B. Howell, 1801-1868, “The Covenant,” 1855).

There was, then, a formal compact between God and man concerning obedience and disobedience, reward and punishment, and where there is a binding law pertaining to such matters and an agreement upon them by both parties concerned, there is a “covenant”—compare Genesis 21:27 and what precedes Genesis 31:44 and what follows. In this covenant, Adam acted not as a private person for himself only, but as the federal head and representative of the whole of his posterity. In that capacity he served alone, Eve not being a federal head jointly with him, but was included in it, she being (later, we believe) formed out of him. In this Adam was a type of Christ, with whom God made the Everlasting Covenant, and who at the appointed time acted as the Head and Representative of His people, as it is written, “over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come” (Rom 5:14).

The most conclusive proof that Adam *did* enter into a covenant with God on the behalf of his posterity is found in the penal evils which came upon the race in consequence of its head’s disobedience. From the awful curse which passed upon all his posterity we are compelled to infer the *legal relation* which existed between Adam and them, for the Judge of all the earth, being righteous, will not punish where there is no crime. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the

world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that [or “in whom”] all have sinned” (Rom 5:12). Here is the fact, and from it we must infer the preceding cause of it—under the government of a righteous God the suffering of holy beings *unconnected* with sin is an impossibility. It would be the very acme of injustice that Adam’s sin should be the cause of death passing on all men, unless all men were morally and legally connected with him.

That Adam stood as the federal head of his race and transacted for them, and that all his posterity were contemplated by God as being morally and legally (as well as seminally) in Adam, is clear from almost everything that was said to him in the first three chapters of Genesis. The language there used plainly intimates that it was spoken to the whole human race, and not to Adam as a single individual, but spoken to *them* and of *them*. The first time “man” is mentioned it evidently signifies all mankind and not Adam alone, “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let THEM have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and [not simply “the garden of Eden,” but] *over all the earth*” (Gen 1:26). All men bear the name of their representative (as the Church is designated after its Head, 1 Corinthians 12:12), for the Hebrew for “every man” in Psalm 39:6, 11 is “all Adam”—plain evidence of their being one in the eye of the law.

In like manner, what God said to Adam after he had sinned, was said *to* and *of* all mankind, and the evil to which he was doomed in this world, as the consequence of his transgression, equally falls upon his posterity, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life...In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen 3:17, 19). As this sentence “unto dust shalt *thou* return” did not respect Adam only, but all his descendants, so the same language in the original threat had respect unto all mankind, “In the day that thou eatest thereof *thou* shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17). This is reduced to a certainty by the unequivocal declarations of Romans 5:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:22. The curse came upon all, so the sin must have been committed by all.

The terms of the covenant are related in or clearly inferable from the language of Genesis 2:17. That covenant demanded as its condition, perfect obedience. Nor was that in any way difficult. One test only was instituted by which that obedience was to be formally expressed, namely, abstinence from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had endowed Adam, in his creation, with a perfect and universal rectitude (Eccl 7:29), so that he was fully able to respond to all requirements of his Maker. He had a full knowledge of God’s will concerning his duty. There was no bias in him toward evil, having been created in the image and likeness of God, his affections were pure and holy (cf. Eph 4:24). How simple and easy was the observance of the obligation! How appalling the consequences of its violations!

“The tendency of such a divine precept is to be considered. Man is thereby taught: 1. That God is Lord of all things, and that it is unlawful for man even to desire an apple, but with His leave. In all things therefore, from the greatest to the least, the mouth of the Lord is to be consulted, as to what He would, or would not have done by us. 2. That man’s true happiness is placed in God alone, and nothing is to be desired but with submission to God, and in order to employ it for Him. So that it is *He* only, on whose account all thing appear good and desirable to man. 3. Readily to be satisfied without even the most delightful and desirable things, if God so command, and to think there is much more good in obedience to the divine precept than in the enjoyment of the most delightful thing in the world. 4. That man was not yet arrived at the utmost pitch of happiness, but to expect a still greater good, after his course of obedience was over. This was hinted by the prohibition of the most delightful tree, whose fruit was, of any other, greatly to

be desired, and this argued some degree of imperfection in that state in which man was forbid the enjoyment of some good” (The Economy of the Covenants, 1660, Hermann Witsius, 1636-1708).

Unto that prohibitive statute was annexed a promise. This is an essential element in a covenant—a reward being guaranteed upon its terms being fulfilled. So here, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17) necessarily implies the converse—“If thou eatest not thereof thou shalt surely live.” Just as “Thou shalt not steal” (Exo 20:15). inevitably involves “Thou shalt conduct thyself honestly and honourably,” just as “rejoice in the Lord” (Phi 4:4). includes “murmur not against Him,” so according to the simplest laws of construction the threats of death as a consequence of eating, affirmed the promise of life to obedience. God will be no man’s debtor. The general principle of “in keeping of them [the divine commandments] there is great reward” (Psa 19:11) admits of no exception.

A certain good, a spiritual blessing, *in addition to* what Adam and Eve (and their posterity in him) already possessed, was assured upon his obedience. Had Adam been *without* a promise, he had been without a well-grounded hope for the future, for the hope which maketh not ashamed is founded upon the promise (Rom 4:18 etc.). As Romans 7:10 so plainly affirms, “the commandment, which was ordained *to life*,” or more accurately (for the word “ordained” is supplied by the translators) “the commandment which was unto life”—having “life” as the reward for obedience. And again, “the law is not of faith: but, The man that *doeth* them *shall live* in them” (Gal 3:12). But the law was “weak through the flesh” (Rom 8:3), Adam being a mutable, fallible, mortal, creature.

Against what has been said above it is objected, Adam was *already* in possession of spiritual life, how, then, could “life” be the reward promised for his obedience? It is true that Adam was in the enjoyment of spiritual life, being completely holy and happy, but he was *on probation*, and his response to the test God gave him, his obedience or disobedience to His command, would determine whether that spiritual life should be *continued*, or whether it would be forfeited. Had Adam complied with the terms of the covenant, then he had been *confirmed* in his creature standing, in the favour of God toward him, in communion with his Maker, in the happy state of an earthly paradise. He would then have passed beyond the possibility of apostasy and misery. The reward, or additional good, which would have followed Adam’s obedience, was a state of inalienable blessedness both for himself and his posterity.

The well-informed reader will observe from the above that we are not in accord with Hermann Witsius and some other prominent theologians of the Puritan period, who taught that the reward promised Adam upon his obedience was the heavenly heritage. Their arguments upon this point do not seem to us at all conclusive, nor are we aware of anything in Scripture which may be cited in proof thereof. An inalienable title to the earthly paradise is, we think, what the promise denoted. Rather was it reserved for the incarnate Son of God, by the inestimable worth of His obedience unto death, to merit for His people everlasting bliss on High. Therefore we are told that He has ushered in a “better covenant” with “*better promises*” (Heb 8:6). The last Adam has secured, both for God and for His people, *more* than was lost by the defection of the first Adam.

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

10. Its Results

The justification of the believer is absolute, complete, final. “It is *God* that justifieth” (Rom 8:33), and “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, *it shall be for ever*: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it” (Ecc 3:14). So absolute and inexorable is this blessed fact that, in Romans 8:30 we are told, “Whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Notice it is not simply a promise that God “*will* glorify,” but so sure and certain is that blissful event, the past tense is used. “Them he also glorified” is speaking from the standpoint of the eternal and unalterable purpose of God, concerning which there is no conditionality or contingency whatsoever. To be “glorified” is to be perfectly conformed to the lovely image of Christ, when we shall see Him as He is and be made like Him (1Jo 3:2). Because God has determined this, He speaks of it as already accomplished, for He “calleth those things which be not as though they were” (Rom 4:17).

So far as the believer is concerned, the penal side of the sin question has been settled once and for all. His case has been tried in the supreme court, and God has justified him. In consequence thereof the divine decision is “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). Once those very persons *were* under condemnation—“condemned already” (Joh 3:18), but *now* that their faith has united them to Christ there is *no* condemnation. The debt of their sin has been paid by their great Surety. The record thereof has been “blotted out” by His cleansing blood. “It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth” (Rom 8:33-34). Who will reverse *His* decision! Where is that superior tribunal to which this cause can be carried? Eternal justice has pronounced her fiat—immutable judgment has recorded her sentence.

It is utterly and absolutely impossible that the sentence of the divine Judge should ever be revoked or reversed. His sentence of justification results from and rests upon a complete satisfaction having been offered to His law, and that in the fulfillment of a covenant engagement. Thus is effectually precluded the recall of the verdict. The Father stipulated to release His elect from the curse of the law provided the Son would meet the claims of justice against them. The Son freely complied with His Father’s will, “Lo, I come” (Heb 10:7). He was now made under the law, fulfilled the law, and suffered the full penalty of the law, therefore shall He see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Sooner shall the lightnings of omnipotence shiver the Rock of Ages than those sheltering in Him again be brought under condemnation.

How very, very far from the glorious truth of the Gospel is the mere *conditional* pardon which Arminians represent God as bestowing upon those who come to Christ—a pardon which may be rescinded, yea, which *will be* canceled, unless they “do their part” and perform certain stipulations! What a horrible and blasphemous travesty of the truth is that!—an error which must be steadfastly resisted no matter who holds it. Better far to hurt the feelings of a million of our fellow-creatures than to displease their august Creator. On no such precarious basis as *our* fulfilling certain conditions has God suspended the justification of His people. Not only is there “*now* no condemnation” resting upon the believer, but there *never* again shall be, for “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom 4:8).

The dread sentence of the law, “thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17). cannot in justice be executed upon the sinner’s Surety and also upon himself. Hence by a necessity existing in the very nature of moral government, it *must* follow that the believing sinner be freed from all condemnation, that is, so cleared of the same that he is raised above all liability to punishment. So declared our blessed Saviour Himself, in words too plain and emphatic to admit of any misunderstanding, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and *shall not come* into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (Joh 5:24). He, the habitation of whose throne is “justice and judgment,” has sealed up this declaration forever, by affirming, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5). Sooner shall the sword of justice cleave the helmet of the Almighty than any divinely pardoned soul perish.

But not only are the sins of all who truly come to Christ eternally remitted, but the very righteousness of the Redeemer passes over to them, is placed upon them, so that a perfect obedience to the law is imputed to their account. It is theirs, not by promise, but by gift (Rom 5:17), by actual bestowment. It is not simply that God treats them as if they were righteous, they *are* righteous and so pronounced by Him. And therefore may each believing soul exclaim, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (Isa 61:10). O that each Christian reader may be enabled to clearly and strongly grasp hold of this glorious fact—that he is now truly righteous in the sight of God, is in actual possession of an obedience which answers every demand of the law.

This unspeakable blessing is bestowed not only by the amazing grace of God, but it is actually required by His inexorable *justice*. This too was stipulated and agreed upon in the covenant into which the Father entered with the Son. That is why the Redeemer lived here on earth for upwards of thirty years before He went to the cross to suffer the penalty of our sins, He assumed and discharged our responsibilities. As a child, as a youth, as a man, He rendered unto God that perfect obedience which we owed Him. He fulfilled all righteousness (Mat 3:15) for His people, and just as He who knew no sin was made sin for them, so they are now made “the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21). And therefore does JEHOVAH declare, “For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness *shall not depart* from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee” (Isa 54:10).

By actually believing with a justifying faith, the sinner doth receive Christ Himself, is joined to Him, and becomes immediately an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ. This gives him a right unto and an interest in the benefits of His mediation. By faith in Christ he received not only the forgiveness of sins, but “an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Act 26:19), the Holy Spirit (given to him) being “the earnest of our inheritance” (Eph 1:13-14). The believing sinner may now say “in the LORD have I righteousness” (Isa 45:24). He is “*complete* in him” (Col 2:10), for by “one offering” the Saviour hath “*perfected for ever* them that are sanctified” (Heb 10:14). The believer has been “accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:6), and stands before the throne of God arrayed in a garment more excellent than that which is worn by the holy angels.

How infinitely does the glorious Gospel of God transcend the impoverished thoughts and schemes of men! How immeasurably superior is that “everlasting righteousness” which Christ has brought in (Dan 9:24) from that miserable thing which multitudes are seeking to produce by their own efforts. Greater far is the difference between the shining light of the midday sun and the blackness of the darkest night, than between that “best robe” (Luk 15:22) which Christ has

wrought out for each of His people and that wretched covering which zealous religionists are attempting to weave out of the filthy rags of their own righteousness. Equally great is the difference between the truth of God concerning the *present* and *immutable* standing of His saints in all the acceptability of Christ, and the horrible perversion of Arminians who make acceptance with God contingent upon the believer's faithfulness and perseverance, who suppose that heaven can be purchased by the creature's deeds and doings.

It is not that the justified soul is now left to himself, so that he is certain of getting to heaven no matter how he conducts himself—the fatal error of Antinomians. No indeed. God also imparts to him the blessed Holy Spirit, who works within him the desire to serve, please, and glorify the One who has been so gracious to Him. “The love of Christ constraineth us...that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again” (2Co 5:14-15). They now “delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom 7:22), and though the flesh, the world, and the devil oppose every step of the way, occasioning many a sad fall—which is repented of, confessed, and forsaken—nevertheless the Spirit renews them day by day (2Co 4:16) and leads them in the paths of righteousness for Christ's name's sake.

In the last paragraph will be found the answer to those who object that the preaching of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith alone, will encourage carelessness and foster licentiousness. Those whom God justifies are not left in their natural condition, under the dominion of sin, but are quickened, indwelt, and guided by the Holy Spirit. As Christ cannot be divided, and so is received as Lord to rule us as well as Saviour to redeem us, so those whom God justifies He also sanctifies. We do not affirm that all who receive this blessed truth into their heads have their lives transformed thereby—no indeed, but we do insist that where it is applied in power to the heart there always follows a walk to the glory of God, the fruits of righteousness being brought forth to the praise of His name. Each truly justified soul will say,

Let worldly minds the world pursue,

It has no charms for me;

I once admired its trifles too,

But grace has set me free.

It is therefore the bounden duty of those who profess to have been justified by God to diligently and impartially examine themselves, to ascertain whether or not they have in them those spiritual graces which *always accompany justification*. It is by our sanctification, and that alone, that we may discover our justification. Would you know whether Christ fulfilled the law *for you*, that His obedience has been imputed to *your* account? then search your heart and life and see whether a spirit of *obedience to Him* is daily working in you. The righteousness of the law is fulfilled only in those who “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom 8:4). God never designed that the obedience of His Son should be imputed to those who live a life of worldliness, self-pleasing, and gratifying the lusts of the flesh. Far from it, “If any man be in Christ, he is *a new creature*: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2Co 5:17).

Summarizing now the blessed *results* of justification. 1. *The sins of the believer are forgiven*. “Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by him all that believe are justified from all things” (Act 13:38-39). All the sins of the believer, past, present, and to come, were laid upon Christ and atoned for by Him. Although sins cannot be actually pardoned before they are actually committed yet their obligation *unto the curse* of the law were virtually remitted at the cross, antecedently to their actual commission. The sins of Christians involve only the

governmental dealings of God in this life, and these are remitted upon a sincere repentance and confession.

2. *An inalienable title unto everlasting glory is bestowed.* Christ purchased for His people the reward of blessing of the law, which is eternal life. Therefore does the Holy Spirit assure the Christian that he has been begotten “to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1Pe 1:4). Not only is that inheritance *reserved* for all the justified, but they are all *preserved* unto it, as the very next verse declares, “who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1Pe 1:5)—“kept” from committing the unpardonable sin, from apostatising from the truth, from being fatally deceived by the devil—so “kept” that the power of God prevents anything separating them from His love in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:35-38).

3. *Reconciliation unto God Himself.* “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Rom 5:1, 10). Until men are justified they are at war with God, and He is against them, being “angry with the wicked every day” (Psa 7:11). Dreadful beyond words is the condition of those who are under condemnation—their minds are enmity against God (Rom 8:7), all their ways are opposed to Him (Col 1:21). But at conversion the sinner throws down the weapons of his rebellion and surrenders to the righteous claims of Christ and by Him he is reconciled to God. Reconciliation is to make an end of strife, to bring together those at variance, to change enemies into friends. Between God and the justified there is peace—effected by the blood of Christ.

4. *An unalterable standing in the favour of God.* “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand” (Rom 5:1-2). Mark the word “also,” not only has Christ turned away the wrath of God from us, but in addition He has secured the benevolence of God toward us. Previous to justification our standing was one of unutterable disgrace, but now, through Christ, it is in one of unclouded grace. God now has naught but good-will toward us. God has not only ceased to be offended at us, but is well-pleased with us—not only will He never afflict punishment upon us, but He will never cease to shower His blessings upon us. The throne to which we have free access is not one of judgment, but of pure and unchanging grace.

5. *Owned by God Himself before an assembled universe.* “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified” (Mat 12:36-37). Yes, justified publicly by the Judge Himself! “These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but *the righteous* into life eternal” (Mat 25:46). Here will be the final justification of the Christian, this sentence being *declaratory* unto the glory of God and the everlasting blessedness of those who have believed.

Let it be said in conclusion that the justification of the Christian is *complete* the moment he truly believes in Christ, and hence there are no degrees in justification. The apostle Paul was as truly a justified man at the hour of his conversion as he was at the close of his life. The feeblest babe in Christ is just as completely justified as is the most mature saint. Let theologians note the following distinctions. Christians were *decretively* justified from all eternity, *efficaciously* so when Christ rose again from the dead; *actually* so when they believed; *sensibly* so when the Spirit bestows joyous assurance; *manifestly* so when they tread the path of obedience; *finally* so at the day of judgment, when God shall sententiously, and in the presence of all created things, pronounce them so.

DIVINE GUIDANCE

Part Two

“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph 5:17). It is clear from this verse that it is both the right and the duty of the Christian to have a knowledge of the Lord’s will for him. God can neither be pleased nor glorified by His children walking in ignorance or proceeding blindly. Did not Christ say to His beloved disciples, “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (Joh 15:15). If, then, we are in the dark as to how we ought to proceed in anything, it is clear that we are living far below our privileges. No doubt the majority of our readers will give their hearty assent to these statements, but the question which concerns most of them is, *how* are we to *ascertain* the Lord’s will concerning the varied details of our daily lives?

First, let it be duly observed this exhortation, that we should be understanding “*what* the will of the Lord is,” is preceded by “Wherefore be ye not unwise.” That word “unwise” does not here signify bare ignorance or lack of knowledge, otherwise the two halves of the verse would merely express the *same* thought in its negative and positive forms. No, the word “unwise” there means “lacking in common sense,” or as the R.V. renders it “be not ye *foolish*.” Nor does the word “foolish” signify no more than it now does in common speech. In Scripture the “fool” is not simply one who is mentally deficient, but is the man who leaves God out of his life, who acts *independently* of Him. This must be duly borne in mind as we seek to arrive at the meaning of the second half of Ephesians 5:17.

Let it also be carefully observed that Ephesians 5:17 opens with the word “Wherefore,” which points us back to what immediately precedes. There we read, “See then that ye *walk circumspectly*, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:15-16). Unless *those* exhortations are prayerfully and diligently heeded, it is impossible that we should be “*understanding* WHAT the will of the Lord *is*.” Unless our *walk* be right, there can be no spiritual discernment of God’s will for us. And this brings us back to the central thought of the preceding article. Our daily walk is to be ordered by God’s Word, and in proportion as it is so shall we be kept in His will and preserved from folly and sin.

“A good understanding have all they that do his commandments” (Psa 111:10). A “good understanding” may be defined as *spiritual instinct*. We all know what is meant by that “instinct” with which the Creator has endowed animals and birds—that inward faculty which prompts them to avoid danger and moves them to seek that which makes for their well-being. Now man was, originally, endowed with a similar instinct, though of a far superior order to that possessed by the lower creatures. But at the Fall, he, to a large extent, lost it, and as one generation of depraved beings has followed another, their “instinct” has become more and more weakened, until now we see the vast majority of our fellows conducting themselves with far less intelligence than do the beasts of the field—rushing madly to destruction, which the instinct of the brutes would avoid—acting foolishly, yea, madly, contrary even to “common sense,” conducting their affairs and concerns without discretion.

Now at regeneration God gives to His elect “the spirit...of a *sound* mind” (2Ti 1:7), but that “spirit” has to be cultivated, it needs training and directing. The necessary instruction for this is found in the Word. From that Word we may learn what are the things which will prove beneficial to us, and what be injurious; what things are to be sought after, and what avoided. As the precepts of Scripture are reduced to *practice* by us, and as its prohibitions and warnings are *heeded*, we are enabled to judge things in their true light, we are delivered from being deceived by false appearances, we are kept from making foolish “mistakes.” The closer we walk by the Word, the more fully will this prove to be the case with us—a “good judgment” or spiritual instinct will be formed within us, so that we shall conduct our affairs discreetly and adorn the doctrine we profess.

So highly does the saint prize this spiritual instinct or sound mind, that he prays, “Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments” (Psa 119:66). He realizes that it can only be increased as he is *divinely* “taught,” that is, by the Spirit applying the Word to his heart, opening to him its meaning, bringing it to his remembrance when needed, and enabling him to make a proper *use* of the same. But let it be duly noted that in this prayer the petition is backed up with a plea, “*for* I have believed thy commandments,” “believed,” not merely by an intellectual assent, but approved with the affections. Only when *that* be truly the case is such a petition sincere. There is an inseparable connection between the two things—where God’s commandments are loved by us, we can count upon Him teaching us “good judgment.”

As we have said above, the “fool” is not the mentally deficient, but the one who leaves God out of his thoughts and plans, who cares not whether his conduct pleases or displeases Him. The “fool” is a *godless* person. Contrariwise, the “wise” (in Scripture) are not the highly intellectual or the brilliantly educated, but those who honestly seek to put God first in their hearts and lives. And God “honours” those who honour Him (1Sa 2:30). He gives them “good judgment.” True, it is not acquired all in a day. It is “here a little and there a little.” Yet the more completely we are surrendered to God, the more the principles of His Word *regulate* our conduct, the swifter is our growth in spiritual wisdom. In saying that this “good judgment” is not acquired all at once, we do not mean that a whole lifetime has to be lived before it becomes ours—though, alas, this *is* often the case with many. No indeed, some who have been converted but two or three years are often more spiritual, godly, and possess more spiritual wisdom than those who have been converted years before them.

By treasuring up in his mind the doctrines, precepts, promises, exhortations, and warnings of Scripture, and by diligently comparing himself with the Rule by which he is to walk, the Christian grows into a habitual frame of spiritual wisdom, and acquires a gracious “*taste*” which enables him to judge of right and wrong with a degree of readiness and certainty as a musical ear judges sounds, so that he is rarely mistaken. He who has the Word *ruling* in his heart is influenced thereby in all his actions, and because the glory of God is the great aim which he has before him, he is not suffered to go far wrong. Moreover, God has promised to show Himself strong on the behalf of the one whose heart is perfect toward Him, and this He does by regulating His providences and causing all things to work together for his good.

“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” (Mat 6:22). This language is of course figurative, yet its meaning is not difficult to ascertain. What the eye is to the body, the heart is to the soul, for out of the heart are “the issues of life” (Pro 4:23). The actions of the body are directed by the light received from the eye. If the eye be “single,” that is, sound and clear, perceiving objects as they really are, then the whole body has light for the directing of its members, and the man moves with safety and comfort. In like

manner, if the heart be undivided, set on pleasing God in all things, then the soul has clear vision, discerning the true nature of things, forming a sound judgment of their worth, choosing wisely, and directing itself prudently. While the heart is right with God, the soul is endowed with spiritual wisdom so that there is full light for our path.

“But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Mat 6:23). Here is the solemn contrast. If the vision of our bodily eye be defective, a cataract dimming it, then nothing is seen clearly, all is confusion, and the man stumbles as if in the dark, being continually liable to lose his way and run into danger. In like manner, where the heart be not right with God, where sin and self dominate, the whole soul is under the reigning power of darkness—native depravity, and in consequence, the judgment is blinded so that it cannot rightly discern between good and evil, cannot see through the gild of Satan’s baits, and so is fatally deceived by them. The very “light” which *is* in fallen man, namely, his “reason,” is controlled by his lusts, so, *great* is his “darkness.”

It is to be noted that the verses we have just been considering were spoken by Christ immediately after what He had been saying in Matthew 6:19-21 concerning the right and wise laying up of treasures. It was as though He now anticipated and answered a question from His disciples. If it be so important and essential for us not to lay up treasures in earth, but to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, then why is it that those men who are commonly regarded as the “shrewdest” and are considered by their fellows to be the most “successful,” seek after earthly treasures, rather than after heavenly? To this Christ replied—marvel not at this—they *cannot see* what they are doing. They are like blind men gathering pebbles supposing that they are valuable diamonds.

Much light does Christ here cast on what we now behold going on on every side. They who have set their hearts upon the things of time and sense, are but spending their energies for that which will stand them in no stead when they come to their deathbed, labouring for that which satisfieth not (Isa 55:2), and the reason why they conduct themselves so insanely—pursuing so eagerly the pleasures of this world, which will bear nothing but bitter regrets in the world to come—is because their hearts are evil. *God* has no real place in their thoughts, and in consequence He gives them up to the spirit of madness. There must be the “single eye”—the heart set upon pleasing God—if the soul is to be filled with heavenly wisdom, which loves, seeks, and lays up heavenly things. That wisdom is something which no college or university can impart—it is “from above” (Jam 3:17).

It is also to be carefully observed that our Lord’s teaching upon the “single eye” with the whole body “full of *light*,” and the “evil eye” with the whole body “full of darkness,” is immediately followed with, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Mat 6:24). This at once establishes the meaning of the preceding verses. Christ had been speaking (under a figure) of setting the Lord supremely before the heart, which necessarily involves the casting out of worldly things and fleshly considerations. Men think to compound with God and their lusts, God and mammon, God and worldly pleasures. No, says Christ, God will have all or nothing. He that serveth Him must serve Him *only* and *supremely*. Ah, my reader, are you willing to pay the necessary price to have *divine* light on your path?

It is quite likely that not a few readers are disappointed at our method of treating this subject, that which has been said being very different from what the title led them to expect. Neither in the preceding article nor in this one have we attempted to enter into specific details and state how a

person is to act when some difficult or sudden emergency confronts him, rather have we sought to treat of *basic principles* and thoroughly establish them. Though it might satisfy his curiosity, it would serve no good purpose for a teacher to explain an intricate problem in higher mathematics to a student who had not already mastered the elementary rules of arithmetic. So it would be out of place for us to have explained how particular cases and circumstances are to be dealt with before we have pressed those rules which must guide our general walk.

Thus far we have dealt with two chief things—the absolute necessity of being controlled by the Word of God without us, and the having a heart within which is single to God’s glory and set upon pleasing Him, if we are to have the light of heaven shining upon our earthly path. A third consideration must now engage our attention—the *help of the Holy Spirit*. But it is at this point we most need to be upon our guard, lest we lapse into a vague mysticism on the one hand, or become guilty of wild fanaticism on the other. Many have plunged into the most foolish and evil courses under the plea they were “prompted by the Spirit.” No doubt they *were* “prompted” by some “spirit,” but most certainly not by the *Holy Spirit*. HE never prompts to anything contrary to the Word. Our only safety is to impartially bring our inward impulses or promptings to the test of Holy Writ.

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom 8:14). This divine Guide is perfectly acquainted with the path which God has ordained for each celestial traveler. He is fully conversant with all its windings and narrowness, its intricacies and dangers. To be led by the Spirit is *to be under His government*. He perceives our temptations and weakness, knows our aspirations, hears our groans, and marks our strugglings after holiness. He knows when to supply a check, administer a rebuke, apply a promise, sympathize with a sorrow, strengthen a wavering purpose, confirm a fluctuating hope. The sure promise is, “He will guide you into all truth” (Joh 16:13). This He does by regulating our thoughts, affections and conduct, by opening our understandings to perceive the meaning of Scripture, applying it in power to the heart, enabling us to appropriate and reduce it to practice. Then let us each time we open the Sacred Volume, humbly and earnestly *seek* the aid of Him who inspired it.

It is to be noted that Romans 8:14 opens with the word, “For,” the apostle introducing a confirmation of what he had been affirming in the previous verses. They who “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom 8: 4), they who mind “the things of the Spirit” (Rom 8:5), they who “through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body” (Rom 8:13), are the ones who are “led by the Spirit.” As the “Spirit of holiness,” it is His aim to deepen the impress of the restored image of God in the soul, to increase our happiness by making us more holy. Thus *He* “leads” to nothing but what is sanctifying. The “Spirit guides” by subduing the power of indwelling sin, by weaning us from the world, by maintaining a tender conscience in us, by drawing out the heart to Christ, by causing us to live for eternity.

(Completed, God willing, in the January issue).

GOATS

A few months ago we published some notes upon goats sent us by a brother in Australia. Several have written to say they were helped by the same. Not long since we wrote to Bro. Klooster, who is engaged in Gospel work in Holland, a land where goats are quite common among the poorer people. In the course of our letter to him, we mentioned that it was our growing conviction “the goats” of Matthew 25:33 etc. are professing Christians who are devoid of the life of God in their souls. His reply has still further strengthened our conviction, and from it we here extract some thoughts concerning these animals, as being an adumbration of those bearing the name of Christ who are strangers to His salvation.

Read Matthew 25:31-33. “It is plain from Scripture that the ‘sheep’ mentioned here are God’s chosen people, who are washed in the blood of the Lamb, and have followed the great Shepherd (Joh 10:26-29). It is equally plain from the Scripture that the ‘goats’ are not atheists and others who repudiate the existence of the eternal God, but are those having ‘a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,’ people ever learning and ‘never able to come to the knowledge of the truth’ (2Ti 3:5-7). Looking now at Matthew 25:44, we read that the goats shall answer Christ ‘saying, *Lord*, when saw we thee an hungered?’ Only those spoken of in 2 Timothy 3:5; Jude 11 etc. will (even as the sheep, God’s children) address Him as ‘*Lord*.’ Hereby they show their ‘form of godliness’ or outward resemblance to God’s children, as at a distance goats resemble sheep in appearance and in the sound of their bleating. In Matthew 7:21-23, we read of this same religious people, with their ‘form of godliness.’

“In Scripture the ‘right hand’ is always used as a symbol for the place of might, power, honor, protection and fellowship. Read carefully Psalm 16:8-9, 11; Mark 15:27; Galatians 2:9; Exodus 15:6. But the ‘left hand’ is a symbol of the place of inferiority, dishonour, folly. ‘A wise man’s heart is at his right hand; but a fool’s heart at his *left*’ (Ecc 10:2). Ehud (Jdg 3:15-22) was left-handed, and a sneaking assassin. The seven hundred men spoken of in Judges 20:16 were all *left* handed, and brought certain destruction when used in fighting. In Ezekiel 16:46, we read of religious by apostate Samaria dwelling at Jerusalem’s *left* hand—Sodom as her ‘right hand’ is to be exalted above her, Matthew 11:20-24.

“In connection with Matthew 25:33, we read in Ezekiel 34:17, ‘Behold, I *judge between* cattle and cattle,’ that is, between sheep and goats, for the very next sentence adds ‘between the rams and the he goats.’ Reading the whole chapter carefully through, there is no doubt that the ‘rams’ speak of the teachers, leaders, pastors of the sheep; while the ‘he goats’ are the false prophets (2Pe 2:1-3), the ‘hirelings’ (Joh 10:12, 13) who catch and scatter the sheep.

“A *ram* has the same nature and taste as the sheep, only he is stronger, and their natural protector. A ram will never attack a man or animal, except he, or his sheep, are attacked. So the true undershepherd only attacks when the honour of his great Shepherd and His sheep are assailed. Then, like the ram, he will fight even unto death. The *he-goat* has the same nature as the goats, only he is more fierce and destructive, and will attack without any provocation or need—so the false shepherds are constantly making onslaughts on the truth, on Christ, and on His people.

“‘Therefore will I *save my flock*, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will *judge between* cattle and cattle’ (Eze 34:22). ‘He shall *separate* them one from another, as a shepherd divideth

his sheep from the goats...and these [the goats] shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous [the sheep] into life eternal' (Mat 25:32, 46)"!!

OUR ANNUAL LETTER

"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice" (Phi 4:4). Rejoicing is not simply a spiritual luxury, but a Christian duty. Nor is it merely for us to be regaling ourselves on special occasions only. We are to rejoice *always*. Spiritual rejoicing is not dependent upon personal temperament, pleasant surroundings, congenial circumstances, or the company of vivacious fellow-saints. This is evident from our opening verse. It was written by one "in bonds," a prisoner at Rome. It is true that a gloomy disposition may affect the mind with doleful thoughts, that unpleasant surroundings are apt to dampen the natural spirits, that trying circumstances tend to harass, and that lack of fellowship with happy saints may sadden the heart. Nevertheless, *the Holy Spirit* is not limited by such things as those, and when *He* takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us we cannot but rejoice.

There are some remarkable statements in the New Testament on the subject of rejoicing. For example we read that after the apostles had been *beaten* by the Jews for preaching the Gospel, they "departed from the presence of the council, *rejoicing* that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Act 5:41), that was the spirit triumphing over the flesh. Nor was that victorious attitude limited to the apostles, for of the Hebrew saints it is recorded that "they took" *joyfully* the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had "in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (Heb 10:34)—that was faith triumphing over unbelief. James exhorted the early saints to "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (Jam 1:2-3). Writing to the saints at Rome, Paul said, "We *glory* in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience" (Rom 5:3).

"Rejoice *with trembling*" (Psa 2:11). What a strange collocation of terms is that! one which we can scarcely conceive of any uninspired pen inventing. If it be proper to "rejoice" then why "tremble"? and how is it possible to conjoin the two at the same time? Ah, God is infinitely wiser than we are, and He well knows our tendency to extremes, our danger of perverting even that which is good, so accordingly He warns by counseling us. Material riches often take to themselves wings and fly away. The fairest flower fades in a few days at most. The sun which is now shining so brightly, may, within a few minutes, be overcast by dark clouds. God requires us to exercise a holy jealousy over ourselves, and to hold all earthly things with a light hand.

"Rejoice with trembling." This is the word which has come to us forcibly as we contemplated our annual letter. We have great cause for "rejoicing." Throughout another twelve months the smile of the Lord has been upon us, lavishly has He bestowed both spiritual and temporal mercies. We have been favoured with much liberty in composing the numerous articles for another volume. Hardly a day has passed by but what evidence has come to hand that the Lord's blessing rests upon our labours. Funds have again come in freely so that all bills were promptly paid. God has graciously heard prayer for an increased circulation, bringing us in touch with quite

a number more who hunger for spiritual things and are willing to be *searched* by the Word. While, throughout another year both the editor and his wife have been spared a single day's sickness. Yes, abundant cause have we for "rejoicing."

But it is written "rejoice *with trembling*." Many have been spoiled by success. Of Israel it is written, "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked" (Deu 32:15). This needs to be taken to heart by us. History shows conclusively that the state of the church was healthiest not in times of outward prosperity, but in seasons of adversity. That ought not to be, yet the fact remains it *is* so. It is the heavily-weighted ship which is steadiest on a stormy sea, and our souls need the ballast of trials to hold us down in our proper place. Even the beloved Paul was given a thorn in the flesh lest he be "exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations" he had been favored with (2Co 12:7). The mountain air is invigorating for a change, but to continue long in a high altitude is hard on the heart.

This word, "Rejoice *with trembling*" needs to be turned into earnest prayer by both writer and reader. None are hated so much by Satan as those whom God is blessing, and there is still that in them which is capable of responding to his temptations. We need to be much on our guard lest increased light will issue in increased chastisement, through our failure to *walk* according to the light. We need to be much on our guard lest multiplied blessings lead to confidence in the flesh, lest we become vain in our joy and puffed up with the very things we rejoice in. We have to do with a jealous God, who will not tolerate idols. May He graciously write this word, "rejoice with trembling" on each of our hearts—we only do so when we rejoice as though we rejoiced not (1Co 7:30).

If anything written by us has been blest to any of our readers, then unto the Lord alone is due *all* the honour and glory. It does not, it cannot, be credited to us. *We* have nothing but what we first received (1Co 4:7). Everything worth having, knowing, or enjoying, is the pure gift of God, and to Him be rendered eternal praise. In ourselves we are poor, sinful, erring creatures, and daily do we have occasion to blush and hang our heads in shame. We are but empty vessels unless the Spirit is pleased to fill them. Therefore we respectfully request that none of our readers will address us as "Rev." No worm of the dust is due such a title. It is written "holy and reverend is HIS name" (Psa 111:9).

Should the Lord spare us for another year, we expect to follow the articles on "Justification" with a series on the doctrine of Sanctification. This is much needed today, for many of God's saints have very hazy and confused ideas on the subject. It is harder to handle than Justification, and we earnestly solicit the prayers of Christian friends that we may be divinely helped therein. The papers on the work and operations of the Spirit are to be continued, God willing, for another year, and here too we approach the more intricate branch of our theme and stand in urgent need of wisdom from on High. Having completed the section on the Life of Faith, the next verses in Hebrews take up the important and searching subject of divine Chastisement. May the Lord graciously prepare our hearts for its contemplation. The Life of David takes a more tragic turn and contains some very solemn warnings for us.

Not a few of our readers would like us to take up the book of Revelation, but in addition to being conscious of our utter incompetency for such a task, we feel there are other matters of more practical moment for these days. The future is in the hands of God, it is the *present* which most concerns our own responsibility. It is of far more importance that we should learn to live daily lives which are pleasing to the Lord, and how to obtain answers to prayer, than it is to speculate about what is going to happen next in the political world. In the day of judgment it will matter

comparatively little whether or not we could rightly explain the four riders of Revelation 6 or the two beasts of Revelation 13, but it will make tremendous difference whether or not we have regulated our lives by the precepts and commands of Holy Writ.

During this year, several hundreds of new names have been added to our mailing list—some of them have written, expressing their appreciation in a practical way, deeming it both a privilege and a duty to have a part in supporting this printed ministry, but most of them we have not heard from. It costs from 80 to 90 cents ($\frac{3}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{9}$) to send this magazine for a whole year to a single person—due to the fact that our circulation is so small, were it doubled, it would almost halve the cost for each individual. There seems to be an increasing number these days who want something for nothing, and we have no intention of encouraging so dishonest a spirit. On the other hand, where *genuine* poverty prevents a reader from sending in a gift, that is no hindrance from his receiving these “Studies.” We have spoken plainly because we do not take a penny for our labours (our own needs being supplied), and because we dare not use the gifts of God’s people to go on sending the magazine year after year to those who are better able to contribute to its expenses.

Several hundred names are dropped from our list each year, which means they have to be replaced by new ones, if we are to be justified in continuing to publish. We would therefore beg each interested friend who has, under God, received real help from its pages, to prayerfully consider if there are any Christians known to him or her who would be likely to value these “Studies,” and if so, to write them, telling about the publication and urging them to write us for it. We heartily thank all friends who have had prayerful and financial fellowship in this word. This written ministry—to which the editor is devoting *all* his time—is more urgently needed than it was ten years ago. Many of Christ’s sheep are starving spiritually. It is our bounden duty to try and reach them. All is well with us. With loving greetings, Yours by God’s abounding mercy, A. W. and V. E. Pink.



APPENDICES

About Studies in the Scriptures

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952) wrote and published his monthly 28 page expository digest, *Studies in the Scriptures*, from 1922 to 1953. He mailed it worldwide by paid subscription to whomever desired the deeper truths of God. Each issue contained continuing serialized articles on six to eight subjects. When one subject was “completed” to the author’s satisfaction, another subject series began in its place in the next issue. In total, the 380 issues comprise a treasure of immense proportions.

By God’s grace, Chapel Library republishes the *Studies* beginning with the year 1934, available for download worldwide, and mailing three issues each quarter by free subscription in North America. We also print many books and booklets gleaned from articles in the *Studies*. These may be ordered in print in North America, or downloaded from our website worldwide without charge:

Studies: www.chapellibrary.org/studies

Other literature: www.chapellibrary.org/literature/title-catalog

Today the various subjects are being gathered together by topic, and republished in paperbacks by several sources. *Chapel Library* offers the following at the time of this printing:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| - The Sovereignty of God | 176 pages |
| - Comfort for Christians | 79 pages |
| - Profiting from the Word | 96 pages |
| - Seven Sayings of the Savior | 94 pages |
| - Spiritual Union and Communion | 175 pages |
| - The Attributes of God | 105 pages |

- The Doctrine of Human Depravity	241 pages
- The Doctrine of Revelation	214 pages
- 1 John – An Exposition, Part 1	190 pages
- 1 John – An Exposition, Part 2	173 pages
- The Holy Spirit	196 pages

Biography of A.W. Pink

by Erroll Hulse

Concerning Calvinism¹ and Arminianism² during the first half of the Twentieth Century, a most interesting case study is the experience of Arthur W. Pink. He was a preacher and writer of outstanding talent who ministered in Britain, America, and Australia. When he died in 1952 in isolation on the Island of Lewis in north eastern Scotland, he was hardly known outside a small list of subscribers to his magazine, *Studies in the Scriptures*. Yet, by the 1970s, his books were in wide demand and his name was widely known among publishers and ministers. In fact, for that period it would be difficult to find a reformed author whose books were more widely read.

The preaching ministry of A. W. Pink had been remarkably blessed in the USA, but it was in Australia that he seemed to reach the apex of his public ministry, and there in particular that his preaching ministry reached great heights. He was then faced with accreditation by the Baptist Union and was rejected on account of his Calvinistic views. He then ministered in a Baptist church of Strict Baptist pedigree. There he came unstuck since they esteemed him an Arminian! A considerable group, however, appreciated Pink, recognised his worth, and seceded from that Strict Baptist Church to form a new church of 27 members. Then suddenly, in 1934, Pink resigned and returned to Britain. It is widely held that one rejection is enough to cripple a minister for life, but two in quick succession can destroy a pastor completely. So it proved for Arthur Pink. He never again found meaningful entrance into the ministry, though he tried his utmost. He sought openings in both the UK and the USA without success. He became increasingly isolated. He ended his days as an evangelical recluse in the Island of Stornoway off the coast of Scotland. It was rumoured that not more than ten souls attended his funeral.

There is much that we can learn from the life of A. W. Pink. Firstly, we will trace out his early life in broad outline. Secondly, we will describe his experience in Australia, and trace out the adverse effects of this on his life. Thirdly, we will the impact of his writing ministry.

1. Early Life

Arthur Pink was born in Nottingham, England, in 1886. His parents were godly. They lived by the Bible and kept the Lord's Day holy. Arthur was the first of three children brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. To the grief of their parents, all three children drifted into lives

¹ **Calvinism** – the doctrinal system developed from the teachings of the French-born Swiss Reformer John Calvin (1509-1664), holding that the Bible teaches the supreme authority of the Scriptures, the sovereignty of God, predestination, and the “doctrines of grace”; these doctrines were the response of the Synod of Dort (1618-19) to the Arminians’ remonstrance (protest) and are commonly known by the acronym TULIP.

² **Arminianism** – (from Jacobus Arminius, 1560-1609, Dutch theologian) the doctrinal system that rejects the Reformers’ understanding of predestination, teaching instead that God’s predestination of individuals was based on His foreknowledge of their accepting or rejecting Christ by their own free will.

of unbelief. Worse was to come: Arthur embraced *Theosophy*, an esoteric cult that claimed powers of the occult! “Lucifer” was the name of the leading theosophy magazine. A natural feature of Arthur’s character was wholeheartedness, and he entered theosophy with zeal. A leadership role was offered him, which meant that he would visit India. At the same time a friend who was an opera singer, noted that Arthur possessed a fine baritone voice; he urged him to study for a career in opera. Then suddenly on a night during 1908, Arthur was converted. His first action was to preach the Gospel to the theosophist group.

Simultaneous with Pink’s conversion was a call to the Christian ministry. But the colleges were in the hands of liberals bent on the destruction of the Scriptures. Arthur, however, heard of the Moody Bible Institute, which had been founded by D. L. Moody³ in 1889. In 1910, aged 24, Pink left for Chicago to begin a two-year course. His time at Moody lasted only six weeks, however. He decided that he was wasting his time, and that he should enter directly into a pastorate—and his professors agreed! He was not disgruntled, but rather frustrated, that the teaching was pitched at such a primary level that it did nothing for him.

During 1910, he began in his first pastorate in Silverton, Colorado, a mining camp in the San Juan Mountains. We possess little detail of this period, but we know that from Silverton, Pink moved to Los Angeles. He was always a hard worker, and this is illustrated by the fact that at one point in Oakland he was engaged in tent evangelism six nights a week for eighteen weeks!

From Los Angeles, he moved to Kentucky. It was here that he met and married Vera E. Russell. There could not have been a better gift from heaven. Vera was entirely committed to the Lord. She was hard working, gifted, intelligent, and persevering. She died just ten years after Arthur’s decease on the island of Stornoway.

The next move was to Spartanburg, South Carolina, from 1917 to 1920. This church building consisted of a small and frail wooden structure, while he and Vera lived in a small wooden house standing on wooden columns. Heating was inadequate, and in the freezing winter it was like an ice box.

It was during this time Pink began writing books. There were two of significance: one with the title *Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, and the second *The Sovereignty of God*, the foreword of which is dated June 1918. It was this book that was later taken up by The Banner of Truth publishers. The first edition, according to I. C. Herendeen, his first publisher at that time, was only 500 copies, and it was a struggle to sell that number. When the book came to Banner, it was edited by Iain Murray and vastly improved. It became one of the most popular of The Banner of Truth paperbacks. By 1980, 92,000 copies had sold.

After about a year at Spartanburg, Pink almost came to grief. He felt a strong conviction to give up the ministry and devote himself to writing only, and at one point was disconsolate. Vera wrote to a friend saying that her husband was even thinking of leaving the ministry and going into business, to make money for the Kingdom as a better way of serving God. In 1920, Arthur resigned the pastorate at Spartanburg. He and Vera moved and settled at Swengel, Pennsylvania, in order to be near the publisher I. C. Herendeen.

In the middle of July, 1920, he left to take a series of meetings in California. Large crowds gathered and numbers were saved. At one point 1,200 gathered to hear the Gospel. Other crusades and conferences followed; it was evident that Pink was eminently suited to this kind of ministry.

³ **D. L. Moody** (1837-1899) – American evangelist and publisher who founded the Moody Church, Northfield School and Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts (now the Northfield Mount Hermon School), the Moody Bible Institute, and Moody Publishers.

Looking back over his life, it is apparent that he experienced more blessing in the itinerant ministry than he did in a total of twelve years in pastoring churches. This had to do with his temperament; he preferred being in his study to visiting.

In 1921, Arthur and Vera were back in Pennsylvania. The monthly digest, the *Studies in the Scriptures*, first appeared in 1922. It ran continuously without interruption for 32 years, until Arthur's death in 1952. Initially, this was a 24 page magazine, with four to six articles as instalments in a series. To write expository material at a high standard at this rate every month is a tremendous testimony to his insight into the Scriptures, and to the Lord's blessing and enabling. All his articles had to be written by hand and finished for the printer at least two months before the date of publication. *Studies in the Scriptures* had about 1,000 circulation at the beginning, but for most of its existence the subscription level hovered at about 500. The financial side was always precarious, with only just enough to cover printing costs from one month to the next. Pink corresponded with some of his subscribers; eventually this formed his pastoral work. Throughout he was assisted by his very hard working wife, who acted as secretary. They never had a family, always lived very humbly, and managed always to make ends meet. This was made possible through a modest inheritance left to him by his parents and through gifts that he received from his readers.

During 1923, Arthur fell into a deep depression, which turned out to be a nervous breakdown. At this juncture a young couple that had been greatly blessed by Pink's ministry came to the rescue, and Arthur was nursed through a period of several months enforced rest, which brought him back to normal health.

In 1924, a major new direction came by way of letters of invitation from a publisher in Sydney, Australia. Before departing for Australia, no less than four months preparation had to be made for the *Studies*. On his way to Australia, Pink engaged in more Bible conference preaching in Colorado, then in Oakland, California, and also San Francisco—from where he and Vera took ship across the Pacific to Sydney.

2. *Pink's Experience in Australia*

The Pinks spent a total of three and half years in Australia. These times were for them the best, but also turned out to be the worst. Upon arrival Arthur had more invitations than he possibly fill. Initially his ministry in Australia was a great success. Crowds gathered; churches were filled; believers were revived; and souls were brought to the Saviour.

Attendance swelled in every place he preached. In the first year in Australia Arthur preached 250 times. He would often work until 2:00 in the morning to keep *Studies in the Scriptures* going. The Pinks truly must have felt that at last they had found the place of permanent fulfilment. There was an evident power in his ministry. One mature believer declared that he drew people "like a magnet," and that he preached the "whole counsel of God's Word," and was capable of preaching a sermon "from every word of the text."

This period proved to be one of great joy. Pink was now 40 years old. He was preaching almost daily for well over an hour. He would get home at 10:00 PM and then work until 2:00 AM. He wrote, "never before during our 16 years in the ministry, have we experienced such blessing and joy in our souls, such liberty of utterance, and such an encouraging response as we have done in this highly favoured portion of Christ's vineyard."⁴

⁴ *The Life of Arthur W. Pink*, by Iain H. Murray, The Banner of Truth Trust, p 49

We can be sure that a thrilling and powerful soul-saving ministry will arouse the fury of Satan. And so it proved to be in this case when that old serpent, the devil, mounted a cunning counterattack. The Baptist Union leaders were fundamentally opposed to Calvinism. These leaders invited Arthur Pink to read a paper on “Human Responsibility.” Sadly, Pink did not realise that this was a plot to demote him in the eyes of the public—and in his sincere earnestness he fell into the trap. Instead of declining this invitation, he presented the paper and then answered questions for over an hour. The result of this was that the BU of New South Wales published a statement that they agreed unanimously *not* to endorse his ministry. What they really meant (for they did not themselves clarify any doctrine) is that they did not agree with Pink’s Reformed doctrine. They were fundamentally Arminian. The effect of all this was that invitations dried up, and Pink’s wider effective ministry in Australia was drastically reduced.

It was at this juncture that one of three Strict and Particular Baptist Churches invited Pink to become its pastor. This church was known as the Belvoir Street Church. Here Pink was as busy as he had ever been in his life. He had preached 300 times in the year ending 1926. In addition to preaching three times a week at Belvoir Street, he preached in three different places in Sydney each week to an average of 200 at each meeting. He still managed to maintain *Studies in the Scriptures* by burning midnight oil.

Trouble however was in store. The early part of the Twentieth Century was a time of lack of clarity in doctrine. One of the evidences of this was confusion over Calvinism, Arminianism, and hyper-Calvinism.⁵ Many churches polarized. The Baptist Union was Arminian, and the Strict and Particular Baptists tended to be hyper-Calvinist. This proved to be the case at Belvoir Street. Until about May 1927, the Pinks believed that they had found a permanent church home.

3. *Impact of Pink’s Writing Ministry*

If history had progressed normally, Arthur Pink would have been forgotten. There are several leaders in each generation who are well known, but it is unlikely that their names will be remembered for very long. When Arthur Pink died, he was known to a small circle of readers—about 500—who read his monthly periodical *Studies in the Scriptures*, which he had faithfully produced with the help of his wife Vera for 31 years. Yet, after his decease, as his writings were collected and published as books, his name became very well known in the English-speaking evangelical world. During the 1960s and ’70s, there was a dearth of reliable expository writing; Pink’s writings filled an important need. His expositions are God-centred, theologically compelling, and reliable—as well as practical and experimental. That was precisely what was needed during a period of spiritual drought. Publishers discovered the value of his writings. The outcome was dramatic.

For instance, Baker Book House published twenty-two different titles by Pink, with a combined total sales by 1980 of 350,000. By the same date just three books (*Sovereignty of God*, *Life of Elijah*, and *Profiting from the Word*) totaled 211,000. Yet as contemporary reformed authors have multiplied, so the demand for Pink’s books has lessened.

We must remember that with the dawning of the twentieth century, the mainline denominations had already suffered extensive losses to higher criticism and modernism. Such was the advance of modernism in the late nineteenth century and through the first half of the twentieth

⁵ **hyper-Calvinism** – the doctrinal error that holds men need not evangelize, since God will save His elect children with or without the means of preaching the Word. This represents only one side of biblical truth; the other is that God is pleased to use human instruments as means to His work, and the preaching of the Word is uniquely marked out for this purpose (2Ti 4:2; 2Ti 3:16; Mat 28:19).

century, most Bible colleges and seminaries were lost to an agenda of unbelief and anti-Christianity. Instead of producing preacher/pastors for the churches, men were sent out who emptied the churches. The most striking example is Methodism. The aggregate membership in Methodism grew to be the highest of the non-conformist churches. Yet this denomination has been virtually annihilated by modernism.

The writings of Pink provided not only food for the spiritually hungry, but as Iain Murray asserts, “Pink has been immensely important in reviving and stimulating doctrinal reading at the popular level. The same can be said of few other authors of the twentieth century.”⁶

*A South African by birth, **Erroll Hulse** gave much of his life to furthering the cause of the gospel and Reformed doctrine in Africa, as well as missions around the world. Through a wide range of mission activities, conference initiatives, and editing Reformation Today magazine, Erroll served as a vital link for Chapel Library to international pastors and missionaries.*

After conversion to Christ in university, Erroll studied theology at the London Bible College and benefited from the ministry of Martyn Lloyd-Jones at Westminster. His pastorates in the UK include 23 years in Cuckfield, West Sussex, three years in Liverpool, and twenty years as Associate Pastor with a missions mandate at Leeds Reformed Baptist Church. Erroll’s life leaves a legacy of passionate prayer for the global cause of Christ, a hunger for Spirit-wrought revival, and ceaseless activity fueled by a love for Christ and the lost.

From 1970-2013, Erroll Hulse edited and wrote extensively for Reformation Today magazine, which continues today as a bi-monthly magazine featuring insightful articles relevant to the Reformed community, with news from global mission fields. Visit www.reformation-today.org for more information.

The Carey Conference is another continuing ministry of Erroll’s Reformation Today Trust. This annual conference in the United Kingdom is aimed at equipping pastors, church leaders, and their wives.

Erroll and others began the African Pastors’ Conferences in 2006 to encourage a recovery of African churches from the influx of the prosperity gospel and syncretism with traditional religions. The conferences operate as a collaborative effort of South African and Zambian Reformed Baptist churches. Reception has been enthusiastic and conferences have spread over many countries in English-speaking Africa. Churches in Africa, UK, and the USA sponsor these conferences by financially “adopting” conferences in specific locations. For more information visit www.reformation-today.org/african-pastors-conference/.

We are deeply grateful to the Lord for Erroll’s life, his fellowship in Christ, partnership in ministry, and passion for global mission endeavors.

⁶ *ibid.*

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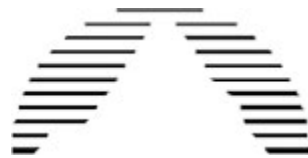
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