

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 open book, which is lying flat. The quill pen is resting on the right page of the book. The background is dark, making the illuminated objects stand out.

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STUDIES IN THE
SCRIPTURES

ARTHUR W. PINK

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January

FIRST THINGS FIRST

The dawning of a new year is a fresh call unto each of us to put first things first and it is only by heeding this call that we are prepared to start it aright. The greatest tragedy of life is that the vast majority of our fellows are dissipating their energies on secondary things, spending their strength for that which satisfies not. Alas, how much time have we wasted in the past! But a new year affords us another opportunity to mend our ways. How much of it, then, are we going to improve and conserve for eternity? The answer to that question will be determined by how far we put first things first.

It is one thing to recognize and realize that it is both our duty and wisdom to put first things first and quite another to actually do so. It is much to be thankful for when light from above makes plain the path wherein we should walk—yet something more than illumination is required in order for us to traverse the same. Strength, power, enablement, is indispensable—and *that* we have not by nature. Have we not already been made painfully aware of this fact? Then have we humbly acknowledged it to God, and sought from Him fresh supplies of grace? Let us say with Jehoshaphat, when the enemies of Israel assembled against them, “O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon *thee*” (2Ch 20:12).

What is it to put first things first? First and supremely to give God Himself His rightful place in our lives and render to Him that which is His due. “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; *I am the first*, and I am the last” (Isa 44:6). The great “I am” is self-existent and self-sufficient. Because He is the First, He should be first served. The world had its beginning from Him. We had ours, and therefore at the beginning of the year, and of each day, it deeply concerns us to take Him along with us. God is the sum of all excellence, being inexpressibly blessed in Himself. How He should attract us! God is possessed of infinite benevolence, which is guided by unerring wisdom, and He has all-mighty power at His disposal. What an Object for our most fervent affections! Shall, then, every glittering toy become a rival to this transcendently glorious Being and rob Him of our hearts?

Let us form the habit (if we have not already done so) of directing our first conscious thoughts unto Him who has preserved us through the night. Begin the day by definitely bringing the Lord God before your heart, contemplate His wondrous attributes, prostrate your soul before Him in worship, adore Him for His glorious perfections. Say with holy David, “My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee” (Psa 5:3). Nor will this be either difficult or irksome if we turn the eyes of our souls unto Him. It is beholding the beauty of the Lord which puts in tune the strings of our harps and enables us to make melody in our hearts unto Him. Nor is this all, by doing obeisance we promote obedience. By solemnly

paying homage to God and rendering to Him the honour which is due His great name, we strengthen the obligations that we lie under to observe His statutes and keep His commandments. By our humble and frequent adoration of His perfections, conformity to His will will be easier, for His authority over us will be more strongly felt.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mat 6:33). God is to be given the preference above all others. Let not any business prevent our seeking communion with Him nor hinder the maintenance of it. There are many things we would like to do, but other things deter us. We wish to visit a dear friend, but the pressure of other concerns thwarts us. But this must never be the case with our seeking unto *God*—that is the “one thing needful” (Luk 10:42). to which everything else must be made to give way. It is not at all necessary to our highest good that we be great in the world or advance our estate in it to such and such a pitch—but it is absolutely essential that we obtain God’s favour and keep ourselves in His love. No worldly business whatsoever can serve to excuse our attendance upon God. Nay, the more important our worldly business be, the more need have we to apply ourselves to God by prayer for His help in and blessing upon it. The closer we keep to God in prayer, the more likely are our affairs to prosper.

Second, to yield ourselves up unreservedly to God. of the Corinthian saints we read that they “*first* gave their own selves to the Lord” (2Co 8:5), which should be done by us at the beginning of each day. This means that they (1) gave their hearts to Him, being won by His loveliness. That they (2) surrendered their wills to Him, to be governed by Him. That they (3) devoted their lives to Him, seeking His honour and glory. “In the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early” (Isa 26:8-9). Our desire must be not only towards the good things that He gives, but towards God Himself—His favour and love, the manifestation of His name to us, and the influences of His grace upon us. Our wills are to be surrendered to God, as the servant is yielded to his master’s pleasure, in everything consulting his desires and interests. God’s will is to be our sole rule, His precepts the regulator of all we engage in. Our lives are to be devoted to His glory—acknowledging Him in all our ways, following Him fully as Caleb did.

Third, to keep our hearts with all diligence (Pro 4:23). It is not enough that our outward conduct be proper—the springs from which it issues must be right. “Cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also” (Mat 23:26). The stream itself cannot be sweet if the fountain-head be foul. A corrupt tree will not bear wholesome fruit. Alas, how widely neglected is this inward cleansing! How generally is external reformation substituted for internal mortification. And why is this?—because we are far more concerned about the approval of our fellow-creatures than we are to obtain the approbation of our *Creator*. Our actions come beneath the gaze of man, but the springs from which they proceed are under the scrutiny of God. He who “weigheth the spirits” (Pro 16:2) demands purity of heart. We are required to judge the motives which actuate us, to make conscience of evil lustings and vain imaginations, to take ourselves to task for wandering thoughts when engaged in divine worship.

Fourth, to manifest godliness in the family circle, “Let them learn first to show piety at home” (1Ti 5:4). Here is another God-appointed “*first*” which is most necessary for us all to heed—but we would specially press it upon the attention of those who are so anxious to engage in what they term “service for the Lord.” The “service” which God requires from all of His people is not a running about here and there, asking impertinent questions of total strangers and prattling to them about divine things, but to be in subjection to Himself, to walk obediently to His law. To talk to

people about Christ is far easier than the task *He* has assigned—to deny self, take up our cross, and follow Him. Actions speak louder than words—it is by our conduct we are to make manifest whose we are. Christians are to “show forth” by their *lives* (rather than tell forth with their lips) “the praises of him who hath called you” (1Pe 2:9). And they are “first to show piety at home,” then in the church, and then in the world, for if there be no piety in our home life, then all our seeming piety in the church and before the world is but humbuggery and hypocrisy.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

6. *The Ministerial office—Matthew 5:13-16*

“Ye are the salt of the earth” (Mat 5:13). These words (and those which follow to the end of v. 16), are frequently regarded as being spoken of God’s people at large, but this we think is a mistake. First, because such an interpretation is out of harmony with the immediate context. Last month, we called attention to our Lord’s changing of the pronoun in verse 11 from the “they” in verses 1-10 to the “ye.” In verse 10, Christ enumerated the general principle that, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,” but in verse 11 He made particular application to His own ministers—persecution is the usual experience of God’s people, but it is the *special* portion of *His servants*. Clear confirmation of this distinction is found in verse 12, where the maligned ministers of Christ are bidden to rejoice because, “So persecuted they the *prophets* which were before you,” not—“the saints,” but the official servants of God.

Thus, the, “Ye are the salt of the earth” (Mat 5:13), obviously has reference to those who now occupy the same position as did the “prophets” of old, namely, those called of God to act as His mouthpiece and interpret His will. Additional proof is found in what immediately follows, where after further designating them the “light of the world” Christ added, “A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid” (Mat 5:14)—a figure fitly pertinent to the *officers* of Christ, who are made a spectacle to the world. Finally, what is said in verse 15 plainly pertains to the ministers of God rather than to their hearers, for the candle on a candlestick again speaks of official dignity, and the giving “light unto all that are in the house” (Mat 5:15) is plainly the one man ministering to the many.

Matthew Henry (1662-1714) begins his comments on these verses by pointing out, “Christ had lately called His disciples and told them they should be ‘fishers of men’ (Mat 4:19). Here He tells them further what He designed them to be—the salt of the earth and lights of the world—that they might indeed be what it was expected they should be.” It is only in recent generations, when the spirit of socialism has invaded the religious realm, that this passage has been promiscuously applied to Christians. The two emblems which Christ here employed are very striking and their *order* significant. He resembles His ministers to “salt” to *humble* them, for salt is cheap, common, and insignificant—to “light” to *encourage* them, for light is illuminating, conspicuous, elevated.

The passage we are now to ponder forms the second section of our Lord’s sermon on the mount. In it Christ touches upon the office of the apostles, and therein (according to their measure), that of all His ministers. It was a distinct division of His address, yet there is a manifest relation between it and the last one—only those whom the Lord pronounces “blessed,” whose characters correspond to that which He portrayed in verses 1-11, are called by Christ to publicly

witness for Him. The ministers of God must themselves first be seasoned by the Word—how could they fittingly apply salt to the consciences of others who had never felt the bite of it on their own? The design of these verses, then, is to stir up Christ's *servants* to diligence and fidelity in declaring the will of God unto saint and sinner alike.

Thus, the first two sections of this sermon are closely connected. The coherence of our present portion with the former stands thus—Christ had declared that there is a company on earth upon whom the divine benediction rests. Anticipating the question, How do they attain to and maintain this felicity by such grades of the Spirit, which fits them for that estate? He answers, the preaching of God's Word is the principal means to work in the heart those graces to which true happiness is promised. Because this is a high and holy privilege to bring men to this estate, Christ exhorted His ministers unto earnestness in their service by two weighty reasons, drawn from the properties of their work, and propounded by two similitudes.

"Ye are the salt of the earth" (Mat 5:13). "Ye," that is, those whom I have called to be apostles and set apart for the work of the ministry. Ye are "salt," not literally, yet by resemblance—yet not in regard of their persons, but of their *labours*. They are here likened to "salt." They were to season souls for God by making them savoury in heart and life. From this emblem both ministers and people may learn their respective duties. Ministers are to dispense the Word, both law and Gospel, in such a way as to express *the qualities of salt*. Now the properties of salt as applied to raw flesh or fresh meats are principally these—first, it will fret and bite, being of a hot and dry nature. Second, it makes meat savoury to our taste. Third, it preserves meat from putrefaction by drawing out of it superfluous moisture.

Salt is an indispensable necessity of life. It is God's great antiseptic in a sphere of decay. It is wrought into the very rocks and soil of earth so that the waters filtering through them become purified thereby. It is a necessary element of the blood, which is the life of our bodies. How well-suited is it, then, as a figure of the truth, by which means the soul is sanctified—for as salt arrests natural corruption, so the Word of God militates against moral corruption. This figure, then, furnishes clear direction to every minister of God as to his *manner of preaching*. Since the Word alone be the savoury salt whereby souls are seasoned for the Lord, then it ought to be dispensed purely and sincerely. If salt be mixed with dust and rubbish it loses its pungency and efficacy, and if the Word be mingled with levity or exciting anecdotes its power is nullified.

This figure plainly warns the minister of his pressing *need of fortitude*. It is "salt" and not sugar-candy he is to employ—something which the ungodly will be more inclined to spit out than swallow with a smile—something which is calculated to bring water to the eyes rather than laughter to the lips. The minister, then, must not expect faithful preaching to be acceptable and popular. It is contrary to nature for those whose consciences are pricked to be pleased with those who wound them. Christ's servants must be prepared for their hearers to fret and set themselves against what searches out their corruptions. Such displeasure and opposition is a testimony that their ministry is "salt," that it has bitten into the depravity of their people. Instead of being discouraged and dismayed, they are to persevere, endeavouring to season their congregation more and more with the pure salt of God's Word.

The hearer also is to receive instruction from this figure. Hereby each one may see what he is in himself by nature—depraved and corrupt, as unsavoury flesh and stinking carrion in the nostrils of God, or else what need of *salt*? How this should humble and cause us to lay aside all pride and self-righteousness. Again—everyone must learn hereby to suffer the word of reproof, whereby his secret sins are discovered and denounced. When our conscience is searched we must be willing for salt to be rubbed into it, for mortification necessarily precedes salvation. The hearer

must give all diligence to be seasoned with this heavenly salt so that the thoughts of his heart, the words of his mouth, and the actions of his life may be acceptable to God (Col 4:6). If we sit under the ministry of the Word (oral or written) and be not seasoned thereby, our case is doubly evil.

“But if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men” (Mat 5:13). This was brought in by Christ to move His servants unto fidelity and diligence in their ministry by the danger attending the opposite. Infidelity in the ministry is like unsavoury salt—ineffectual, worthless, despicable, subject to a fearful curse. This is the great danger of the pulpit—to become men-pleasers, to yield unto the demand for smooth speaking, to tickle the ears of their auditors with novelties. Such preachers become unsavoury salt, unprofitable in their ministry, failing to season souls so that they are acceptable to God. Salt is useless when it loses its virtue and acrimony. Ministers become such when through lack of prayer and continuous study they fail to increase in spiritual knowledge, or when adopting false doctrine they preach error, or when they cease to denounce sin, or when they fail to practice what they preach.

The greatness of the danger attending ministers who become unfaithful and unprofitable is here pointed out by Christ in His words, “Wherewith shall it [i.e. the salt—cf. Mar 9:50] be salted?” (Mat 5:13). Those who depart from fidelity very seldom, and then only with great difficulty, are recovered and restored. Read what is recorded of the false prophets in the Old Testament and of false apostles in the New, and where is there an instance that any *repented*? The same solemn principle is exemplified in the case of almost all those preachers who have forsaken Protestantism and gone over to Rome. How diligently, then, do ministers need to take to heart that injunction, “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed *unto thyself*, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1Ti 4:15-16). Again—“But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (cf. 1Ti 6:11).

The *unprofitableness* of unfaithful ministers is expressed in the words, “It is thenceforth good for nothing” (Mat 5:13)—just as unsavoury salt is become worthless to season meat, so unfaithful ministers are valueless to God and man. The curse resting upon such is, “To be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men” (Mat 5:13), that is, such preachers are condemned both by the Lord and by their fellow men. “Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law” (Mal 2:9). Such was the fate pronounced upon the renegade priests of old. No doubt Christ was here making an oblique reference to the scribes and Pharisees of His day, affirming their unprofitableness and announcing the impending doom of Judaism. Solemn beyond words is this verse, and prayerfully should it be laid to heart by all Christian ministers.

“Ye are the light of the world” (Mat 5:14). Here Christ likens His ministers unto “light,” and that, with the object of stirring them up to preach the will of God. It was as though He said, Your position and condition is such that your sayings and doings are open to the cognizance of man, therefore be careful to please God therein. Spiritually the world is in darkness (2Pe 1:19) and sits in the shadow of death (Mat 4:16), because in Adam it turned away from Him who is Light. But ministers of the Word carry with them a Lamp of Truth, and by the illumination of their ministry are they to shine upon the benighted souls of men. By their preaching, ignorance is to be exposed, that their hearers may be “turned from darkness to light” (see Act 26:18).

By this figure Christ shows *how* the Word is to be *handled*—it is to be so applied to the minds and consciences of men that they may be made to see their sins and their woeful wretchedness

thereby, then bringing before them the remedy for their misery, which is the person and work of the Lord Jesus, and then to make plain that path of obedience in all good duties to God and men which He requires in the life of a Christian. Preachers may display great homiletic skill and deliver flowery discourses, but only true preaching conveys the light of spiritual knowledge to the heart and leads souls to God. So, too, since true ministers are the light of the world, it is incumbent upon all who hear them to raise the blinds of carnal prejudice and open the windows of their souls so that the illuminating message may receive due entrance.

“A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house” (Mat 5:14-15). Such is the case with God’s ministers by virtue of their calling. Christ has denominated His servants, “the light of the world” (Mat 5:14) and they may be inclined to regard themselves as men of some renown, and therefore He informs them His *intent therein*. It was not to give them titles of praise, to puff them up, but to acquaint them with the demands of their office. By reason of their high calling, they would be public spectacles—heard and scrutinized by men—and therefore it doubly behoooves them to see to it that their message is acceptable to God and their walk blameless before men—for if by their fidelity they may “turn many to righteousness,” *infidelity* will involve souls in eternal destruction.

Hereby God’s ministers must learn not to think it strange if they lie more open to manifold reproaches and abuses of the world than do the rank and file of God’s people. The more godly their conduct be, the more distasteful to the unregenerate. Hence it follows that God’s servants cannot without great sin hide the gifts and talents which He has bestowed upon them, for they are as lighted candles which must not be put under a bushel. That may be done in various ways—by refusing to humble themselves and speak in terms suited to the capacity of the most simple; by refusing to give out the truth of God; by toning it down through the fear of man; by flirting with the world and adopting its ways.

“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). By “so shine” is signified ministerial teaching, whereby God’s will and grace is made known to His people, backed up by a godly example. Seeing that by your calling you are so conspicuous in the world, look well to the holiness of your lives and the fruit of your labours, so that God’s people may not only hear your doctrine, but also perceive your good works, and thereby be moved to follow the same, and thus bring honour and praise to the Lord. These two things must never be separated—sound doctrine and holy deportment are ever to be conjoined in a minister. He who teaches to write will give rules of writing to the scholars and then set before them a copy to follow. God will have men learn His will in two ways—by *hearing and seeing*—cf. 1 Timothy 4:12.

In regard to this double charge which lies on every minister, his hearers (or readers) must for their part remember in their prayers to crave of God that their pastors may be divinely enabled to preach to them by lip and life. It is striking to note how often Paul required the churches to which he wrote to *pray* for him in regard of his ministry, see Romans 15:30; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Ephesians 6:19. If, then, the chief of the apostles had need to be prayed for, how much more so the ordinary minister of God! Great reason is there for this, for the devil stood at the right hand of Israel’s high priest to resist him (Zec 3:1). Though he opposes every Christian, yet he aims especially at the minister to cause him to fail, if not in his teaching, then in his conduct.

“That they may see your good works” (Mat 5:16)—your sincerity, fidelity, love, self-sacrifice, perseverance, zeal, etc. “And glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat 5:16). This is the chief, though not the whole, end of good works—subordinately, they enrich ourselves and benefit

our fellows. As regards God they serve, first, as means whereby we give evidence of our homage by obeying His commands. Second, they serve as tokens of our gratitude for all His mercies, both spiritual and temporal, for thankfulness is to be expressed by life as well as lip. Third, they serve to make us followers of God, who hath bidden us to be holy as He is holy (1Pe 1:16), and to put into practice the duties of love to our neighbour. This must be the main aim of the minister—to bring men to glorify God. Though the unregenerate are quite capable of perceiving the minister's failures, it is only real Christians who can discern his spiritual graces and the fruit thereof, as it is they alone who will glorify the Father because of the same. Probably the day to come will reveal that few things have evoked so much genuine praise to God as His people's returning thanks for the piety, integrity, and helpfulness of His servants, who untiringly sought their good.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

85. *His Last Words*

The passage for our present consideration (2Sa 23:1-7) presents somewhat of a difficulty, especially to those who are not accustomed to the drawing of distinctions and the taking of words relatively as well as absolutely. It opens by telling us, "These be the last words of David," (2Sa 23:1). when, in fact, the close of the patriarch's life was not yet reached. It seems strange that we should read of this *here*, when so much else is recorded in the chapters which follow, for we naturally associate the "last words" of a person with his closing utterances as life is expiring. Nor is the difficulty decreased when we note what vastly different language is upon David's lips in 1 Kings 2:9. Thomas Scott (1747-1821) suggested that, "Perhaps he repeated them in his dying moments as the expression of his faith and hope and the source of his consolation." This may be the case, for very likely such sentiments were in his heart and mouth again and again during his declining days.

However, it seems to us that 2 Samuel 23 refers to "the last words of David" not so much as those merely of a *man*, but rather as being a *mouthpiece* of God, thus forming a brief appendix to his Psalms. That our passage concerns the final inspired utterance of David appears to be quite plain from the specific terms used in it. First, he makes definite mention of himself as "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (2Sa 23:1), which obviously refers to his official character as the Lord's servant and seer. Second, he states, "the spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2Sa 23:2), which language could only be used of one appointed to formally deliver the oracles of God, of one so completely controlled by the Holy Spirit that his utterance was a divine revelation. Third, what he said in verses 3 and 4 looked beyond himself, being a prophetic announcement concerning the antitypical "Ruler"—proof that he was "moved by the Holy Spirit." Further, there is nothing in the chapters following which indicate David was giving forth a formal utterance by divine revelation.

There is still another distinction which may be drawn, that clears away any remaining difficulty from our passage. Not only are we to distinguish between David's utterances as a man and as the mouthpiece of JEHOVAH, but also between his acts and words looked at *historically* and considered *typically*. In the course of this lengthy series, we have pointed out again and again that in many (though by no means in all) of his experiences, David is to be viewed *representatively*, as treading the same path and encountering the temptations and trials common to all the saints as they pass through this wilderness of sin. 1 Kings 1 gives us the historical close of

the patriarch's life, the last utterance of the aged king being, "But his hoar head bring thou down to the grave *with blood*." (1Ki 2:9). "Blood" is the final word on the lips of the dying warrior, a "man of war" from his youth, as Philistine enemies and Amalekite foes could testify.

But in 2 Samuel 23, we are permitted to gaze upon the other side of the picture, a most blessed and refreshing one. Here, the Spirit of God brings before us not, "the man of war," (1Sa 16:18), but, the "man after God's own heart" (1Sa 13:14)—the one who had found favour in His eyes and had been loved with an everlasting love, and thus the representative of His chosen people. Here we listen to the holy breathings of the saint and the scene becomes to us a "gate of heaven." As the believer draws near the end of his wilderness journey, like David, he reviews the Lord's goodness, dwells upon the amazing grace which lifted him from the dunghill and made him to sit in the heavenlies in Christ (2Sa 23:1), and while he laments the spiritual condition of some near and dear to him and his own failure to grow in grace as he ought, yet he found unspeakable comfort in the fact that God had made with him an everlasting covenant.

"Now these be the last words of David" (2Sa 23:1). Rightly did Matthew Henry point out that, "When we find death approaching, we should endeavour both to honour God and to edify those about us with our last words. Let those who have had long experience of God's goodness and the peacefulness of wisdom's ways, when they come to finish their course, leave a record of that experience and bear their testimony to the truth of the promise." It is not all who are granted a clear token of their approaching dissolution or given a season of consciousness, so that they may clearly avow their faith and hope, but when such is afforded, their duty and privilege is plain. David thus acquitted himself to the glory of God and the comfort of His people, and everything else being equal, so should we.

"David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said" (2Sa 23:1). The Hebrew word for "said" (twice used in this verse) signifies to speak with assurance and authority, thus confirming what we have pointed out above concerning the divine character of this utterance. David described himself, first, by the lowliness of his origin—"the son of Jesse," unknown amongst those arrayed in purple and fine linen. The stock from which he came was indeed a humble one, for when it was asked in Saul's court, "Whose son is he?" the answer was returned, "O king, I cannot tell" (1Sa 17:55)—and so David had to answer for himself, "I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite" (1Sa 17:58)—a small and despised house, and he the least in that house. Typically speaking, this is the believer owning his humble origin, looking back to the hole of the pit from which he was digged.

"And the man who was raised up on high" (2Sa 23:1). Here he makes mention, secondly, of the dignity of his elevation. Though of such mean parentage, from one of the humblest of Saul's subjects, yet he found favour in the sight of the Lord, being exalted to the throne and made ruler over all Israel. The nearer the believer approaches the close of his life, the more is his heart made to wonder at the sovereign grace of God for laying hold of one so utterly unworthy, and raising him to a position of dignity and honour above that occupied by the holy angels. Third, David described himself as, "the anointed of God" (2Sa 23:1)—as such he was again the typical believer, for of Christians it is written, "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath *anointed* us, is God" (2Co 1:21). Finally, "and the sweet psalmist of Israel." That, of course, refers to his official character, and yet this, too, is representative—though he composed the Psalms, they are for our use (Jam 5:13).

"The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2Sa 23:2). Though it be useless for us to attempt any explanation of the rationale of divine inspiration, yet this is one of many statements found in Holy Writ which serves to define its nature and extent. When we come

face to face with the conjunction of the divine and the human, we confront that which transcends the grasp of the finite mind. Nevertheless, by the aid of what is revealed, we may make certain postulates, so as to guard against error at either extreme. The Scriptures are indeed the very Word of God, inerrant and imperishable, yet the instrumentality of the creature was employed in the communication and compilation of them. The mouth uttering it was human, but the message was divine—the voice was that of man, but the actual words those of God Himself.

“Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2Pe 1:21). Those holy men were the actual mouthpieces of the Almighty. Their utterances were so absolutely controlled by Him that what they said and wrote was a perfect expression of His mind and will. It is not simply that their minds were elevated or their spirits sublimated, but that their very tongues were regulated. It was not merely that their wills received a supernatural impulse or that their minds were divinely illuminated, but the very words of their message was conveyed to them. Nothing less than this can be gathered from the verse before us. When David affirmed God’s Word was “in his tongue,” far more is denoted than that a concept was conveyed to his mind and he left free to express it in his own language. Nothing less than their *verbal inspiration* is predicated of the Scriptures themselves—compare 1 Corinthians 2:13.

“The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God” (2Sa 23:3). The older writers saw in these verses, and we believe rightly so, a reference to the blessed Trinity. First, in verse 2, David affirmed, “the spirit of the LORD spake by me” (2Sa 23:2), and that a divine person rather than a spiritual inflation was denoted is plain from, “and *his* word was in my tongue” (2Sa 23:2). Second, “the God of Israel said,” that is, God the Father spake, as a reference to Hebrews 1:1-2 makes clear. Third, “the Rock of Israel spake to David” (see 2Sa 23:3), alludes to the Son, in His mediatorial capacity, of whom it was predicted, “And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great *rock* in a weary land” (Isa 32:2). Though a fuller and brighter manifestation of the Godhead has been made under Christianity, nevertheless the Tri-unity of God was definitely revealed in the *Old Testament* Scriptures.

There is a distinction to be drawn between what is recorded in the verse preceding and in verse 3. There it was, “the Spirit of the LORD spake *by* me”—here “spake *to* me”—that relates to what he was moved to record by divine inspiration (principally in the Psalms), this, a more personal message for himself and family. “Let ministers observe that those by whom God speaks to others are concerned to hear and heed what the Spirit speaks to themselves. They whose office it is to teach others their duty, must be sure to learn and do their own” (Matthew Henry). Particularly must due attention be paid unto these two things, “He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.” The immediate reference is to civic leaders, but the principle applies strictly to ecclesiastical ones too. Impartiality and righteousness ought ever to characterize both magistrate and minister alike, while the office of each is to be discharged in the awe of Him to whom an account will yet have to be rendered.

“And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain” (2Sa 23:4). Here is the blessing and prosperity assured to those who faithfully discharge their obligations, keeping both tables of the law. “Light is sweet and pleasant, and he that does his duty shall have the comfort of it; his rejoicing will be the testimony of his conscience. Light is bright, and a good prince [or minister] is illustrious. His justice and piety will be his honour. Light is a blessing, nor are there greater and more extensive blessings to the public than princes that rule in the fear of God. It is like ‘the light of the morning,’ which is most welcome after the darkness of the night.

So was David's government after Saul's. It is likewise compared to the tender grass, which the earth produces for the service of men. It brings with it a harvest of blessings" (Matthew Henry).

Verses 3 and 4 can also be rightly regarded as a Messianic prophecy, for the Hebrew may be rendered, "There shall be a ruler over men which is just, ruling in the fear of God." The qualities essential in the one who is to rule for God's glory and His people's good, are righteousness and dependence—found alone in their perfection in that blessed one who came not to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him. Saul wielded the power for himself. David had to hang his head and own, "my house be not so with God" (2Sa 23:5), which requires us to turn to Christ. He orders the affairs of the Father's kingdom according to the divine will. He is "as the light of the morning," because He is "the light of the world" (Joh 8:12), and "as the tender grass," because He is "the branch of the LORD...and the fruit of the earth" (Isa 4:2).

"Although my house be not so with God" (2Sa 23:5). Here, again, the historical merges into the typical. After the prophetic foreview just granted him, David turned his reflections upon himself and his own house, and sorrowed over the state of the same. "By his own misconduct, his family was much less religious and prosperous than it might have been expected, and both he and Israel had suffered many things in consequence. Several grievous and scandalous events had occurred. Matters were not yet as he could wish, and he seems to have had his fears concerning his descendants, who should succeed him in the kingdom" (Thomas Scott). Grief, then, was mingled with his joy, and dismal forebodings cast a dark shadow over his lot.

As the believer nears the end of his course, he not only meditates upon the lowliness of his original estate, and then the elevated position to which sovereign grace has lifted him, but he also reviews his follies, bemoans his failures, and sorrows over the wretched returns he has made unto God's goodness. This is the common experience of the pious—as they journey through this wilderness they are sorely tried and exercised, pass through deep waters, experience many sharp conflicts, and are often at a loss to maintain their faith.

"Favour'd saints of God,
His messengers and seers,
The narrow path have trod,
'Mid sins, and doubts, and fears."

And at the end they generally have to mourn over the graceless condition of some that are nearest and dearest to them, and exclaim, "Although my house be not so with God" (2Sa 23:5).

"Yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure" (2Sa 23:5). Blessed antithesis. The opening "yet" is placed over against the "although" at the beginning of the previous clause. It is the faithfulness of God set in delightful contrast from David's failures. It illustrates most solemnly the awe-inspiring sovereignty of God. Divine justice had been meted out to his foes, divine grace had dealt with himself. At least one of his children had evidenced himself to be among the reprobate, but God had entered into an eternal compact of peace with the father. Here was indeed sweet consolation for his poor heart. The allusion is to that covenant of grace which God made with all His people in Christ before the foundation of the world. That covenant is from everlasting in its contrivance, and to everlasting in its consequences.

That everlasting covenant is so "ordered" as to promote the glory of God, the honour of the Mediator, and the holiness and blessing of His people. It is "sure" because its promises are those of Him who cannot lie, because full provision is made in it for all the failures of believers, and because its administration is in the hands of Christ. "For this is all my salvation" (2Sa 23:5). David rightly traced his salvation back to "the everlasting covenant." Alas that so many today are ignorant of this inexhaustible well of comfort. It is not enough that we go back to the hour when

we first believed, nor even to the cross where the Saviour paid the price of our redemption—to the everlasting covenant we must look, and see there God graciously planning to give Christ to die for His people and impart the Spirit to them for quickening and the communicating of faith. This is “all our salvation” for it entirely suffices, containing as it does a draft of all the salvation-acts of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In consequence of the nature, fullness, and sufficiency of the everlasting covenant, it must be “all my desire”—that is, obtaining by the Spirit’s help an assurance of my personal interest in its grand promises. “Although he make it not to grow” (2Sa 23:5). First, with reference to his house, “In number, in power, it is God that makes families to grow or not to grow” (cf. Psalms 107:41). Good men have often the melancholy prospect of a declining family—David’s house was typical of the church of Christ. “Suppose this be not so with God as we could wish—suppose it be diminished, distressed, disgraced, and weakened by errors and corruptions, yea, almost extinct, yet God has made a covenant with the church’s Head, that He will preserve to Him a seed. This our Saviour comforted Himself with in His sufferings, Isaiah 53:10, 12” (Matthew Henry). Second, with reference to himself—he had received the grace of the covenant, but it had not flourished in him as could be desired—his own neglect being the criminal cause.

David concluded (2Sa 23:6-7) with a most solemn reference to the awful fate awaiting the reprobate. Destitute of faith, self-willed, unconcerned about God’s glory, despising and ill-treating His servants, righteous retribution shall surely fall upon them. “As thorns thrust away” is a figure of their rejection by God. Ultimately they shall be “utterly burnt with fire.” It was a prediction of the eternal undoing of all the implacable enemies of Christ’s kingdom.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

8. *Its Manifestation*

By His electing act, God took the church into a definite and personal relation to Himself, so that He reckons and regards its members as His own dear children and people. Consequently, even while they are in a state of nature, *before* their regeneration, He views and owns them as such. This is very blessed and wonderful, though, alas, it is a truth which is almost unknown in present-day Christendom. It is now commonly assumed that we only become the children of God when we are born again, that we have no relation to Christ until we have embraced Him with the arms of faith. But with the Scriptures in our hands there is no excuse for such ignorance, and woe be unto those who deliberately repudiate their plain testimony—to their Divine Author will they yet have to answer for such wickedness.

It seems strange that the very ones who are foremost in propagating (unwittingly, we would believe) the error alluded to above, are they who have probably said and written more upon the typical teaching of the book of Exodus than anyone else. We would ask such, were not the Hebrews definitely owned by God as belonging to Him *before* He sent Moses to deliver them from the house of bondage—before the blood of the paschal lamb was shed, yea, while they were utterly idolatrous (Eze 20:5-9)? Verily, for to Moses He declared, “I have surely seen the affliction of *my people* which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows” (Exo 3:7). And of Pharaoh He demanded, “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). And the Hebrews were a divinely-ordained type of the Israel of God, the spiritual election of grace!

It is quite true that God's elect are "*By nature* the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph 2:3), nevertheless, their *persons* have been loved by Him with an everlasting love. Consequently, before the Spirit is sent to quicken them into newness of life, the Lord God contemplates and speaks of them as His own. As this is now so little known, we will pause and offer proof from the Word. First, God calls them His *children*, "All thy children shall be taught of the LORD" (Isa 54:13)—His children *before* taught by Him. And again—"He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (Joh 11:52)—His children *before* "gathered" by Him. Second, He designates them *His people*. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power" (Psa 110:3)—His people before "made willing." "I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I *have* much people in this city" (Act 18:10)—before Paul preached the Gospel in that heathen center.

Third, Christ denominates God's elect *His sheep* before they are brought into the fold, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring" (Joh 10:16)—who were those "other sheep" but those of His elect among the Gentiles? Fourth, the elect are spoken of as *the tabernacle of David* while they are in the ruins of the fall, "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, after this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down" (Act 15:14-16). In the apostolic age, God began to take out of the Gentiles a people for His name, and concerning this Amos had prophesied of old, "The tabernacle of David, that is, the elect of God, once stood in Adam with the non-elect, and with them they fell. But the Lord will set up His elect again, not in the first Adam, but in the second Adam, in whom they shall be for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (James Wells, 1803-1872).

Love in the heart of God was a secret in Himself from everlasting, being wholly unknown before the world began, except to Christ, God-man, yet it had been exercised towards the whole election of grace. Though they were beloved with such a love as contained the uttermost of God's good will unto them, and to the uttermost of blessing, grace, and glory, yet it was in such a way and manner that for a season they were altogether unacquainted with the same. Though the acts of God's will in Christ's person concerning them and upon them were such as could never cease, nevertheless they were to be in a state for a season in which none of them were to be opened and made known to them. All was in the incomprehensible mind of JEHOVAH from everlasting, and the same it will be to everlasting—but the revelation and manifestation of the same has been made at different times and in various degrees.

The various conditions in which God's elect find themselves not only exhibit the manifold wisdom of God, but illustrate our last remark above. The elect were to be in a creature state of purity and holiness—as such they were made naturally in Adam. From that they fell into a state of sin and misery, sharing the guilt and depravity of their federal head. They were to be brought therefrom into a redeemed state by the atoning work of Christ, and given a knowledge of this through the quickening and sanctifying operations of the Spirit. After their earthly course is finished, they are brought into a sinless state, while they rest from their labours and await the consummation of their salvation. In due course they shall be brought into the resurrection state, and from thence into the state of everlasting glory and unutterable bliss.

In like manner, there are different stages in the unfolding of God's eternal purpose concerning His people. The principle of divine election has operated from the beginning of human history. No sooner did the fall take place than the Lord announced the line of distinction which was drawn

between the woman's seed and the seed of the serpent, first exemplified in the clear-cut case of Cain and Abel (1Jo 3:12). In an earlier article of this series, we called attention to the continuous operation of this selective principle, as was seen in the families of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and later still more conspicuously in the separating of Israel from all other nations, as the people of JEHOVAH'S choice and the objects of His special favour. But what we would now consider is not so much the operation of God's eternal purpose of grace, as the *manifestation* of it.

In all these states through which the elect are ordained to pass, the love of God is exercised and displayed toward them and upon them, agreeably to the good pleasure of His will. The secret and everlasting love of God to His chosen and His open disclosure of the same, though distinct parts, are one and the same love. The first act of God's love to the persons of those whom He chose in Christ consisted in giving them being *in Christ*, well-being in Christ from everlasting—that was the fundamental act of all grace and glory, for God then “blessed them with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies” (see Eph 1:3). The love of God in His own heart towards the person of Christ, the Head of the whole election of grace, cannot be expressed, and His love towards the persons of the elect in Christ is so great and infinite that the Scriptures themselves declare, “It passeth knowledge” (Eph 3:19). The open expression and manifestation of this love is now our design to ponder.

First, *the incarnation and mission of Christ*: “In this was *manifested* the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (1Jo 4:9). Take notice of *the persons* unto whom the love of God was thus manifested, expressed in the word “us.” This is a term made use of by the sacred writers to include and express the saints of God. It is a distinguishing excellence of the apostles that they bring home their subjects with all their energy to the minds of saints, and then apply them so that hereby the truth might be felt in all its vast importance. Let the subject be election, redemption, effectual calling, or glorification, and most generally they use the term “us,” as thereby including themselves and all the believers to whom they wrote. This serves fitly to evince that all of them are alike interested in all the blessings and benefits of grace, which opens the way for them to appropriate and enjoy the good of them in the Scriptures.

To illustrate what has just been pointed out, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed *us* with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen *us* in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated *us* unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ...to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made *us* accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:3-6). In that passage, the repeated “us” shows the interest which *all* the saints have in their eternal election in Christ. With respect to effectual calling, the apostle uses the word “us” in Romans 9:23-24. So in connection with salvation (note the “us” in 2Ti 1:9) and glorification (see Eph 2:7 and Rom 8:18). Let it be carefully observed that whereas this repeated “us” in the epistles includes the whole election of grace, yet it excludes all others and cannot with any truth or propriety be applied to any but the called of God in Christ Jesus.

We next consider in what this open manifestation of the love of God consisted, namely, in the incarnation and mission of Christ. In the infinite mind of JEHOVAH, all His love concerning the persons of the elect was conceived from everlasting, with the various ways and means by which the same should be displayed and made known in a time state, so that the church might be the more sensibly taken therewith. As it pleased the Lord, notwithstanding His eternal love to His people in Christ, to will their fall from a state of creature purity into depravity, so also their redemption from the same was predetermined. An everlasting covenant transaction took place

between the Father and the Son, wherein the latter engaged to assume human nature and act as their Surety and Redeemer. His incarnation, life, and death were fixed upon as the means of their salvation. This became the subject of Old Testament prophecy—that Christ was to be manifested in the flesh, with what He was to do and suffer, in order to take away sin and bring in everlasting righteousness.

That which was revealed in the Scriptures of the prophets concerning Christ made it fully evident that it was of God that the whole of it was originally conceived in heaven before time began—the fruit of consultation between JEHOVAH and the Branch, of which the eternal Spirit was witness. He communicated the same to holy men, who spoke as they were moved by Him, for He searches all things, even the deep things of God. In the person of Immanuel, God with us, by His open incarnation and the salvation He wrought out and most honourably completed, all the love of the blessed Trinity is reflected most gloriously. God has shone forth in all the greatness and majesty of His love upon His church in Christ, and thus displayed His everlasting good will unto them. He has so loved them as to give His only begotten Son. This is clearly set forth in His Word, so that it is all-sufficient to keep up a lively sense thereof in our minds, as the Spirit is pleased to maintain a believing knowledge of it in our hearts.

A brief word upon the *end* of this manifestation of the love of God as spoken of in 1 John 4:9—it is “that we might live through him.” “It is through the incarnation and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ that we live through Him a life of justification, peace, pardon, acceptance, and access to God. The elect of God in their fallen state were all sin, corruption, misery and death. In these circumstances God commendeth His love toward them, in that whilst they were yet sinners Christ died for them. He by His death removed their sins from them. He loved them and washed them from their sins in His own blood, and brought them nigh unto God, so that herein the Father’s everlasting love of them is most distinctly evidenced” (S. E. Pierce [1746-1829], to whose lovely sermon on 1 John 4:9, we here gladly acknowledge our indebtedness).

A most striking parallel with the Scripture we have looked at above is the statement made by the Lord to His Father in John 17:6, “I have *manifested* thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me.” The manifesting of the name of God, or the secret mystery of His mind and will, could only be performed by Christ, who had been in the bosom of the Father from everlasting, and who became incarnate in order to make visible Him who is invisible. It was the office and work of the Messiah to open the “hidden wisdom” (1Co 2:7), to unlock the holy of holies, to declare what had been kept secret from the foundation of the world, and here in John 17 He declares that He had faithfully discharged it. But mark well how the “us” of 1 John 4:9 is here defined—as “the men which thou gavest me out of the world.” Yes, it was to them Christ manifested God’s ineffable name.

In John 17, Christ opened the whole heart of God, making known His everlasting love as was never revealed before. Therein He expounded the good will which the Father bore to the elect in Christ Jesus, in a manner sufficient to fill the spiritual mind with knowledge and understanding, even such as was calculated to lead to an entire trust and confidence in the Lord for all the blessings of this life and that which is to come. And who could give this information but Himself? He came down from heaven with this express end and design. He was the great prophet over the house of God. He had the key of all the treasury of grace and glory. In Him personally was hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3). By the “Name” of God is meant all that He is in a manifestative and communicative way. It is His love to the church, His covenant relation to His people in Christ, the eternal delight of His heart to them, which Christ has been pleased to so fully reveal.

It is by the Lord's admitting us into the knowledge of Himself that we are led to know our election of God. The true apprehension of this is a ground for joy, therefore did Christ say, "Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luk 10:20). As we cannot know that we are the beloved of God but by believing on His Son, so this is the fruit of spiritual knowledge. Christ has the key of knowledge and opens the door of faith, so that we receive Him as revealed in the Word. It is He, who by His Spirit, is pleased to shed abroad the love of God in the heart. He gives the Spirit to make a revelation of the everlasting covenant to our minds, and thereby we are made to know and feel the love of God to be the fountain and spring of all grace and everlasting consolation. As JEHOVAH caused all His goodness to pass before Moses and showed him His glory (Exo 33:19), so He admits us into the knowledge of Himself as "The LORD God merciful and gracious."

Second, *by a supernatural call*. We have somewhat anticipated this in the last two paragraphs, but must now consider it more distinctly. A saint's being called is the first immediate fruit and breaking forth of God's purpose of electing grace. "The river ran underground from eternity and rises and bubbles up therein first, and then runs above ground to everlasting. It is the initial and grand difference which God puts between man and man, the first mark which He sets upon His sheep, whereby He owns them and visibly signifies that they are His" (Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680). "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called" (Rom 8:30). The original benefit was His predestination of us, and the next blessing is His calling of us. The same order is observed in, "Who hath saved us, and called us...according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2Ti 1:9). The eternal purpose is made evident in time by a divine *call*.

Another Scripture which presents this same truth are those well-known words, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2Pe 1:10). It is not our faith nor our justification which is here specifically singled out, but our "*calling*," which we are bidden to "make sure," for thereby our election will be attested to us, that is, confirmed to our faith. It is not that election is not sure without it, for "the foundation of God [His eternal decree] standeth sure" (2Ti 2:19) before our calling, but hereby it is certified unto our faith. Thus the apostles speak one uniform language, and therefore when writing to believers show that the two terms are co-extensive. Thus, Paul—"To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, *called* to be saints"—saints by calling (Rom 1:7). Peter unto "the church that is at Babylon, *elected* together with you" (1Pe 5:13). The terms are equivalent, the apostles acknowledging none other to be true "*calling*" but what was the immediate proof of election, being commensurate to the same persons.

It is indeed blessed to observe—so graciously has the Spirit condescended to stoop and help our infirmity—how frequently this precious truth is reiterated in the Word, so that there might be no room whatever for doubt on the point. "The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer 31:3). Two things are here affirmed, and the intimate and inseparable relation between them is emphatically stated. First, the everlasting love of God unto His own. Second, the effect and showing forth of the same. It is by the Spirit's effectual call the elect are brought out of their natural state of alienation and drawn to God in Christ. That supernatural call or drawing is here expressly attributed to the Lord's "lovingkindness," and the connection between this and His everlasting love for them is pointed by the "therefore." Thus, it is by means of God's reconciling us to Himself that we obtain proof of His everlasting good will toward us.

THE HOLY SABBATH

1. Introduction

Two things are absolutely essential for the maintenance of vital godliness—the profession of its truth and the practice or exercise of its power, for they mutually assist each other. Where there is no profession of faith in its truth, none will express its power in obedience, and without obedience, profession is worthless. Clearly is this exemplified in connection with the Holy Sabbath. In proportion as the pulpit has failed to insist on and press the claims of the Sacred Day, vital godliness has been weakened and all but destroyed, and commensurate with the growth of an empty profession has been the decay of genuine piety. Things have now come to such a deplorable pass that we may well-exclaim, “Truth is fallen in the street” (Isa 59:14), yea, is being ruthlessly trampled under foot, not only by the masses in general, but also by the great majority of those in high places. It is therefore incumbent upon all who fear and love God to do whatever lies within their power to rescue the Sabbath from its present profanation.

Whatever furnishes help, according to the revealed will of God, in the promotion of good works, is greatly to be valued, especially so in a time when the profession of the truth is being so widely called into question, and its practice not only neglected but despised. Now nothing is so well-calculated to accomplish this end than the solemn observance of a weekly day of rest, hallowed unto God, for that lies at the very foundation of all true piety. Rightly did John Owen (1616-1683) affirm, “Amongst all the outward means of conveying to the present generation that rule which was at first taught and delivered by Jesus Christ and His apostles, there hath been none more effectual than the universal uninterrupted observance of such a day for the celebration of the religious worship appointed in the Gospel. The profession of our Christian religion in the world at this day doth depend upon it. How much it tends to the exercise and expression of the power of religion cannot but be evident to all, unless they be such as hate it.”

The Lord’s Day has ever been a precious boon to all genuine Christians. Occupied as most of them are with worldly concerns during the remainder of the week, they feel that but for this merciful restraint of one day in seven devoted to the worship and service of God, they would soon become wholly absorbed in the things of time and sense. But the Sabbath and its holy exercises restores the claims of God to an ascendance over their minds. on this day they are led to examine their spiritual progress, reflect upon their duties, meditate on the grand truths of divine revelation, and prepare for eternity. By faithfully discharging the obligations of this Sacred Day their souls are cleansed from the defilement contracted during the week, their affections raised unto things above, and new strength is obtained for the engagements which lie before them. Christians generally know full well that they owe much of their growth in grace to the blessings of the Sabbath.

Again—attention should be called to the vast amount of benevolent Christian effort which has resulted from the instrumentality of the Sabbath. It has been pertinently pointed out, “If all those who have to secure their livelihood by bodily or mental exertion were obliged to labour through seven days of the week as they now labour through six of them, how few would have time or strength to visit the poor, to teach the young, or to speak of Christ to the ungodly! But through this ordinance of the Sabbath hundreds of thousands of persons in this country, who devote six days to hard labour, bodily or mental, give a part of their Sabbath to the religious instruction of the young and ignorant. Without the Sabbath, nearly all the inappreciable good which is now done by Sabbath Schools, and much of that which attends the visiting of the sick and distressed in cities, would vanish from the land” (Baptist W. Noel, 1799-1873).

“The sabbath was made for man” (Mar 2:27). God has graciously sanctified it for the good of the whole world. It is highly probable that more persons are converted to the Lord on that day than all the other six together. When anyone is awakened to a concern about his soul, he naturally looks forward to the return of that time when he can most successfully seek his spiritual good. Moreover, how many there are who, though not earnestly inquiring after God, yet attend public worship, and there learn much of the letter of Scripture and acquire some respect for its authority, who otherwise would grow up as heathens. Furthermore, since the Sabbath alone releases hundreds of the disciples of Christ from secular labours to employ a part of their energies in the instructing of the ignorant, who can say how much of the religious knowledge and moral principle which still exists in our nation, is instrumentally due to the institution of this Sacred Rest?

Godliness has never flourished in the world from its foundation till now, nor will it ever do so, without a due attendance upon this divine ordinance, and it requires very little perspicuity to foresee what increasing disorder and disaster will yet ensue if it be totally disregarded. It is an incontestable fact that the times when the Sabbath’s sanctity was most faithfully proclaimed and maintained in the British Isles—and we may add, in the U.S.A.—were those in which true spirituality was healthiest and vital godliness was in its most flourishing state. The men to whom, under God, we owe this, are the ones whose writings are still among the most precious treasures of English religious literature. A right observance of the Lord’s Day lies at the foundation of national happiness and prosperity. So prolific of good is this blessed day that its powerful influences on the well-being of our kingdom vitally affects its spiritual intelligence, the morality of its social order, and the liberties of its people.

So far, then, from the Sabbath law being a heavy burden which God has laid on His creatures, it is a noble boon and an inestimable blessing. So far from its being an unkind deprivation of our liberty, its right observance makes for an entrance into real spiritual freedom. “God blessed the seventh day” (Gen 2:3). The Sabbath was divinely designed, from its original institution, to be a day of blessing to all who duly observed it. Therefore has the Lord declared, “*Blessed is the man...that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it*” (Isa 56:2). It is not a day of irksome restraint, but one of peace and good. It is a gracious gift whereby, in the midst of our toils, we are granted a deliverance even from that curse, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground” (Gen 3:19). Man’s Maker has mercifully secured to him one seventh portion of his whole life wherein he may rest his wearied body and refresh his needy soul, by separating himself from the toil of this life and fixing his contemplation on the life to come.

The great excellence of this divine grant lies not, as many seem to suppose, in a mere bodily blessing, appointed for the recuperation of our physical frame—that is but a secondary object. No, the abstention from mental and manual labours is not its primary use and purpose, but is only preparatory to its great and chief design. The high and prime value of it lies in the salvation and sanctification of God’s people, who experience growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord by obeying His law and keeping faithfully His Sabbaths. As a means of grace towards our sanctification, none, under the blessing of God, is more effectual than the Sabbath. Our right observance thereof has the fullest assurance of that promise, “Them that honour me I will honour” (1Sa 2:30). Our happiness lies in the favour and service of God—that favour is “life” and that service is “perfect freedom.” Then let us do all that lies within our power—by precept, example, and encouragement—to maintain the claims of God’s own day.

It lies not within the capacity of any mortal to adequately set forth the tremendous value and supreme moment of a Scriptural observance of the Holy Sabbath. Let us briefly call attention to a

few features wherein and whereby the Holy Spirit has emphasized the fundamental importance of this divine institution. It is placed on virtually the frontispiece of divine revelation, for immediately after the account of creation we are informed that God Himself rested on that day and hallowed it. It was the very first lesson taught the children of Israel in the wilderness, impressed upon them by the Lord's withholding a supply of manna on that day (Exo 16). It was made the outstanding "sign" between JEHOVAH and His people (Exo 31:13). The most fearful judgments were sent upon them for their violation of the fourth commandment. The Lord Jesus set His imprimatur upon it in an unmistakable manner (Luk 4:16). Finally, the Spirit Himself placed special stress upon this holy ordinance by communicating the last book of Scripture to John on that day (Rev 1:10).

To be guilty of desecrating the Holy Sabbath is therefore no light matter, my reader. The violation of the fourth commandment is a sin of the gravest and blackest kind. Yet, sad to say, the profanation of the Lord's Day has become one of the most common crimes of our perverse generation. Yea, so general is its pollution that few have any conscience on the matter, but placidly take it as a matter of course. The world has turned the Holy Day into a holiday, and even the majority of professing Christians join hands with them therein. No wonder God is displeased with us as a people, and is more and more evidencing His displeasure against us. Britain has disturbed God's rest, and He is now disturbing Britain's rest, and unless we repent of and forsake this sin as a nation, then we are most certainly treasuring up to ourselves wrath against the day of wrath.

Fully-assured that the sanctification of the Sabbath is indispensable for the promotion of the manifestative glory of God, the health and prosperity of His people, the salvation of sinners, and the national well-being; firmly convinced that the desecration of this Blessed Day is our greatest and most grievous national sin, on account of which the Lord is visiting us with judgment, which ominously threatens to become far more severe unless we mend our ways—this writer dares not remain silent thereon, but determines to use whatever influence he possesses in pressing the claims of this sacred and grand institution. Then let all who fear the Lord, who dread His displeasure, who desire to see a revival of vital godliness in the churches, and who love their country and wish to save it from being completely paganized, resolve and determine, "As for me and my house," we will "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

If the Sabbath were of little or no value, there would be some excuse for standing by and leaving it to its assailants. But since it *is* of divine appointment, since its weighty and venerable claims are as binding on us today as they were upon God's people in Old Testament times, since the Lord is very jealous of its sanctity (honouring the nation which respects it and visiting His indignation upon those who pollute it), since its proper observance is fraught with such spiritual blessing to the churches and moral and temporal good to the country, then we should do no less than evidence an uncompromising firmness, yet reasonable and enlightened zeal, in doing all we can to preserve this imperiled treasure, and thus secure for future generations a boon won for ourselves by the efforts, sacrifices, and prayers of godly progenitors. Thus did our forefathers, and woe be unto as if we now squander our birthright.

In view of all that has been pointed out above, is it not tragic beyond words to witness not only the general indifference of the vast majority of professing Christians unto the claims of the Holy Sabbath and to the world's awful profanation of it, but also to find that many influential men among the reputedly orthodox sections of Christendom—the "leaders of Christian thought"—should oppose those who are striving for the preservation of this spiritual heritage? These men are seeking to destroy its very foundations by teaching that the Sabbath is only a

Jewish institution and therefore is not binding upon us today. Unspeakably sad is it to find some whom we must regard as brethren in Christ, and who are standing firmly for the divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, yet in this vital matter making common cause with the Lord's enemies.

John Owen commenced his exertions on the Day of Sacred Rest by citing, "God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Ecc 7:29), adding, "The truth hereof we also find by woeful experience, not only in sundry particular instances, but in the whole course of men in this world, and in all their concerns with respect to God. There is not anything wherein and whereabouts they have not found out many inventions, to the disturbance and perverting of that state of peace and quietness wherein all things were made of God...An evident instance we have hereof in the business of a day of sacred rest and the worship of God therein required."

If this justly renowned Puritan had cause to complain in his time at the many controversies which had been raised about this divine institution, "Agitating among men of all sorts," and who grieved over their inventions, "to our own disturbance and to the perverting of the right ways of God," we wonder how he would feel could he take a survey of the present situation. O what "inventions" have professing Christians resorted to in their efforts to set aside the Holy Sabbath, inventions which have greatly influenced the minds of multitudes and enervated them in the practice of that piety which the Lord's Day inculcates and stimulates. How happy Satan must be when he succeeds in moving "Bible teachers" to affirm that the Sabbath is not for us. It is Christ being again wounded in the house of His friends.

Such opposition to the Sabbath is a challenge to all who prize and revere it. The more it be opposed by assailants, the more firmly and unitedly must its lovers rise up in its defense. When some would set aside the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship on the ground of our being under a more spiritual dispensation, we must show the utter fallacy of such an absurd conclusion. Is the secularization of the Sabbath more befitting a spiritual dispensation than the religious observance of it!—more calculated to promote vital godliness, than the dedication of it to holy exercises and attendance on the means of grace? The question answers itself. Then if you, my reader, love the Sabbath because you have found that its devout and dutiful employment has brought you many blessings, it is your bounden duty to spread the knowledge of its claims throughout the land. Pray that it may please the Lord to bless this humble effort to such an end.

FAMILY WORSHIP

There are some very important outward ordinances and means of grace which are plainly implied in the Word of God, but for the exercise of which we have few, if any, plain and positive precepts—rather are we left to gather them from the example of holy men and from various incidental circumstances. An important end is answered by this arrangement—trial is thereby made of the state of our hearts. It serves to make evident whether, because an expressed command cannot be brought requiring its performance, professing Christians will neglect a duty plainly implied. Thus, more of the real state of our minds is discovered, and it is made manifest whether we have or have not an ardent love for God and His service. This holds good both of public and family worship. Nevertheless, it is not at all difficult to prove the obligation of domestic piety.

Consider first the example of Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God. It was for his domestic piety that he received blessing from JEHOVAH Himself. "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment" (Gen 18:19). The patriarch is there commended for

instructing his children and servants in the most important of all duties, “the way of the Lord”—the truth about His glorious person, His high claims upon us, His requirements from us. Note well the words, “He will command them”—that is, he would use the authority God had given him as father and head of his house, to enforce the duties of family godliness. Abraham also prayed with, as well as instructed his family. Wherever he pitched his tent, there he “built an altar to the LORD” (Gen 12:7; 13:4). Now, my readers, we may well ask ourselves, are we “Abraham’s seed” (Gal 3:29) if we “do not the works of Abraham” (see Joh 8:39) and neglect the weighty duty of family worship?

The example of other holy men are similar to that of Abraham’s. Consider the pious determination of Joshua who declared to Israel, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Jos 24:15). Neither the exalted station which he held, nor the pressing public duties which devolved upon him, were allowed to crowd out his attention to the spiritual well-being of his family. Again—when David brought back the ark of God to Jerusalem with joy and thanksgiving, after discharging his public duties he “returned to bless his household” (2Sa 6:20). In addition to these eminent examples, we may cite the cases of Job (Job 1:5) and Daniel (Dan 6:10). Limiting ourselves to only one in the New Testament, we think of the history of Timothy, who was reared in a godly home. Paul called to remembrance the “unfeigned faith” (2Ti 1:5) which was in him, and added, “Which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice.” Is there any wonder, then, that the apostle could say, “*From a child* thou hast known the holy scriptures” (2Ti 3:15).

On the other hand, we may observe what fearful threatenings are pronounced against those who disregard this duty. We wonder how many of our readers have seriously pondered those awe-inspiring words, “Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name” (Jer 10:25). How unspeakably solemn to find that *prayerless families* are here coupled with the heathen that know not the Lord. Yet need that surprise us? Why, there are many heathen families who unite together in worshipping their false gods. And do not *they* put thousands of professing Christians to shame? Observe, too, that Jeremiah 10:25 recorded a fearful imprecation upon both classes alike, “Pour out thy fury upon.” How loudly should those words speak to us!

It is not enough that we pray as private *individuals* in our closets—we are required to honour God in our *families* as well. At least twice each day, in the morning and the evening, the whole household should be gathered together to bow before the Lord—parents and children, master and servant—to confess their sins, to give thanks for God’s mercies, to seek His help and blessing. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with this duty—all other domestic arrangements are to bend to it. The head of the house is the one to lead the devotions, but if he be absent, or seriously ill, or an unbeliever, then the wife should take his place. Under no circumstances should family worship ever be omitted. If we would enjoy the blessing of God upon our family, then let its members gather together daily for praise and prayer. “Them that honour me I will honour” (1Sa 2:30) is His promise.

An old writer well-said, “A family without prayer is like a house without a roof, open and exposed to all the storms of heaven.” All our domestic comforts and temporal mercies issue from the lovingkindness of the Lord, and the least we can do in return is to gratefully acknowledge, together, His goodness to us as a family. Excuses against the discharge of this sacred duty are idle and worthless. of what avail will it be when we render an account to God for the stewardship of our families, to say that we had no time available, working hard from morn till eve? The more pressing be our temporal duties, the greater our need of seeking spiritual succour. Nor may any

Christian plead that he is not qualified for such work—gifts and talents are developed by use and not by neglect.

Family worship should be conducted reverently, earnestly, and simply. It is then that the little ones will receive their first impressions and form their initial conceptions of the Lord God. Great care needs to be taken lest a false idea be given them of the divine character, and for this the balance must be preserved between dwelling upon His transcendency and imminence, His holiness and His mercy, His might and His tenderness, His justice and His grace. Worship should begin with a few words of prayer invoking God's presence and blessing. A short passage from His Word should follow, with brief comments thereon. Two or three verses of a Psalm may be sung. Close with a prayer of committal into the hands of God. Though we may not be able to pray eloquently, we should earnestly. Prevailing prayers are usually brief ones. Beware of wearying the young ones.

The advantages and blessings of family worship are incalculable. First, family worship will prevent much sin. It awes the soul, conveys a sense of God's majesty and authority, sets solemn truths before the mind, brings down benefits from God on the home. Personal piety in the home is a most influential means, under God, of conveying piety to the little ones. Children are largely creatures of imitation, loving to copy what they see in others. "He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments" (Psa 78:5-7). How much of the dreadful moral and spiritual conditions of the masses today may be traced back to the neglect of their fathers in this duty? How can those who neglect the worship of God in their families look for peace and comfort therein? Daily prayer in the home is a blessed means of grace for allaying those unhappy passions to which our common nature is subject.

Finally, family prayer gains for us the presence and blessing of the Lord. There is a promise of His presence which is peculiarly applicable to this duty, see Matthew 18:19-20. Many have found in family worship that help and communion with God which they sought for with less effect in private prayer.



February

REJOICING IN THE LORD

“Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phi 4:4). How many there are today who make an entirely wrong use of this divine exhortation. Let any servant of God faithfully trace out the inward experiences of a Christian, let him describe the painful discoveries of “the plague of his own heart” (1Ki 8:38), and his daily conflict with his corruptions and the corresponding effect this produces in the dampening of his spirits. Let him point out how well-suited to his case is the humiliating lament of Romans 7:24, and the light-hearted and empty-headed religionists of the day will promptly (we do not say “quote,” but) *hurl* at his head these words—“Rejoice in the Lord alway.” Those who thus misuse our text suppose that its happy strains condemn all gloominess in a Christian, and that it goes to show that one who is groaning is living far below his privileges.

There is a large percentage of people in Christendom today who imagine the interests of Christ and His cause on earth require that the somber side of things should be steadily kept out of sight—that only the joyousness of Christianity should be exhibited. They think that it is the pressing duty of saints to attract the unregenerate and not repel them by their heaviness. But that is a most mischievous misconception, a serious error, for it would be but a *one-sided* and therefore a *false* representation of vital godliness. It is an essential part of piety to make conscience of sin and to grieve over it. Christ never rebuked the penitent but declared, “Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh....Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep” (Luk 6:21, 25). Surely we are not to hide that aspect of piety which God specially delights in, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isa 66:2).

It is true that those of a *naturally* bright temperament and happy disposition may find it easy to present an attractive face to the world, but will it be to themselves or to Christ that they will draw the ungodly? Let that question be seriously pondered by those who insist that a smiling countenance is highly desirable. “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phi 4:4). What does the repetition of this exhortation argue? Does it denote that the Christian is always happy? No indeed, the very reverse. Is it not because the saint is so often cast down, because he finds so much both in himself and what is going on around to sadden him, that he is directed to look above to and rejoice in the Lord?

Study carefully the picture of the “Blessed” man which Christ has drawn for us in Matthew 5:1-11, and it will be seen that each feature in that portrait depicts the Christian as sorrowful so long as he is upon earth. Is he “poor in spirit”? (Mat 5:3) then assuredly will he feel pain from a pressing sense of want. Does he “mourn”? (Mat 5:4) then it would be downright hypocrisy to pretend he is joyful. Is he “meek”? (Mat 5:5) but such a spiritual grace is only evidenced by his

submitting to the test of grievous afflictions. Does he “hunger and thirst after righteousness”? (Mat 5:6) then he can be no stranger to an experience of feeling weak and unworthy. “Merciful” (Mat 5:7)—such a disposition cannot remain unmoved amid abounding misery in the world. “Pure in heart” (Mat 5:8) necessarily entails grief over impurity. “Peacemakers” (Mat 5:9) cannot but be saddened as they behold millions of their fellows striving against their Maker.

On the other hand, there are not a few among the Lord’s people whose tendency is to go to an opposite extreme, being afraid to rejoice in the Lord lest they be guilty of presumption. They who are most painfully conscious of the sea of iniquity surging within, feel it would be hypocrisy to joy in God and sing His praises. But let it be carefully borne in mind that the same human instrument who cried, “O wretched man that I am” (Rom 7:24), penned this very exhortation. However low the true believer may sink in his feelings, however cold and barren his heart, there is still abundant cause for him to heed this injunction. He is not bidden to rejoice in his own experiences or attainments, but “in the Lord.” It is a call to the exercise of faith, of hope, of love.

Though poor in this world’s goods, though grieving the loss of loved ones, though suffering pain of body, though harassed by sin and Satan, though hated and persecuted by worldlings, whatever be the case and lot of the Christian, it is both his privilege and duty to rejoice in the Lord. He has given us abundant cause so to do—His favour, love, faithfulness, longsuffering, granting us access to the throne of grace, the privilege of communion with Himself (in our sorrows and trials!), the promise of an eternity of bliss in His presence—all call for gladness and praise. This exhortation to rejoice in the Lord does not mean we are bidden to cast all sorrow out of our hearts, nor are we acting contrary to its terms when we grieve over sin. Godly sorrow and holy joy are coinciding and not conflicting emotions. There is no enjoying the sweetness of the Lamb apart from the “bitter herbs” (Exo 12:8).

To rejoice in the Lord is an act of *faith*, and therefore it lies not within the power of the creature to put it forth whenever *he* is so inclined. Do not despair, then, fellow-saint, because you are not able to reach this sphere of joy as and when you please. We are entirely dependent upon the Holy Spirit, here as everywhere—none but He can draw us to Christ and enable us to rejoice in Him. Very far are we from being competent to master ourselves and overcome all the oppositions of sin. We are not the lords of our joy. We can no more make ourselves rejoice in God than we can make ourselves well when suffering from a dangerous and painful disease. Like all other exhortations, this one must be turned into earnest prayer for divine enablement. Finally, note the very next words are, “Let your *moderation* [not hilarity] be known unto all men”! (Phi 4:5).

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

7. Christ and the Law—Matthew 5:17-18

The manifestation of Christ in Israel’s midst was sudden and startling. The first thirty years of His life on earth had been lived in private, and outside His own immediate circle He seems to have attracted little attention. But as soon as He appeared on the stage of public action, this was altered—the eyes of all were fixed upon Him and the leaders of the nation were compelled to take notice of Him. His meekness and lowliness at once distinguished Him from those who sought the praise of men. His miracles of healing soon became heralded far and wide. His call to repentance and proclamation of the Gospel (Mar 1:15) made people wonder what was the real character and

design of His mission. Was He a revolutionary? Was it His purpose to overthrow the existing order of things? What was His attitude towards the Scriptures and particularly to the law of Moses? Did He disavow their divine authority? These were questions agitating the minds of men and called for clear answers.

Christ's preaching was so entirely different from that of the Pharisees and Sadducees (which was supposed to be based on the Old Testament), that the people were inclined to suppose His intention was to subvert the authority of God's Word and substitute His own in its place. Because Christ despised the "traditions of the elders" (Mat 15:2), the religious leaders supposed Him to be a deceiver, going about to destroy the very foundations of piety. Because He threw far more emphasis upon great moral principles than upon ceremonial institutions, many were ready to imagine that He repudiated the entire Levitical system. Because He was the proclaimer of grace and the dispenser of mercy, the "friend of publicans and sinners," the idea became current that He was opposed to the law. The balance of truth had been lost, and because the Lord Jesus did not echo the prevailing theology of the day, He was regarded as a heretic. Christ had refused to identify Himself with any of the sects of His time, and because He was outside them all, people wondered what was His real attitude to the law and the prophets.

For a long time past, the view had more or less obtained that when the Messiah appeared He would introduce radical changes and entirely overthrow the ancient order of religion. Therefore did Christ here assure the people that so far from being antagonistic to the Old Testament Scriptures, He had come to fulfil them. He strongly disavowed any hostile design in regard to the Word of God and proceeded to confirm its authority. The verses we are now to ponder begin the third and longest section of the Sermon on the Mount—from verse 17 to the end of chapter 5, Christ treats of the most important subject of *the moral law*, showing its true meaning, which had been much corrupted by the Jewish teachers. First, our Lord refuted the erroneous ideas which the people had formed of Him by three emphatic declarations, the force of which we shall now endeavour to bring out.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, *or* the prophets" (Mat 5:17). The Old Testament Scriptures were comprehensively summarized under this title, "The law and the prophets" (Mat 7:12; Luk 16:16). Thus the first and widest meaning of our Lord's words is, Suppose not that My mission is to repudiate the authority of Holy Writ, rather is it to establish and enforce the same. This will be the more evident when we examine the verses which immediately follow. The entire record of His ministry furnished clear proof of what He asserted on this occasion. Christ venerated the Sacred Scriptures, was regulated by them in all His actions, and definitely set His imprimatur upon their divine inspiration. No fouler calumny could be laid to His charge than to accuse Him of any antagonism to or disrespect for the divine Oracles.

We must next duly note Christ did not here speak of "the law *and* the prophets," but "the law *or* the prophets," a distinction we are required to weigh and understand, for it presents quite a different concept. The law and the prophets are not here associated in such a way as to comprise a unity, or as indicating the spirit of the law by another word. No, the two terms are here put together by the disjunctive particle "or" and therefore each of them must represent a distinct idea familiar to the Jews. Christ was here referring to the prophets not so much as the commentators upon the law, as those who had foreannounced His person, mission, and kingdom. His obvious design, then, was to intimate that the Old Testament in all its parts and elements—ethical or predictive—referred to Himself and was accomplished in Himself.

It is also to be observed that no further reference is made to the prophets throughout this sermon (let those who have such a penchant for prophecy take due note!), and that from verse 18

onwards, it is the law which Christ treats of. Before proceeding further we must next inquire, exactly what did Christ here signify by “the law”? We answer unhesitatingly, the whole Jewish law, which was threefold—ceremonial, judicial, and moral. The ceremonial described rules and ordinances to be observed in the worship of God; the judicial described ordinances for the government of the Jewish commonwealth and the punishment of offenders. The former was for the Jews only—the latter primarily for them, yet concerned all people in all times so far as it tended to establish the moral law. The moral law is contained in the Ten Commandments.

While the entire Jewish law was comprehended by our Lord’s expression “The law,” it is clear that He alluded principally to the moral law, for the subsequent parts of the sermon refer directly and mainly to it. But we must add that this term here also included the types, the law of sacrifice, and especially the sin-offering—for the question might well be asked, If there had been no real accomplishment of the sacrificial emblems, what then became of all the references in Moses to the propitiatory offerings and to the entire typical system? If Christ had not accomplished them by presenting to God the substance which they shadowed forth, then they would have been an unfulfilled prophecy or pledge, for they manifestly pointed to Him. Christ, then, came to present the reality of which they were the pledge.

“I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Mat 5:17). We must now carefully inquire what our Lord here meant by “fulfil.” We understand Him to signify that so far from its being His purpose to annul the moral law, He had come with the express design of meeting its holy demands, to offer unto God what it justly required—to magnify it by rendering to it a perfect obedience in thought and word and deed. And that so far from despising the prophets, His mission was to make good their predictions, concerning Himself, by performing the very work they had announced He should do. In a word, we regard this statement of Christ’s as a definite declaration that He had entered this world with the object of bringing in a perfect righteousness, which should be imputed to all His believing people. But this vital and glorious truth is now blankly repudiated by some who pose as being orthodox and therefore they viciously wrest this passage.

Unwilling to admit that Christ rendered to the law any vicarious obedience on behalf of His people, Socinians contend that the word “fulfil” in this passage simply means to “fill out” or “fill full.” They imagine that in the remainder of the chapter, Christ partly cancels and partly adds to the moral law. Even Mr. Grant in his “Numerical Bible” rendered it “complete,” and in his notes says, “What would the Old Testament be without the New? very much like a finger pointing into vacuity.” As quite a number of our readers have more or less come under the influence of this error, we deem it necessary to expose such a sophistry and establish the true meaning of Christ’s declaration. In essaying this, we cannot do better than summarize the arguments used by George Smeaton (1814-1889).

First, “That usage of language is opposed to such an interpretation which here adopts the rendering ‘to fill out’ in preference to fulfil. No example of such a usage can be adduced when the verb is applied to a law or to an express demand contained in the spirit of the law, in which case it uniformly means ‘to fulfil.’ Thus it is said, ‘He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law’ (Rom 13:8). The inflexible usage of language rules the sense in such a phrase, to the effect that Christ must be understood to say that He came not to fill out or to supplement the law by additional elements, but to *fulfil* it, by obeying it or by being made under it.”

Second, “‘fill out’ is inadmissible as applied to the second term or object of the verb. Christ did not come to fill out or expound the prophets, but simply to fulfil their predictions. Whenever the word here used is applied to anything prophetic, it is always found in such a connection that it can only mean, ‘to fulfil,’ and hence we must not deviate from its uniform significance. Third,

the eighteenth verse must be regarded as giving a reason for the statement made in the seventeenth. But what sort of a reason would be given if we were to render the connected verses thus, ‘I came to fill out or to supplement the law, for verily, I say unto you till heaven and earth pass not one jot or tittle shall in any wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled?’”

To these arguments we would add this forcible and (to us) conclusive consideration—the term “fulfil” was here placed by Christ in direct antithesis from “destroy,” which surely fixes its scope and meaning. Now to “destroy” the law is not to empty it of meaning, but is to rescind, dissolve, or abrogate it. But to “fill out” or complete the law obviously presents no proper contrast from “destroy” or render void. “To fulfil,” then, is to be taken in its prime and natural sense, as meaning to perform what they (the law and the prophets) required, to substantiate them, to make good what they demanded and announced. Merely to rescue the law from the corrupt glosses of the Jews and to explain its higher meaning was business which could have been done by the apostles, but to bring in an “everlasting righteousness” no mere creature was capable of doing. Law can only be “fulfilled” by perfect obedience.

If we take “fulfil” here in its widest scope then we gladly avail ourselves of the compound definition of William Perkins (1558-1602). First, Christ fulfilled the law by His *doctrine*—both by restoring to it its proper meaning and true use, and by revealing the right way in which the law may be fulfilled. Second, in His *person*—both by performing perfect and perpetual obedience unto its precepts, and by suffering its penalty, enduring death upon the cross for His people. Third, *in men*—in the elect by imparting faith to their hearts, so that they lay hold of Christ who fulfilled it for them, and by giving them His own Spirit which imparts to them a love for the law, and sets them on endeavouring to obey it, and in the reprobate when He executes the curse of the law upon them.

Taking our verses as a whole, we may perceive how that though the law and the Gospel vary in some respects very widely, yet there is a perfect consonance and agreement between them. Many now suppose that the one is the avowed enemy of the other. Not so. There is a sweet consent between the law and the Gospel, for Christ came to fulfil the former and is the substance of the latter, and therefore are we informed through His chief apostle that, by faith “We *establish* the law” (Rom 3:31), and that when Moses had given the law unto the people of Israel he offered sacrifices and sprinkled the blood thereof upon the book and the people (Heb 9:19-20)—type of the shedding of Christ’s blood, and which thus did notify the perfect harmony of the law and the Gospel.

What that blessed consonance is between the law and the Gospel no regenerate soul should have any difficulty in perceiving. Let us briefly present it thus. The law required perfect obedience and pronounced death on the least breach thereof, and does not propose any way of fulfilling the same in our own persons. But the Gospel directs us to Christ, who as the believer’s Surety, fulfilled the law for him, for which reason Christ is called, “The end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom 10:4). And through Christ it is that, “The righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom 8:4).

“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). In these words our Lord advances a conclusive argument for clearing Himself from the false imputation that He had come to destroy the law, as the opening “For” (following His statement in v. 17) clearly indicates. His argument is drawn from the very nature of the law, which is immutable. Since the law is unchangeable, it must be fulfilled—that its Author be vindicated and glorified. Since fallen man was incapable of rendering

perfect obedience to it, it was essential that Christ Himself should perform and bring in that everlasting righteousness which God required. Christ's argument, then, may be stated thus—If the law be inviolable and for observance eternal, then I could not have come to destroy it. Because the law is immutable and eternal, it necessarily follows that He came not to annul but to *accomplish it*.

“Verily I say unto you” (Mat 5:18) was a form of speech employed by the Saviour when He would solemnly avouch any weighty truth, propounding it in His own name. Herein He evidences Himself to be the grand “Amen,” the “faithful and true witness” (Rev 1:5), the antitypical prophet, the divine Teacher of His church, to whom we must hearken in all things, for He cannot lie. In saying, “Till heaven and earth pass” (Mat 5:18)—the most stable of all created objects—Christ affirmed the unchangeableness of the law. And that this might be rendered the more emphatic, He made reference to the minutiae of the Hebrew alphabet, that not so much as its smallest part shall pass from the law—the “jot” being the tiniest letter and the “tittle” the smallest curve of a letter.

The ceremonial law has not been destroyed by Christ, but the substance now fills the place of its shadows. Nor has the judicial law been destroyed, though it has been abrogated unto us so far as it was peculiar to the Jews, yet, as it agrees with the requirements of civic justice and mercy, and as it serves to establish the precepts of the moral law, it is perpetual—herein we may see the blasphemous impiety of the popes of Rome, who in their “canons” have dared to dispense with some of the laws of consanguinity in Leviticus 18. The moral law remains forever as a rule of obedience to every child of God, as we have shown so often in these pages.

Let us learn from Christ's declaration of the immutability of the law that, first, the Scriptures are the very Word of God, and therefore a sure resting-place for our hearts. A Christian is subject to many doubts of the truth of God's promises in times of trial and temptation, but this should ever be remembered—not one jot or tittle can pass till all be accomplished. Second, that no part of the inspired Scriptures, still less any whole book of it, can be lost—neither man nor devil can destroy one jot of it. Third, this immutability of the law contains a matter of great terror and woe unto all impenitent sinners, for no matter how much they may presume upon God's mercy, the curse of His law shall stand against them forever. Fourth, Christ's setting His seal upon the inviolable authority of the law intimates its perfections—every part of it is needed by us, every sentence evidences its divine authorship, every precept calls for our loving obedience.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

86. His Mighty Men

The last thirty-two verses of 2 Samuel 23 have received comparatively scant attention from those who are accustomed to read the Scriptures, and even most of the commentators are nearly silent upon them. Probably the average Christian finds it somewhat difficult to glean much from them which he feels is really profitable to his soul. A number of men are enumerated—some of them mentioned in earlier chapters, but the great majority otherwise quite unknown to us—and one or two of their deeds are described. The second half of our chapter is taken up with a long list of names, which most people are inclined to skip over. Nevertheless, these very verses are included in that divine declaration, “Whatsoever things were written *aforetime* were written for

our learning” (Rom 15:4), and it is therefore to the dishonour of God and to our own real loss if we ignore this passage.

There is nothing meaningless in any section of Holy Writ—every part thereof is “profitable” for us (2Ti 3:16-17). Let us therefore settle it at the outset that this passage contains valuable instruction for us today, important lessons which we do well to take to heart. Let us, then, humbly bow before God and beg Him to open our eyes, that we may behold “wondrous things” in this part of His law. Let us gird up the loins of our minds, and seek to reverently ponder and spiritually meditate upon its contents. Let us bear in mind the law of the context, and endeavour to ascertain the relation of this passage to the verses immediately preceding. Let us duly take note of how these “mighty men of David” are classified, and try to discover what is suggested thereby. Let us look beyond the historical and trace out what is typical, at the same time setting bounds to our imagination and being regulated by the Analogy of Faith.

Before entering into detail, let us point out some of the general lessons inculcated—suggested, in part, by the brief notes of Matthew Henry (1662-1714). First, the catalogue which is here given us of the names, devotion, and valour of the king’s soldiers is recorded for the honour of David himself, who trained them in their military arts and exercises, and who set before them an example of piety and courage. It enhances the reputation of, as well as being an advantage, when a prince is attended and served by such men as are here described. So it will be in the day to come. When the books are opened before an assembled universe and the fidelity and courage of God’s ministers are proclaimed, it will be principally for the glory of their Captain, whom they served and whose fame they sought to spread, and by whose Spirit they were energized and enabled. Whatever crowns His servants and saints receive from God, they will be laid at the feet of the Lamb, who alone is worthy.

Second, this inspired record is made for the honour of those worthies themselves. They were instrumental in bringing David to the crown, of settling and protecting him in the throne, and of enlarging his conquests, and therefore the Spirit has not overlooked them. In like manner, the faithful ministers of God are instrumental in the establishing, safe-guarding, and extending the kingdom of Christ in the world, and therefore are they to be esteemed highly for their works’ sake, as the Word of God expressly enjoins. Not that they desire the praise of men, but “honour to whom honour is due” (Rom 13:7) is a precept which God requires His people to ever observe. Not only are the valorous soldiers of Christ to be venerated by those of their own day and generation, but posterity is to hold them in high regard, “The memory of the just is blessed” (Pro 10:7). In the day to come each of them shall “have praise of God” (1Co 4:5).

Third, to excite those who come after them to a generous emulation. That which was praiseworthy in the sires should be practiced by their children. If God is pleased to hereby express His approbation of the loyalty and love shown unto David by his officers, we may be sure that He is pleased now with those who strengthen the hands of His ministers, be they in the civil or the ecclesiastical realm. Those alive today should be inspired and encouraged by the noble deeds of heroes of the past. But to raise the thought to a higher level—if those men held David in such great esteem that they hesitated not to hazard their lives for his sake, how infinitely more worthy is the antitypical David of the most self-denying sacrifices and devotion from His servants and followers. Alas, how sadly they put most of us to shame.

Fourth, to show how much genuine religion contributes to the inspiring men with true courage. David, both by his Psalms, and by his offerings for the service of the temple, greatly promoted piety among the officers of the kingdom (see 1Ch 29:6), and when they became famous for piety, they became famous for bravery. Yes, there is an inseparable connection between the

two things, as Acts 4:13 so strikingly exemplifies. Even the enemies of the apostles, “took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus,” when they “saw the *boldness*.” He who truly fears God, fears not man. It is written, “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Pro 28:1). History, both sacred and secular, abounds in examples of how pious leaders imbued their men with courage—Abraham, Joshua, Cromwell, being cases in point. From the record of their exploits, courage should be inspired *in us*.

Let us now inquire, What is the connection between our present portion and the one preceding it? This is a principle which should never be neglected, for the ascertaining of the relation of one passage to another often throws light upon its typical scope, as well as supplies a valuable key to its interpretation. Such is the case here. The next seven verses of 2 Samuel 23 are concerned with “the last words of David,” and what follows is virtually an honour roll of those who achieved fame in his service. What a blessed foreshadowment of that which will occur when the earthly kingdom of the antitypical David comes to an end. Then shall His servants receive their rewards, for the righteous Judge will then distribute the crowns of “life” (Rev 2:10), of “righteousness” (2Ti 4:8) and of “glory” (1Pe 5:4). Then shall He pronounce His, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” Let therefore those now engaged in fighting the Lord’s battles be faithful, diligent, and valorous, assured that in due course they will be richly compensated.

“These be the names of the mighty men whom David had: The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains; the same was Adino the Eznite: he lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time” (2Sa 23:8). When God calls a man to perform some special service in the interests of His kingdom and people, He also graciously raises up for him those who support his cause and strengthen his hands by using their influence on his behalf. Some of those helpers obtain the eye of the public, while others of them are far more in the background. But at the end, each shall receive due recognition and proportionate honour. It was so here. David could never have won the victories he did, unless a kind Providence had supplied him with loyal and courageous officers. Nor had men like Luther and Cromwell performed such exploits unless supported by less conspicuous souls. Thus it has ever been, and still is. Even such a trivial work as the ministry of this magazine is only made possible by the co-operation of its readers.

The first one mentioned of David’s mighty men is Adino the Eznite. He is described as “The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains,” by which we understand that he presided over the counsels of war, being the king’s chief military adviser. In addition to his wisdom, he was also endowed with extraordinary strength and valour, for it is here stated that he, “Lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time” (2Sa 23:8). His case seems to have been one similar to that of Samson’s—a man endued with supernatural strength. Typically, he reminds us of Paul, *the chief* of the apostles, who was not only enriched with unusual spiritual wisdom, but was mightier than any other in the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan—but whereas the one was famous for the taking of life, the other was instrumental in the communicating of life.

“And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines that were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away” (2Sa 23:9). Here is the second of David’s worthies, one who acquitted himself courageously in an hour of urgent need. Nothing is said of him elsewhere, save in what some term “the parallel passage” of 1 Chronicles 11. This son of Dodo was one of the heroic triumvirate that enabled their royal master to successfully defy the assembled Philistines, and that at a time when, for some reason or other, the king’s army was “gone away” (2Sa 23:9). Eleazar

refused to flee before the massed forces of the enemy, and he not only nobly stood his ground, but took the offensive, and with his confidence in the living God fell upon and slew hundreds of them.

The Spirit has placed special emphasis upon the noteworthiness of Eleazar's prowess by informing us it was exercised on an occasion when "the men of Israel had gone back" (see 2Sa 23:9). *That* is the time for true courage to be manifested. When through unbelief, lack of zeal, or the fear of man, the rank and file of professing Christians are giving way before the forces of evil, then is the opportunity for those who know and trust the Lord to be strong and do brave exploits. It does not require so much courage to engage the enemy when all our fellow-soldiers are enthusiastically advancing against them—but it takes considerable grit and boldness to attack an organized and powerful foe when almost all of our companions have lost heart and turned tail.

God esteems fidelity and holy zeal far more highly in a season of declension and apostasy than He does in a time of revival. A crisis not only tests but reveals a man, as a heavy storm will make evident the trustworthiness or otherwise of a ship. What is here recorded to the lasting honour of Eleazar makes us think of the beloved Paul. Again and again he stood almost alone, yet he never made the defection of others an excuse for the abating of his own efforts. On one occasion he had to lament, "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2Ti 1:15). Later, in the same epistle he wrote, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding *the Lord* stood with me, and strengthened me" (2Ti 4:16-17). Let the servants of God today take heart from these blessed examples.

"He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword" (2Sa 23:10). Let it be duly noted that Eleazar did not stop when his work was half done, but went on prosecuting the same as long as he had any strength remaining. "Thus, in the service of God, we should keep up the willingness and resolution of the spirit, notwithstanding the weakness and weariness of the flesh; faint, yet pursuing (Jdg 8:4); the hand weary, yet not quitting the sword" (Matthew Henry). Alas, in this age of ease and flabbiness, how readily we become discouraged and how quickly we give in to difficulties. O to heed that emphatic call, "Not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal 6:9). Such incidents as these are recorded not only for our information, but also for our inspiration—that we should emulate their noble examples, otherwise they will put us to shame in the day to come.

"And the LORD wrought a great victory that day" (2Sa 23:10). It is the *daring* of faith which He ever delights to honour, as He had so signally evidenced a few years previously, when David as a stripling had challenged and overcome the mighty Goliath. It is the *perseverance* of faith which the Lord always rewards, as was strikingly demonstrated after Israel had marched around the walls of Jericho thirteen times. No doubt God struck this army of the Philistines with a terror as great as the courage with which He had endowed this hero. It is ever God's way to work at both ends of the line—if He raises up a sower He also prepares the soil, if He inspires a servant with courage He puts fear into the hearts of those who oppose him. Observe how the glory of the victory is again ascribed to the Lord, and carefully compare Acts 14:27 and 21:19. "And the people returned after him only to spoil" (2Sa 23:10). How like human nature was this—they *returned* when there was "spoil" to be had!

"And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentiles: and the people fled from the Philistines" (2Sa 23:11). This incident concerned an armed force of Israel's enemies who were out foraging, and who struck such terror into the hearts of the countryside that the peaceful locals

fled. But there was one who refused to yield unto the marauders, determined to defend the food supply of his people, and under God, he completely routed them. Here is another courageous man of whom we know nothing save for this brief reference. What a hint it furnishes that in the day to come many a one will then have honour from God who received scant notice among his fellows. No matter how obscure the individual, or how inconspicuous his sphere of labour, nothing that is done in faith, no service performed for the good of His people, is forgotten by God. Surely this is one of the lessons written plainly across this simple but striking narrative.

“But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD wrought a great victory” (2Sa 23:12). How this reminds us of what is recorded in Acts 14:3, “Long time therefore abode they speaking *boldly* in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and *wonders* to be done by their hands.” Then let us heed that divine injunction, “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph 6:10-11). Let us duly observe how, once more, the victory is ascribed to the *Lord*. No matter how great the ability and courage of the instruments, all praise for the achievement must be rendered alone unto God. “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches” (Jer 9:23), for what has he that he did not first receive from above! How needful is this exhortation in such a day as ours, when pride is so much in the saddle and men’s persons are “had in admiration.” God is jealous of His glory and will not share it with the creature, and His Spirit is quenched if we do so.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

8. *Its Manifestation*

The everlasting love and grace of the Triune God unto His chosen ones is made apparent to them in this world by means of the fruit or immediate effects of the same—that which was secret in the heart of JEHOVAH is gradually brought into open manifestation through His own wondrous works unto the church. It cannot be expected that the world of the ungodly should take any interest in these transactions, but to the regenerate they must be a source of unfailing and ever-increasing delight. As we pointed out in the preceding section of this article (in the January issue), the electing love of God was evidenced, first, in the incarnation and mission of His own dear Son, who was ordained to accomplish the redemption of His people that had fallen in Adam. Second, the eternal purpose of God’s grace is revealed in and through a divine *call* which the elect receive while here on earth. We must now consider more definitely what this divine call really is.

First of all we must distinguish carefully between this call which is received by the elect and that which comes to all who are under the sound of the Word—the one is particular, the other general. Whosoever comes under the sound of the Word, yea, all who have it in their hands in its written form, are called by God to forsake their sins and seek His mercy in Christ. This general call comes to the elect and non-elect alike, but alas, it is *refused* by all of them. It is described in such passages as, “Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man” (Pro 8:4), “many be called, but few chosen” (Mat 20:16). Their rejection of the same is depicted thus, “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded” (Pro 1:24),

“They all with one consent began to make excuse” (Luk 14:18). But it is with the special and particular call, of which the *elect alone* are the subjects, that we are now concerned.

Second, then, this calling of the elect is an individual and *inward one*, falling not upon the outward ear, but penetrating to their very hearts. It is the Word of God’s power, reaching them in their natural state of spiritual death and quickening them into newness of life. It is the good Shepherd seeking and saving His lost sheep and restoring them to His Father. As it is written, “He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice” (Joh 10:3-4). From the legal side of things, the salvation of God’s elect became an accomplished fact when Christ died and rose again, but not until the Spirit of God’s Son is sent into their hearts—“Whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15)—is it made good in their actual experience. It is by the Spirit alone that we are given a saving knowledge of the truth, being led by Him into a right apprehension thereof—the Spirit so shines upon our understanding that we are enabled to take in the *spiritual* knowledge of God and His Son Jesus Christ.

Third, then, it is an *effectual* call, being accomplished by the supernatural operations of the Spirit. It holds equally good of the new creation as of the old that, God “spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (Psa 33:9). It is in such passages as, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power” (Psa 110:3). This effectual call is referred to their natural unwillingness to surrender themselves completely to the Lord’s claims is sweetly melted down by the communication of an overwhelming sense of God’s grace and love to them. Again—“All thy children shall be taught of the LORD” (Isa 54:13), *so* taught that He “hath given us an understanding, that we may *know him* that is true” (1Jo 5:20). once more, this effectual call is God’s making good the promises of the new covenant, “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).

Theologians have wisely designated this the “effectual call” so as to distinguish it from the general and outward one which comes to all who hear the Gospel. This effectual call is not an invitation, but is the actual *bestowment* of life and light. It is the immediate fruit of God’s wondrous and infinite love to our persons when we are altogether unlovely, yea, the subjects of nothing but what renders us repulsive and hateful (see Eze 16:4-8)! It is then that the Holy Spirit is given to the elect—given to make good *in* them what Christ wrought out *for* them. Let it be clearly recognized and thankfully owned that the gift of the Spirit to us is as great and grand a gift as the gift of Christ for us. By the Spirit’s inhabiting us, we are sanctified and sealed unto the day of redemption. By the Spirit’s indwelling of us, we become the temples of the living God, His dwelling-place on earth.

It is not sufficiently recognized that all covenant mercies are in the hand of the blessed Holy Spirit, whose office and work it is to bring home the elect (by effectual calling) to Christ, and to make known and apply to their souls the salvation which the Lord Jesus has fulfilled and wrought out for them. He comes from heaven in consequence of Christ’s atonement and ascension, and proclaims salvation from the Lord for wretched sinners. He enters their hearts of sin and woe, and makes known the salvation of God. He puts them, by believing on the person and work of Christ, into possession of the things that accompany salvation, and then He becomes a Comforter to them. Such do not pray for the Spirit to come and regenerate them, for they have already received Him as a life-giving and sanctifying Spirit. What they must now do is pray for grace to receive Him as the Spirit of adoption, that He may witness with their spirit that they are the children of God.

Now this effectual call is a necessary and proper consequence and effect of God's eternal election, for none are the recipients of this supernatural vocation but His chosen ones. Wherever predestination unto everlasting glory goes before concerning any person, then effectual calling unto faith and holiness infallibly follows. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2Th 2:13). The elect are chosen unto salvation by the free and sovereign grace of God, but how is that salvation actually obtained? How are His favoured ones brought into the personal possession of it? Through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, and not otherwise. God's decree of election is an ordination unto everlasting life and glory, and it is evident by holiness being effectually wrought in its objects by the regenerating and sanctifying operations of the Spirit. It is thereby that the Spirit communicates what Christ purchased for them.

"And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles" (Rom 9:23-24). In the verses immediately preceding, the apostle had treated of the unspeakably solemn subject of how God shows His wrath and makes known His power in connection with the non-elect, but here he takes up the blessed theme of how God discovers the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy. This is by the effectual call which is received individually by His people. That call is what serves to make manifest God's everlasting grace toward us. As Romans 8:28 expresses it, we are "the called according to his purpose"—in other words, the Spirit is given to us in order to the accomplishment of God's decree, or to put it another way, through his effectual call the believer may look upward to the eternal love of God unto him, much as he might through a clink in his wall peer through to the shining of the sun in the heavens.

As the love of God the Father is chiefly spoken of under the act of election and expressed by Him giving His only begotten Son to be our Head and Mediator, and as the love of God the Son shines forth brightest in His incarnation, obedience, and laying down His life for us, so the love of God the Spirit is displayed in His *revealing* in the Word the eternal transactions between the Father and the Son, and by *enlightening* our minds into a true, vital, and spiritual knowledge of the Father and the Son. It is at effectual calling that the Spirit is pleased to make an inward revelation and application of the salvation of Christ to the soul, which is indeed heaven dawning upon us, for by it dead sinners are quickened, hard hearts softened, stubborn wills rendered pliable, great sins manifestatively forgiven, and infinite mercy displayed and magnified. It is then that the Holy Spirit, who is the Lord and Giver of all spiritual life, enables great sinners to know that God is love.

By His Spirit, Christ is pleased to shed abroad the love of God in the heart, and through the Gospel He manifests the knowledge of the Father's love to us. He gives the Spirit to make a revelation of this to our minds, and thus we are led to know and feel the love of God to be the foundation of all grace and of everlasting consolation. As the knowledge of our personal election (obtained through our effectual calling) makes it evident to us that we are near and dear to God, so it follows that we perceive we are dear to Christ. As the Spirit imparts to us a knowledge of the Father's love unto us in His dear Son, we are led to search into and study this wondrous subject of election, and the more we know of it, the more we are astonished at it. Hereby, under the influences of the Holy Spirit, we are led to such views of the grace of the Lord Jesus as fills the heart with holy contentment and delight.

Third, the eternal purpose of God's grace unto us is manifested by a *supernatural change in us*. Strictly speaking, this is not a distinct branch of our subject, for the new birth is one and the

same as our effectual calling. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity and to resolve those doubts which the regenerate are the subjects of, we deem it well to give the same a separate consideration. When a sincere soul learns that there is both a general and external call, and a particular and inward one, he is deeply concerned to ascertain which of these he has received, or rather, whether he has been favoured with the *latter*, for it is only the supernatural call of the Spirit which is effectual unto salvation. It is on this point that many of God's dear people are so deeply perplexed and exercised—to ascertain and make sure that they have passed from death unto life and been brought into a vital union with Christ.

In seeking to clarify this point, the writer has to guard against infringing too much upon the next branch of our subject, namely, the *knowledge* of our election. At present we are treating of the *manifestation* of it, particularly as it is seen in that supernatural change which is wrought in its subjects at the moment they receive God's effectual call. We shall therefore content ourselves here with endeavouring to describe some of the principal features of this supernatural change. That supernatural change is described in general terms in, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2Co 5:17). Another passage treating of the same thing is, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2Pe 1:3). It will at once appear that this verse is very much to the point, for it refers specifically to our effectual call and attributes the same to God's "divine power."

This supernatural change consists, then, in our being made new creatures in Christ Jesus. That which is brought forth by the Spirit at the new birth, though but a feeble and tiny spiritual babe, is nevertheless "a new creature"—a new life has been imparted, new principles communicated from which new actions proceed. It is then that, "of his [Christ's] fulness have we all received, and grace for grace" (Joh 1:16), that is, every spiritual grace in the Head is transmitted to His members, every grace from Christ in the Christian is now complete for parts—"grace for grace" as a child receives limb for limb from its parents. At our effectual calling, divine power gives to us "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2Pe 1:3). What they comprise we must now briefly consider.

First, a spiritual *understanding*. The natural man can neither perceive nor receive spiritual things in a spiritual way (though he can ponder them in a natural and intellectual way), because he is devoid of spiritual discernment (1Co 2:14). But when we are effectually called, God gives us "an understanding, that we may know him that is true" (2Jo 1:20). Hence it is 2 Peter 1:3 declares that all things pertaining to life and godliness are given us "through the knowledge of him that hath called us." The first light which the soul receives when the Spirit enters his heart is a new view of God, and in that light we begin to see what sin is, as it is in itself against a holy God, and thus perceive what holiness is. It is this new and spiritual knowledge of God Himself which constitutes the very core and essence of the blessing and work of the new covenant of grace, "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" (Heb 8:11). This spiritual knowledge of God, then, is the germ and root of the spiritual change which accompanies the effectual call.

Second, a *principle of holiness* is wrought in the soul. God chose His people in Christ that they should be "holy" (Eph 1:4), and therefore does He call them "with an holy calling" (2Ti 1:9). Thereby we are made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col 1:12). Our title to heaven rests upon what Christ did for us, but our *fitness for* heaven consists of the image of Christ being wrought in us. This principle of holiness is planted in the heart by the Spirit and is termed "the new nature" by some writers. It evidences itself by the mind's pondering again

and again that God is a holy God, whose pure eyes can endure no iniquity, and by the heart's cleaving to Him under this apprehension of Him. Here, then, is the test by which we are to examine and measure ourselves—do I—notwithstanding so much in my heart and life which humbles me and causes me to mourn as contrary to divine holiness—approve of all God's commands as holy and good, though opposite to my lusts? and is it my constant longing for God to make me, increasingly, a partaker of this holiness?

Third, *a love for spiritual objects and things*. Not only is a “new heart” communicated at our effectual calling, but there is such a divine renewing of our will that it is now enabled to choose what is spiritually good—a power which the natural man has not in his fallen condition. It is the turning of the heart unto and longing after holy objects which carries the will along with it. When the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, we cannot but love Him and all that He loves. A true and sincere love to God is the fruit and effect of His effectual call—the two things are inseparable—“to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28). Alas, our natural lusts still crave that which is unholy—nevertheless, in the renewed heart there is a principle which delights in and seeks after that which is pure and holy, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1Jo 3:14). Do you not find (intermingled with other workings in you) true strains of love toward God Himself?

Fourth, *a spiritual principle of faith*. Natural faith suffices for natural objects, but spiritual and supernatural objects require a spiritual and supernatural faith. That spiritual faith is “the gift of God” (Eph 2:8), wrought in the regenerate by “the operation of God” (Col 2:12). This faith is the effect and accompaniment of our effectual call, “With lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer 31:3) signifies, first, that the heart is drawn unto the Lord, so that it rests on His promises, reposes in His love, and responds to His voice. “By *faith* Abraham, when he was *called* to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed” (Heb 11:8)—the two things are inseparable—faith responds to God's call. Therefore do we read of “the faith of God's elect” (Ti 1:1), which differs radically from the “faith” of formal religionists and wild enthusiasts. First, because it is a divine gift and not the working of a natural principle. Second, because it receives with child-like simplicity whatever is stated in the Word, quibbling not at “difficulties” therein. Third, because its possessor realizes that only God can sustain and maintain that faith in his soul, for it lies not in the power of the creature to either exercise or increase it.

In conclusion, let us point out that this supernatural change wrought in the elect at their effectual call, this working in them a spiritual understanding that they may know God, the imparting to them of a principle of holiness, of love and of faith, is *the foundation* of all the acts of grace which do follow. Every act of grace, to the end of the believer's life, evidences this first work of effectual calling to be sound and saving. At regeneration, God endows the soul with all the principles and seeds of all graces, and the future life of the Christian and his growth in grace (through the conflict between the “flesh” and “spirit”) is but a calling of them into operation and manifestation.

THE HOLY SABBATH

2. *Its Institution*

“And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and

sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made” (Gen 2:2-3). Before commenting upon these verses, perhaps it is well to make a few preliminary remarks thereon. First, let us point out how emphatically they repudiate the error of those who declare that the Sabbath was an institution peculiar to the Jews. More than two thousand years before the Lord entered into covenant with them at Sinai, the weekly day of sacred rest was appointed and consecrated by the Creator. Instead of its origin dating only from the time when the Ten Commandments were written on the tables of stone, its inception carries us right back to the very beginning of history. As we shall see (D.V.) when we come to examine Exodus 20, the Lord Himself there declared the Sabbath was as old as the world itself.

Not only is it a glaring mistake to suppose the Sabbath was first instituted at Sinai, but it is equally wrong to insist that it is binding on Jews only. The reasons which JEHOVAH gave in Exodus 20:8-11, why the sacred day must be observed, are just as pertinent to and incontestable for the Gentiles as they are for the Jews. The original occasion of its appointment and the design thereof hold good with equal respect for the entire human race. Nor is this any arbitrary assertion of ours. Nothing could be plainer than the words of our Redeemer, “The sabbath was made for *man*” (Mar 2:27) and not merely for one small fraction of mankind. “The weekly day of rest is one of two things that were ordained in and have come from a sinless Eden. The Sabbath was before Moses, before Abraham—the only other relic of the primitive Paradise is marriage—ideal marriage. As well make marriage a matter of Mosaic legislation as the Sabbath law, since both of them were instituted and ordained for man in Eden” (A. T. Pierson, 1837-1911).

But plain though the above considerations be to any unprejudiced and simple reader of the Scriptures, there are those who raise cavils against them. Unwilling, at any price, to admit the Sabbath is binding on us today, various subterfuges have been resorted to in an endeavour to set aside the obvious meaning of Genesis 2:2-3. Some have argued, “It only *seems* to import that the Sabbath was then instituted,” making out that this passage is to be understood only as giving “the reason of that particular day being chosen, not that it was then actually appointed and set apart.” To say that these verses contain merely an anticipation of the fourth commandment is handling the Word of God deceitfully. Those verses are the continuation of a plain historical narrative. Having finished the account of the creation of the world in the first chapter of Genesis, and given a recapitulation of it in Genesis 2:1, Moses declared what immediately followed thereon, namely, the rest of God on the seventh day, and His blessing and sanctifying of that day.

For the special benefit of those who have sadly misrepresented the teaching of Calvin on this subject, we give a brief quotation from the remarks of that renowned Reformer and expositor on this passage, “That blessing of the seventh day is nothing else than the solemn consecration of it, by virtue of which, God claims for Himself on that day the labours and occupations of men. It is, indeed, the proper study of their whole life to be exercised in considering the infinite goodness, justice, power, and wisdom of God, as displayed on the vast theater of heaven and earth, but lest men should apply less diligently to this than they ought, every seventh day was peculiarly set apart. God, therefore, first rested—then He blessed that rest, that it might be sacred among men through all coming ages. He consecrated each seventh day to rest, that His own example might furnish the perpetual rule. Not that God simply enjoined men to take their leisure every seventh day, as if He delighted in idleness, but that, being released from all business, they might with more freedom employ their minds on the Creator of the world—His own example stimulating them to the duty and engaging them to its performance.”

Others have sought to base an argument on the fact that the actual word “Sabbath” is not found in Genesis 2, 3, but how futile is such a cavil may at once be seen by a reference to Exodus

20. When it pleased the Lord God to assume the immediate government over the people of Israel at Sinai, He not only restored the Sabbath to its original place of honour, but did so by recognizing it as an existing ordinance, re-enforcing a creation-institution. In referring back to Genesis 2, JEHOVAH expressly termed that first seventh day the Sabbath, “For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the *seventh* day: wherefore the LORD blessed the *sabbath* day, and hallowed it” (Exo 20:11). We will not waste any further time and space by considering other objections which the perversity and unbelief of man have brought against this simple passage.

The second chapter of Genesis opens with the words, “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” And then the very next thing we read of is the institution of the Sabbath rest. Thus, to appoint and sanctify the Sabbath was God’s *first* act after the earth had been made fit for human habitation. Nothing could more emphatically press upon us the fundamental importance of this divine ordinance, and the priority of its claims upon us—claims to which every consideration of selfish interests must be strictly subordinated. “The weekly Sabbath, therefore, is the first institution of God, and bears on its very origin the stamp of a *universal* and *perpetual* appointment—good for man even when surrounded by the glories of paradise that is lost—and much more so now, when called to struggle and prepare for the higher glories of the paradise that is to be won” (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874).

Four things call for special consideration in the passage now before us. 1. The primal Sabbath *was a rest day*. Emphasis is laid upon this feature by the repetition in thought which is found in the two parts of Genesis 2:2. First, on the seventh day, “God *ended his work* which he had made.” Second, “and he *rested* on the seventh day from all his work he had made.” Therefore the prime element and basic truth connected with the Sabbath is *rest*. Before raising the question as to why God “rested,” let us offer a few remarks on the *nature* of His rest.

It has been said repeatedly by a certain class of expositors that this rest of God consisted of His *satisfaction* in the work of His hands, that it was God looking out in complacency over His fair creation. But we are told, that this “rest” of God did not last for long—it was rudely broken by the entrance of sin, and ever since man fell God has been “working”—John 5:17 being appealed to in proof. That such a definition of the “rest” of God in Genesis 2:2 should have been received by a large number of the Lord’s people, only goes to show how few of them ever do much thinking or studying for themselves. It also proves how the most puerile interpretations of Scripture are likely to be accepted, if they are made by reputable teachers, who on other matters are worthy of respect. Finally, it demonstrates what a real need there is for every one of us to humbly, prayerfully, and diligently bring everything we read and hear to a rigid examination in the light of Holy Scripture.

That God’s “rest” in Genesis 2:2 was *not* the complacency of the Creator prior to the entrance of sin, is unequivocally evidenced by the fact that Satan had fallen *before* the time contemplated in that verse. How could God look abroad upon creation with divine contentment when the highest creature of all had become the blackest and basest of sinners? How could God find satisfaction in all the works of His hands when the anointed cherub had apostatised, and in his rebellion had dragged down with him “the third part” of the angels (Rev 12:4)? No, this is manifestly untenable. Some other definition of God’s “rest” must therefore be sought.

Now we need to pay very close attention to the exact wording here, as everywhere. Genesis 2:2 does not say (nor does Exo 20:10) that God rested from *all* work, for that was not true. Genesis 2:2 is careful to say, “on the seventh day God ended his work which *he had made*,” and, “He rested on the seventh day from all his work which he *had* made.” And this brings out and

calls attention to the basic feature and primal element in the Sabbath—it is a resting from the activities commonly pursued during the six working days. But the Sabbath day is not appointed as a day for the cessation of *all* activities—to remain in bed and sleep through that day would not be spending the Sabbath as God requires it to be spent. What particular works are required and are permissible, we shall (D.V.) show later, but what we would now press upon the reader is the fact that, according to Genesis 2:2, the Sabbath rest consists of ceasing from the labours of the working week.

Genesis 2:2 does not state that on the seventh day God did no work, for, as we have seen, that would not have been true. God *did* work on the seventh day, though His activities on that day were of a *different nature* from the ones in which He had been engaged during the preceding days. And herein we see not only the marvellous accuracy of Scripture, but the perfect *example* God set before His people, for as we shall yet show, there *are* works suited to the Sabbath. For God to have ceased from all works on that first seventh day in human history, would have meant the total destruction of all creation. God's *providential* workings could not cease, or no provision would be made for the supply of His creatures' wants. "All things" needed to be "upheld" or they would have passed into non-entity.

Let us fix it firmly in our minds that rest is not inertia. The Lord Jesus has entered into "rest" (Heb 4:10), yet is He not inactive, for He ever lives to make intercession. And when the saints shall enter their eternal rest, they shall not be inactive, for it is written, "And his servants shall *serve* him" (Rev 22:3). So here with God. His rest on that first Sabbath day was not a rest of total inactivity. He rested from the work of creation and restoration, but He then began (and has never ceased) the work of providence—the providing of supplies for His myriad creatures.

But now the question arises, *why* did God rest on the seventh day? Why did He so order it that all the works recorded in Genesis 1 were completed in six days, and that then He rested? Certainly it was not because the Creator needed rest, for, "The Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary" (Isa 40:28). Why, then, did He "rest," and why is it so recorded on the top of the second page of Holy Writ? Surely there can be only one answer—as *an example* for man! Nor is this answer merely a logical or plausible inference of ours. It rests on divine authority. It is based directly upon the words of none other than the Son of God, for He expressly declared, "The sabbath was made *for man*" (Mar 2:27)—made not for God, but for man. Nothing could be plainer, nothing simpler, nothing more unequivocal.

2. The next thing that we would carefully note in this initial reference to the Sabbath is that Genesis 2:3 tells us this day was blessed by God, "And God *blessed* the seventh day." The reason why God blessed the seventh day was not because it was the seventh, but because, "that in it he had rested." Hence, when the Sabbath law was written upon the tables of stone, God did not say, "Remember the seventh to keep it holy," but "Remember the *sabbath* day to keep it holy." And again, He did not say, "He blessed the seventh day and hallowed it," but, "He blessed the *sabbath* day, and hallowed it."

But why should He do so? Why single out the seventh day thus? Young's Concordance defines the Hebrew word for "blessed" here as "to declare blessed." But why should God have "declared" the seventh day blessed? for there is no hint that He pronounced any of the other days blessed. Surely it was not for the mere day's sake. only one other alternative remains—God declared the seventh day blessed because it was the Sabbath day, and because He would have every reader of His Word know, right at the beginning, that special *divine blessing* marks its observance. This at once refutes a modern heresy and removes an aspersion which many cast upon God. The Sabbath was not appointed to bring man into bondage. It was not designed to be a

burden, but a blessing! And if history demonstrates anything, it demonstrates beyond all room for doubt that the family or nation which has kept the Sabbath day holy, has been markedly *blessed* of God, and contrariwise, that the family or nation which has desecrated the Sabbath, has been *cursed* of God. Explain it as we may, the fact remains.

3. Genesis 2:3 teaches us that the Sabbath was a day set apart *for sacred use*. This comes out plainly in the words, “And God blessed the seventh day and *sanctified* it,” or as the R.V. has it, “God blessed the seventh day, and *hallowed* it.” The prime meaning (according to its Scriptural usage) of the Hebrew word rendered “sanctified” or “hallowed” is to set apart for sacred use. This shows plainly that here in Genesis 2:3, we have something more than an historical reference to the rest of God on the seventh day and even something more than God setting an example before His creatures. The fact that we are told God “sanctified” it, proves conclusively that here we have the original *institution* of the Sabbath, the divine appointment of it for man’s use and observance. As exemplified by the Creator Himself, the Sabbath day is separated from the six preceding days of manual labour.

4. Let us call attention to a notable *omission* in Genesis 2:3. If the reader will turn to Genesis 1, he will find that at the close of each of the six working days, the Holy Spirit says, “And the evening and the morning were,” etc., see Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31. But here in Genesis 2:2-3, we do *not* read, “And the evening and the morning were the seventh day,” nor are we told what took place on the eighth day. In other words, the Holy Spirit has not mentioned the *ending* of the “seventh day.” Why is this? There is a reason for every omission in Scripture, a divine reason—and there is a reason why the Holy Spirit omitted the usual formula at the close of the seventh day. We suggest that this omission is a silent, but most significant intimation, that the observance of the Sabbath *never would end*—it was to be perpetuated as long as time should last!

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that Genesis 2 contains nothing whatever which enables us to determine *which day* of our week this primal “seventh day” was. We have absolutely no means of knowing whether that original seventh day fell on a Saturday, a Sunday, or any other day of the week—for the simple reason that we are quite unable to ascertain on which day that first week *began*. All we do know, and all which it is necessary for us to know is, that the seventh day was the day which followed six days of manual work. As to which day of the week is the Christian Sabbath, we shall (D.V.) consider later.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

14. Cyrus

A way of return providentially opened to the Jews on the overthrow of the Babylonian empire by Cyrus. “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem” (Ezr 1:1-3).

The Jews must return from Babylon at the end of seventy years. God has said it. Failure, delay, is impossible. But *how* shall they be delivered? If they could not defend themselves with all their resources in their own country, how shall they deliver themselves from captivity in the

midst of a mighty empire? God delivered them, it is true, from the bondage of Egypt, but it was by mighty signs and wonders. From Babylon He delivers them without a single miracle. His providence, by a long train of events, effected His purpose as fully as if all had been done by a display of power as manifest as that on Sinai.

What a wonderful train of preparation was put into operation to effect this purpose! The birth, genius, talents, education, and character of Cyrus, were all providentially adapted for the office that God designed him in this business. Follow him through his wars, and be astonished at his enterprise and success. Reflect on the office which the God of providence assigned him, and let your wonder terminate in more exalted views of the power and government of God. Empire was given to Cyrus because he was the anointed of the Lord to deliver His people out of Babylon.

But when Cyrus is in Babylon, what secures the deliverance of the Jews? Had not the conqueror the same interest with the king of Babylon in keeping them in bondage? Was Cyrus a worshipper of the true God? No, he was a heathen. What, then, inclines his heart to deliver the people of JEHOVAH? Was he now made a convert? No, he continues a worshipper of his own gods. He dies a heathen. Why, then, does Cyrus, rather than the king of Babylon, deliver the people of God? Cyrus was the man appointed by the Lord and the hour of fulfillment is now come. God has the hearts of all men in His hands and He turns them as rivers of water. He makes His enemies, as easily as He does His friends, the instruments of effecting what He decrees. God put it into the heart of Cyrus to set the Jews free from captivity. This is clear from the book of Ezra.

From the passage quoted above, we see that it was the Lord who stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to make that proclamation. The prophecy concerning himself, it is evident from this document, had been laid before him, and the providential effect was the proclamation of liberty. Had it been the will of God that Cyrus should be hardened, the prophecy would have been neglected or mocked. How did Pharaoh resist amidst all the mighty works of JEHOVAH! The effects, then, that the knowledge of the prophecy, concerning himself had on Cyrus, is said to be a stirring up of his spirit by the Lord. Success depended on this, and not merely on the natural effect of the document submitted to the conqueror. God here effects through His providence, by Cyrus, as mighty a deliverance to His people, as He had done by all the display of His power against Pharaoh in their deliverance from Egypt. God's people, then, have, in every age, a right to look to Him with confidence *for deliverance* from the greatest dangers, and the most inextricable difficulties.

Surely the life of no sovereign, in the midst of his most faithful and attached guards, is so safe as the man who has his trust in the God of Israel. From this fact we may see that God can easily effect all that remains in His predictions and promises with respect to His ancient people. Without the supposition of a single miracle, He can remove every obstacle in the way of His purpose and effect the greatest work of power. The prospect of the Jews ought to be determined by a fair exposition of the Word of God, by the laws of language, consistently with all that anywhere in Scripture bears on the subject. But no objection can be allowed from difficulty of accomplishment or opposition of the rulers of the world. God rules on earth as absolutely as He does in heaven. No being can resist His will. Everything must fulfil it. The stars do not know their course more certainly than every event that takes place on earth fulfils the designs of providence.

As God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to deliver His people, so He stirred up some of the people to return. At first view, we may be ready to think that all the Jews would have with avidity seized the opportunity to return to their native land, in which they had so high prospects. But it was not so. And as a matter of fact, all did not return. Very many, induced by connections which they had

formed in the land of their captivity, chose to remain. But God stirred up the spirit of a number to return on the proclamation of Cyrus. “Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all those whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered” (Ezr 1:5-6). Some were providentially excited to return, others to assist in persuading those who were inclined to remain.

15. Sennacherib

Sennacherib was sent by God against His people, yet was punished for going. “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. *I will send him* against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few” (Isa 10:5-7).

The wisdom of the world can never understand this part of the ways of the Most High. If the Assyrian was without any command from God or any constraint on his mind, how can he be said to be sent by God? If in any sense he was sent by God, how can he be guilty in going? How can he be justly punished for doing the very thing which God appointed him to do? Here is the very essence of the question that has forever agitated the wisdom of this world, the consistency of the decrees of God with the voluntary actions of men. Here the truth is practically exhibited. God appointed what His enemies act, yet the whole sin is theirs. How can this be? Foolish men, why ask the questions? Are you able to measure the conduct of the infinite and incomprehensible JEHOVAH? That the thing is true, every impartial mind must here see. How it is true is not revealed—therefore, can never be found out—should never be inquired after. What God reveals, let us know: what He conceals, let us *not* attempt to discover.

One thing we may here see plainly. Though Sennacherib was sent by God to punish His people for their sins, yet the instrument of wrath did not know that he was God’s messenger, and did not act from obedience to God. He acted from selfish and wicked motives, and therefore was guilty in doing the very thing which God had appointed to be done by him. In a sovereign way utterly inscrutable to human wisdom, God sends the Assyrian to do His work, while he did his own work, and satisfied his own pride and passions. Instead of intending to execute the purposes of the Lord, the conqueror boasted of doing all by his own power and turns all to his glory. The Lord, therefore, denounces, “Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will *punish* the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks” (Isa 10:12).

“Here we have an infallible commentary on the providence of God with respect to the desolates of the earth in every age. God sends them as His scourge, yet they go to gratify themselves, and are, therefore, justly guilty of all the evils which they cause to mankind. Whether they are ultimately successful or unsuccessful, God will call them to account for all the blood which they have shed and all the miseries which they have brought upon the earth. Cyrus and Alexander, Julius Caesar and Napoleon, all executed the purposes appointed by the Lord for them to perform—yet they are all guilty of every aggression on the happiness of mankind. They served God, but did not intend to serve Him. And what are all the wars that still spread desolation and misery among the nations? Their authors are commissioned by the Ruler of the world to the work of violence, but for every drop of the oceans of blood that have been shed since the murder of

Abel men must give account. Princes and statesmen may think that the interests or aggrandizement of their nations is a just apology for their wars. But justice is the same thing among nations as among individuals. If the pirate is to be blamed by Alexander for disturbing the seas, Alexander is equally to be blamed by the pirate for disturbing the world.”—Alexander Carson (1776-1844).

N.B. We have purposely placed in juxtaposition these two different pieces from Carson’s work—separated by some pages in his book. We wished to present to the reader, as vividly as possible, both sides of this composite picture—so many today dwell only on the first, and thus obtain but a one-sided view of the subject. A greater contrast could scarcely be imagined. In the former, we see God stirring up a powerful king in order to the emancipation of the Jews. In the latter, we behold Him commissioning a military tyrant to desolate the Jews. “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God” (Rom 11:22)!

Now it is one thing to read, approve of, and enjoy the above, but it is quite another to make practical use of the same. It is one thing to believe abstractly that the Most High is Ruler of this world and Governor of the nations, but it is quite another thing for the mind to be regulated and the heart stabilized by this grand truth in times of turmoil and upheaval. It is one thing to recognize that a Sennacherib or a Caesar was but an instrument in the hands of the Lord of Hosts to execute His eternal decrees, but it is quite a different thing to realize that a present-day despot or dictator is equally accomplishing, by His providential guidance, the design of the Almighty. Alas, what a skeptical age we are living in. The vast majority of even professing Christians look no higher than *secondary causes*, and are occupied on the one hand, with the unscrupulous avarice and oppression of a human instrument, and on the other hand, with the dogged perseverance and diplomatic skill of another—and the one who controls both alike is lost to view. This ought not to be—nor is it where *faith* is in exercise, for faith ever fixes the eye upon the Lord Himself. Let the reader get a firm grasp of what has just been pointed out—faith not only rests upon the veracity of the Scriptures, but it also looks unto their living Author. Real faith sees the hand of God in nature, in history, in our circumstances and daily lot, as truly as it views Christ on the cross suffering in our stead. Real faith beholds God regulating the weather as truly as He orders the effects of Gospel preaching. It is unbelief which shuts God out from the affairs of this world, which excludes Him from the realm of providence, and which imagines His activities are confined to heaven. It is *unbelief* which is so entirely absorbed with secondary causes and human instruments, that the one who employs them is completely lost to view. If we test ourselves at this point, probably some will discover they have more faith than they supposed, while others may rightly fear they have none at all.

Let us not overlook another important practical lesson inculcated in the foregoing pieces by Carson. Though Sennacherib was a bloodthirsty, unscrupulous, and covetous man, who wrought fearful havoc upon those who wished to be at peace, yet he was a scourge in the hand of the Lord, used by Him to chasten His people for their sins. It has been thus all through history, and holds good today as much as in the times of Isaiah. The terrible sufferings to which Jews are still subjected, is God’s present-day reminder that He has not forgotten their murder of His Son. But let us come nearer home, Great Britain and the U.S.A. desire to live at peace with the rest of the world, but if they continue to mock God, trample upon His laws, and reject His Gospel, then they can assuredly expect some modern Sennacherib to be sent by heaven against them. God is granting us further space for repentance, but if we repent not of our national wickedness, then we shall be made to suffer the due reward of our iniquities. God has already loudly warned us, and if we heed not, His judgments will descend upon us.



March

SPIRITUAL FLUCTUATIONS

“Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God” (Psa 55:19). As there are some people who uniformly enjoy good health, so there is a class of religious professors who appear to maintain one steady level of experience. There is no rise and fall of their emotional thermometer, no ebbs and flows in the tide of their energy, no ups and downs in their history. Their faith (such as it is) does not flag, their “assurance” is never eclipsed by the dark clouds of unbelief, their zeal continues lively to the end. Are such people to be envied or pitied? Perhaps such a question seems senseless. Does not the timid and trembling believer, whose case varies as often and as radically as the weather, frequently wish that his experience approximated far more closely to that which we have just described?

Surely such a uniform level of experience is greatly to be coveted. What more desirable than unruffled peace, unbroken confidence, uninterrupted joy. Ah, but all is not gold that glitters and much that passes in the churches for the coin of Canaan lacks a genuine ring to it. We must needs inquire, Is such a peace that of the graveyard or the peace of heaven? Is such confidence a carnal one or the fruit of the Spirit? Is it a delusive or a substantial joy? In order to ascertain this, the question has to be raised, Is the fear of God upon such characters? Do they furnish any clear evidence that it is so? The solemn declaration of our text demands an impartial answer to these queries.

What “changes” the real Christian experiences in *his conflicts with sin*! At conversion it often seems as though the believer is completely delivered from all his spiritual enemies. His heart has been so melted and drawn out Godwards, his sense of Christ dying on the cross in his room and stead has imparted such a hatred and horror of evil, that he is filled with a desire and determination to live henceforth unto the pleasing of his Lord. He feels that the Song of Israel on the farther shores of the Red Sea (Exo 15) is exactly suited to express his case. But how soon he discovers that the Wilderness of Sin lies between him and the Promised Land, and that though the Egyptians be dead there are Amalekites to assail him (Exo 17:8). True, God grants him many a token of His favour along the way, and at each gracious reviving indwelling sin appears to slumber, but soon after it awakens and rages worse than ever, and “I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom 7:14) becomes his cry.

What “changes” the real Christian experiences in *his enjoyment of the Scriptures*! often he is able to feelingly exclaim, “More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (Psa 19:10). But alas, it is by no means always so. When fellowship with God is broken our relish is lost for His Word, and it becomes more or less neglected. Sad to relate, it was thus with Israel of old, “But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes” (Num 11:6). And when the Lord chastens His

child because of his waywardness, so far from His Word affording comfort, it pricks, condemns, and terrifies. How many a backslider has turned to the Word only to feel that the solemn curses pronounced upon the hypocrite and the apostate apply to his case.

What “changes” the real Christian experiences *in his faith*! on some occasions his heart goes out instinctively to God so that he can exclaim, “I will trust, and not be afraid” (Isa 12:2), but at other times he is filled with doubts and fears, and is quite unable to lay hold of the divine promises. Nor is this always explainable from the human side—when a Christian is walking closely with God and is conscious of no transgression, yet he is not lord of his faith and is painfully reminded of the fact. What “changes” the faith of Abraham experienced—not fearing to leave Chaldea at the call of JEHOVAH, yet in the time of famine going down to Egypt—daring to arm his servants and rescue Lot from Chedorlaomer—yet on two occasions afraid to own Sarah as his wife; believing God that he should have a numerous seed, and then resorting to the unbelieving device of cohabiting with Hagar.

What “changes” the real Christian experiences in *his prayer life*! one day he is favoured with real freedom and his devotions are delightful, but another day he is bound in the spirit and his attempts at supplication are wearisome. O how different it is when the believer is favoured with conscious access to God and an answer of peace is granted him, from feeling that the Lord is far off and the heavens above are as brass. How different it is from having liberty in pleading the promises than deeming ourselves to have no right to appropriate them—from having importunity to plead our suit than a sense that it is useless to continue asking. And what a sore trial it is for the Christian when such an experience is protracted—then it is that he cries, “Oh that I were as in months past” (Job 29:2).

What “changes” the true Christian often experiences in *his outward lot*! For a time—perhaps for years—the smile of providence is upon him, and then all is drastically altered. one trouble follows swiftly upon the heels of another, until the sorely tried soul is ready to say with Jacob, “All these things are against me” (Gen 42:36). The strain of financial reverses and family bereavements undermines his health, and Satan takes full advantage of his low spirits and shattered nerves. Thoroughly dejected, he asks, “Where are thy former lovingkindnesses?” (Psa 89:49).

But such “changes” or afflictions are helpful, for they deeply exercise an honest heart, humble him before the Lord, cause him to tread more softly, and deepen his fear of God. Long-continued ease and comfort produce the worst effects upon the godless, but the spiritual fluctuations to which we have alluded are a part of God’s discipline for the believer’s growth in piety.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

8. *Christ and the Law—Matthew 5:17-20*

We are not unmindful of the fact that the passage now before us is one which will possess little attraction for the great majority of professing Christians in our degenerate age, and possibly some of our own readers would be better pleased if we superficially summarized its teaching rather than endeavour to give a detailed exposition of its weighty contents. Those verses which contain God’s *promises* are far more acceptable in this day of self-pleasing and self-gratification, than those which insist upon our obedience to the divine *precepts*. But this ought not to be, for the

one is as truly a part of God's Word as the other and just as much needed by us. If any vindication for our present procedure be required, it is sufficient to point out that the words we are to examine are those of Christ Himself, and He ever sought the glory of God and the good of souls, caring not for either the praise or the criticism of His hearers.

Healthy Christianity can only be maintained where the balance is properly preserved between a faithful exposition of the holy law of God and a pressing of its claims upon the conscience, and by tenderly preaching the Gospel and applying its balm to stricken hearts. Where the former predominates to the virtual exclusion of the latter, self-righteous Pharisaism is fostered, and where the proclamation of the Gospel ousts the requirements of the law, Antinomian licentiousness is engendered. During the past hundred years, Christendom has probably heard fifty Gospel sermons or addresses to one on the law, and the consequence has indeed been disastrous and deplorable—a light religion with no backbone and with loose and careless walking. Therefore when a servant of God is expounding, consecutively, any portion of the Scriptures, and in the course thereof arrives at a passage upon the law, it is now (more than ever before) his bounden duty to tarry there and press its claims upon his hearers or readers.

Such a verse as the one which is to be particularly before us ought indeed to search all our hearts, especially those of us who have been called by the Lord to His service. Taken at its surface meaning, Matthew 5:19 emphasizes the deep importance of obedience to the divine commandments, and most solemnly warns against disobedience. Yet it is at this very point that modern Christendom errs most grievously, and the pulpit is chiefly to be blamed for this sad state of affairs. Not only do many who pose as ministers of Christ themselves break the commandments, but they publicly teach their hearers to do the same, and this not with regard to the "least" of the divine precepts, but in connection with the most fundamental of God's laws. Should these lines catch the eyes of any such men, we trust that it may please the Lord to use the same in convicting them of the enormity of their sin.

Our Lord was on the point of correcting various corruptions of the law which obtained among the Jews of His day, and He prefaced what He had to say by cautioning them not to misconstrue His design, as though He were opposing either Moses or the prophets, neither of whose writings were at any variance with the kingdom He had come to establish. So far from setting Himself against Moses, He, with the most solemn assertion, declared the law to be of perpetual obligation (Mat 5:18), and such was His regard for it that if anyone posing as a minister in His kingdom should break the least of the law's precepts and taught others to make light of it, he should be as little in the eyes of the Lord as the precept was in his eyes (Mat 5:19), while those practicing and inculcating the law should have His highest approval.

Our passage begins at Matthew 5:17, in which our Lord made known in no uncertain terms *His* attitude toward the divine law. False conceptions had been formed as to the real design of His mission, and those who were unfriendly toward Him sought to make the people believe that the Lord Jesus was a revolutionary, whose object was to overthrow the very foundations of Judaism. Therefore in His first formal public address Christ promptly gave the lie to these wicked aspersions and declared His complete accord with the divine revelation given at Sinai. Not only was there no antagonism between Himself and Moses, but He had come down to earth with the express purpose of accomplishing all that had been demanded in the name of God. So far was it from being His design to repudiate the holy law, He had become incarnate in order to work out that very righteousness it required, to make good what the Levitical institutions had foreshadowed, and to bring to pass the Messianic predictions of Israel's seers.

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Mat 5:17). Well did Beza (Theodore, 1519-1605) say upon this verse, “Christ came not to bring any new way of righteousness and salvation into the world, but to fulfil that in deed which was shadowed by the figures of the law: by delivering men through grace from the curse of the law; and moreover to teach the true use of obedience which the law appointed, and to engrave in our hearts the force of obedience.” on the dominant word “fulfil,” Matthew Henry (1662-1714) pertinently pointed out, “The Gospel is ‘The time of reformation’ (Heb 9:10)—not the repeal of the law, but the amendment of it [i.e., from its Pharisaical corruptions—A.W.P.] and consequently, *its re-establishment*.”

“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). In these words our Lord affirmed the perpetuity of the law, insisting that it should never be abrogated. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of our God endures forever—the Old Testament as much as the New, the law as truly as the Gospel. The “verily I say unto you,” was the solemn assertion of the Amen, the faithful and true Witness. Everything in the law must be fulfilled—not only its prefigurations and prophecies, but its precepts and penalty—fulfilled first, personally and vicariously, by and upon the Surety. Fulfilled second and evangelically, in and by His people, and fulfilled third, in the doom of the wicked, who shall experience its awful curse forever and ever. Instead of Christ’s being opposed to the law of God, He came here to magnify it and render it honourable (Isa 42:21), and rather than His teachings being subversive thereof, they confirmed and enforced it.

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:19). This afforded proof of what Christ had declared in verses 17 and 18, for the language He here employed manifestly implies the perpetual and inflexible obligation of the law throughout the entire course of the kingdom of heaven—this Christian era. Not only so, but the words of Christ in this verse make unmistakably clear the inestimable value which He placed upon the divine commandments, and which esteem He would strictly require and exact from all who taught in His name—His disapproval falling on the one who slighted the least of the law’s requirements, and His approval resting on each who by his example and teaching honoured the same.

“Whosoever *therefore* shall break one of these least commandments” (Mat 5:19), namely, the “jot and tittle” of the previous verse—the smallest part of the law. Weigh carefully the word we have placed in italics—it denotes two things. First, Christ is here illustrating or exemplifying what He had so expressly affirmed in the previous verses and insists that instead of encouraging His followers to disregard the divine law, He upheld its claims in the most certain manner, for the King Himself would frown upon any of His officers who dared to disesteem its smallest requirements. Second, Christ drew an obvious conclusion from what He had laid down in the foregoing. If the Master Himself came not to destroy the law but rather to fulfil it, then it manifestly followed that His servants, too, must keep the commandments and teach others to do the same. It is in this way the ministers of Christ are to be identified—by their following the example which He has left them.

Let us next take notice of how what immediately follows the “therefore” clinches the interpretation we gave of the “destroy” and the disputed but simple “fulfil” of verse 17. To “destroy” the prophets would be to deny their validity, to repudiate their inspiration, to annul their authority, so that they would then possess no binding power on the people of God. In like manner, to “destroy” the law is not simply to break it by transgression, but also to abolish it. It is such a

destruction as would rob it of all virtue and power so that it would be no law at all. This is why the Lord added, “Break one of these least commandments and *teach* men so.” The order is significantly the same in both verses—“destroy...fulfil” (Mat 5:17), “break...do and teach them” (Mat 5:19).

Let us further observe how the contents of this verse establish the definition we gave of “the law” in the preceding verses—a matter on which there has been some difference of opinion among the commentators. We pointed out that, while it is clear from the later parts of the sermon, Christ alluded principally to the moral law, yet in view of the circumstances under which this discourse was delivered, and in view of Christ’s allusion to the “jot and tittle” of the law, the ceremonial and judicial aspects of it must not be excluded. Throughout this passage, “the law” is to be understood in its widest latitude, as embracing the entire Mosaic law. This is clear from our Lord’s reference to “one of these *least* commandments,” for surely we cannot think of the Ten Commandments in such a connection—for they one and all belong to the fundamental statutes of the kingdom.

Should anyone demur at what has just been said and insist that “the law” is to be understood as here referring to the Ten Commandments only, we shall not quarrel with him. It may indeed be pointed out inasmuch as the divine Decalogue is a unit, and therefore each of its commands possess equal authority, that no part of it can be of slight obligation. Yet some parts of it respect matters of, relatively, more importance than do others. Transgressions of the first table are far more heinous than those against the second—to take the Lord’s name in vain is much more sinful than stealing from a fellow creature. So, too, there are degrees of criminality in offenses against the precepts of the second table—to murder is a graver crime than to bear false witness against my neighbour. Thus, while none of the Ten Words are trivial, some respect more momentous objects than the others. Nevertheless, let not the solemn fact be forgotten that “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in *one* point, he is guilty of all.” (Jam 2:10).

Ere passing on it should be pointed out that the verse now before us also definitely confirms our explanation of the “ye” in verses 13-16—a point which is disputed by many of our moderns. When treating of that passage, we called attention to our Lord’s change of the pronoun in His second division of the sermon. In verses 3 to 10, the Saviour throughout used “theirs” and “they,” but in verses 11 to 16, He employed “ye” and “you.” We insisted that this second section has exclusive reference to Christ’s official servants—the New Testament successors of the “prophets” (Mat 5:12), for they are, ministerially, the salt of the earth and the light of the world. That Christ continued to have in mind the same class, and was addressing Himself not to the rank and file of His people, but to His official servants, is clear from His, “Whosoever shall do and *teach* them.”

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.” The “kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:19) here, as in the great majority of places, has reference to the sphere of profession. It is wider than the church which is Christ’s body, for none but the elect of God are members of *that*. The “kingdom of heaven” takes in all who claim to own the sceptre of Christ, and therefore it includes the false as well as the real, as is clear from our Lord’s parables—the tares growing in the same field as the wheat, the bad fish being enclosed in the net with the good—though at the end there shall be a severance of one from the other. This at once removes any difficulty which may be felt over a minister who teaches others to break God’s commands having any place at all therein. This kingdom was announced by Christ’s forerunner (Mat 3:2) and since that time has been preached (Mat 11:12).

Two different explanations have been given by the commentators as to the meaning of “The same shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:19). First, that one is called the least because he is not deemed worthy to have any part at all or any real inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God—this is negated by the Lord’s own words. Second, and strange to say, the one adopted by the best writers—this person shall be held in such low esteem by his fellow-citizens as to be called by *them* the least in the kingdom. But we see nothing in our verse which indicates that the reference is to the judgment of men. Personally, we believe something far more solemn than *that* is in view. The evil minister shall be judged the least by the King Himself. Does not our verse look back to, “The ancient and the honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is *the tail*” (Isa 9:15). It was Christ’s condemnation of the unfaithful servant.

Not only does our present verse solemnly condemn Dispensationalists (who repudiate one of the greatest of all God’s commands—the Sabbath statute), but it announces the disapproval of Christ upon another class of errorists. Not a few Calvinists have pitted the Gospel against the law, and instead of showing the one is the handmaid of the other, have represented them as being irreconcilable enemies. These men have disgraced divine grace, for they fail to show that grace works through righteousness, and have taken from the Christian his rule of life. Their conception of what Christian liberty consists of is altogether wrong, denying that the believer is under divine bonds to walk in obedience to the Decalogue. Failing to see that Romans 6:14 has reference to our justification and not our sanctification, they repudiate the moral law, teaching that in no sense are we under its authority. But though such men be held in high esteem by many of the churches, they are the very “least” in the sight of Christ, and must yet answer to Him for engaging in the very practice which He here denounces.

Antinomianism (the repudiation of the moral law as the Christian’s rule of life) is as reprehensible and dangerous as Papal indulgences. If on the one hand, we need to guard against legality (seeking to keep the law in order to merit something good at the hands of God), on the other hand, there is just as real a danger of dwelling so exclusively on the grace of the Gospel that we lose sight of the holy living required. “Let us then beware equally of Antinomian licentiousness and of Pharisaical self-righteousness—these are Scylla and Charybdis, the fatal rock and whirlpool. Most men in shunning the one fall into the other and we need the Holy Spirit to pilot us between them. But the clear and full exposition of the holy law of God and the Scriptural application of it to the heart and conscience, forms one most important preservative from these fatal extremes” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

“But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:19). Note well the order here—“do and teach.” As Paul exhorted his son in the faith, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine” (1Ti 4:16)—Christ requires integrity of life and soundness of doctrine from His servants. The Lord is both mocked and grievously insulted by ministers who practice one thing and preach another. Far better to quit preaching entirely if our lives be opposed to our sermons. Furthermore, there will be no power in the preaching of the man whose own walk clashes with his talk. His words will carry no conviction to the hearts of his hearers—as one quaintly but solemnly said to his minister, “I cannot hear what you say, from seeing what you do.” Finally, a minister cannot with any clearness of conscience and joy of heart teach others their duty, unless he practices what he preaches.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

87. His Mighty Men

2 Samuel 23 supplies a vivid illustration of the great variety of spiritual gifts and graces which God bestows upon His people in general and on His ministers in particular. All are not called to engage in the same specific form of service, and therefore all are not alike qualified. We see this principle exemplified in the natural sphere. Some have a special aptitude for certain avocations, while others are fitted for entirely different ones. Those who find it easy to work a typewriter or keep books, would be quite out of their element if they attempted to do the work of a farmer or carpenter. So it is in the spiritual realm—one is called to some particular sphere and is endowed accordingly, while another is appointed to a different function and is suitably equipped for it, and naught but confusion would follow if the latter attempted to discharge the duties of the former.

“Every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that” (1Co 7:7), but whether our talents be more or fewer, it is our duty to use and improve the same for the good of our generation. “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will” (1Co 12:11), and therefore we must be content with the gifts and position which God has allotted us, neither despising those below nor envying those above us. There are various degrees of usefulness and eminence among Christians, just as there were different grades of honour among those worthies of David. Of one of them we read, “Therefore he was their captain: howbeit he attained not unto the first three” (2Sa 23:19), and later in the chapter we are given a list of another thirty who occupied a yet lower rank. First in eminence were the apostle,; next to them were the Reformers, and below them are those who have followed during the last four centuries.

Throughout the long and checkered career of David, there were two things to cheer and comfort him—the unchanging faithfulness of God and the loving devotedness of his servants. Another has pointed out that at the close of Paul’s career he had the same spring of solace to draw from. “In his second epistle to Timothy, he glances at the condition of things around him. He sees the ‘great house’ (2Ti 2:20), which assuredly was not so with God as He required it. He sees all that were in Asia turned away from him. He sees Hymeneus and Philetus teaching false doctrine and overthrowing the faith of some. He sees Alexander the coppersmith doing much mischief. He sees many with itching ears, heaping to themselves teachers, and turning away from the truth to fables. He sees the perilous times setting in with fearful rapidity. In a word, he sees the whole fabric, humanly speaking, going to pieces, but he, like David, resting in the assurance that ‘the foundation of God standeth sure.’ And he was also cheered by the individual devotedness of some mighty man or other, who, by the grace of God, was standing faithful amid the wreck. He remembered the faith of a Timothy, the love of an Onesiphorus, and moreover, he was cheered by the fact there would be a company of faithful men in the darkest times who would call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

In last month’s article, we called attention to the logical connection of 2 Samuel 23 with the previous chapter, where “the last words of David” (his final inspired and official message) (2Sa 23:1) are recorded. We may also notice that our present passage comes immediately after David’s reference to the “everlasting covenant” which JEHOVAH had made with him (v. 5). How significant is this, and what blessed instruction it conveys to us. The two things are intimately, yea, inseparably connected—the eternal counsels of God’s grace and His providing us with all needed assistance while we are in a time state. In other words, that “everlasting covenant” which God made with His elect in the person of their Head guarantees the supply of their every need in

this world, the interposition of the Lord on their behalf wherever required, and the raising up of faithful friends to help in each hour of emergency. Thus David found it, as the verses before us amply demonstrate.

If the Spirit of God has been pleased to chronicle some of the bravest exploits of David himself, He has not been altogether silent upon the heroic achievements of those who stood loyally by him when he was menaced by his numerous foes. This too adumbrated something yet more blessed in connection with the antitypical David and his officers. Some of their deeds of devotion may not be known among men, or at most little valued by them, but they are recognized and recorded by God, and will yet be publicly proclaimed from His throne. We should have known nothing of these deeds of David's worthies had not the Spirit here described them. So, many a heart which now throbs with affection for Christ of which the world is not cognizant, and many a hand which is stretched forth in service to Him which is unnoticed by the churches, will not pass unheeded in the day to come.

Also in last month's article, we dwelt upon the exploits of the first triumvirate of David's mighty men—Adino, Eleazer, and Shammah (2Sa 23:8-12)—our present passage opens with a most touching incident with records (we believe) another heroic enterprise in which the same three men acted together. We are told, "And three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest time into the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim" (2Sa 23:13). This most probably takes us back to what is narrated in 1 Samuel 22, when the uncrowned son of Jesse was a fugitive from the murderous designs of King Saul. It was not, then, in the hour of his popularity and power that these three officers betook themselves unto David, but in the time of his humiliation and weakness, while taking refuge in a cave, that they espoused his cause. No fair-weather friends were these, but disinterested and unselfish supporters.

"And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem" (2Sa 23:14). How strangely varied is the lot of those who are beloved of God! what ups and downs in their experience and circumstances! Bethlehem was the place where David was born—presaging the incarnation of his Son and Lord—but now it was occupied by the enemies of God and His people! How many a dwelling-place which once gave shelter to an eminent servant of God is now the abode of worldlings. From the fertility and peacefulness of Bethlehem, David was forced to flee and seek refuge in a cave. Then let us not be cast down if a lowly and uncongenial habitation be our portion. But David was not forgotten by the Lord, and He graciously moved the hearts of others to seek him out and proffer their loving service. Take heart, then, lonesome believer—if God does not raise up earthly friends for you, He will doubly endear Himself to your heart.

"And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" (2Sa 23:15). Some of the Puritans believed that David was not here expressing his desire for literal water, but rather for the Messiah Himself, who was to be born at Bethlehem. Though this does not appear to be borne out by what follows, yet it is surely significant that such excellent and desirable water was to be found there. Bethlehem means "the house of bread," and as the Lord Jesus declared, He is in His own blessed Person both the Bread of Life and the Water of Life—the Sustainer and Refresher of the new man. Personally, we agree with Matthew Henry that what is recorded in this verse "seems to have been an instance of his weakness," when he was dissatisfied with what divine providence had supplied, giving way to inordinate affection and yielding to the desires of mere nature.

It was summer time, when the weather was hot and trying, and David was thirsty. Perhaps good water was scarce at Adullam, and therefore David earnestly cried, “Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem” (2Sa 23:15). True, it is natural to hanker after those things which providence withholds, and such hankering is often yielded to even by godly men in an unguarded hour, which leads to various snares and evils. “David strangely indulged a humour which he could give no reason for. It is folly to entertain such fancies, and greater folly to insist upon the gratification of them. We ought to check our affections when they go out inordinately toward those things which are more pleasant and grateful than others” (Matthew Henry). The best way, and perhaps the only one, of doing this is by heeding that injunction—“Giving thanks always for all things unto God” (Eph 5:20), thereby evidencing we are content with such things as we have—instead of lusting after those we have not.

“And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David” (2Sa 23:16). What proof this gave of how highly these brave men valued their leader, and how ready they were to face the greatest of dangers in his service. It must be remembered that at this time David was uncrowned, a fugitive from Saul, and in no position to reward their valiant efforts on his behalf. Moreover, no command had been issued, no one in particular was commissioned to obtain the water from Bethlehem. It was enough for them that their beloved master desired it. How little they feared the Philistines, so absorbed were they in seeking to please David, that terror of the enemy had no place in their hearts! Do they not put all of us to shame? How feeble in comparison is our devotedness to the antitypical David! How trifling the obstacles which confront us from the peril which menaced them.

“Nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD” (2Sa 23:16). Very blessed is this, and a lovely sequel to what has just been before us. Those three men had spontaneously responded to the known wish of their leader, and not counting their lives dear unto themselves, they had—whether by use of the sword or by strategy we are not told, but most likely the former—obtained and brought back to David the longed-for refreshment. Such devotion to his person and such daring on their part was not lost upon David, and being recovered from his carnal lapse and seeing things now with spiritual discernment, he deemed that water a sacrifice too costly for any but JEHOVAH Himself, and hence he would not suffer the sweet odour of it to be intercepted in its ascent to the throne of God.

“And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men” (2Sa 23:17). This is ever one of the marks of a gracious man. When he is conscious of making a mistake or of committing folly, he does not feign ignorance or innocence, but acknowledges and seeks to correct the same. The outstanding characteristic of regeneration is that where this miracle of grace is wrought, an *honest heart* is ever the evidence of the same. It is those who are under the full sway of Satan who are crafty, deceitful, and serpentine in their ways. Those whom Christ saves, He conforms unto His image, and *He* was without guile. David was now ashamed of his inordinate desire and rash wish, and regretted exposing his brave officers to such peril on his behalf. This is another mark of the genuine child of God—he is not wholly wrapped up in himself.

Sin and self are synonymous terms, for as someone has quaintly pointed out the center of SIN is “I,” that is why when the church confesses, “All we like sheep have gone astray,” she defines it by saying, “we have turned everyone to *his own way*” (Isa 53:6). If sin and selfishness are synonymous, grace and unselfishness are inseparable, for when the love of God is shed abroad in

the heart there is awakened a genuine concern for the good of our fellows, and therefore will the Christian seek to refrain from what would injure them. “Upon reflection and experience, a wise man will be ashamed of his folly, and will abstain not only from unlawful indulgences, but from those also which are inexpedient and might expose his brethren to temptation and danger” (Thomas Scott).

“And Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief among three. And he lifted up his spear against three hundred, and slew them, and had the name among three” (2Sa 23:18). We are not here informed when or where this extraordinary feat was accomplished, but from the analogy supplied by the other examples in this chapter, we know it was performed by divine enablement, for the public good, and in the service of David. It is solemn to note that Abishai’s more famous, and yet infamous brother, has no place in this role of honour, illustrating the solemn truth that “The memory of the just is blessed,” yet “the name of the wicked shall rot” (Pro 10:7). “Was he not most honourable of three? therefore he was their captain: howbeit he attained not unto the first three” (2Sa 23:19). These degrees of eminence and esteem exemplify the fact that men are not designed to all occupy a common level—the theory of “socialism” receives no countenance from Scripture.

“And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lionlike men of Moab” (2Sa 23:20). It is good to see the sons walking in the steps of their sires when a noble example has been set before them. God takes notice of the one as much as the other. Those men of Moab might be fierce and powerful, but nothing daunted Benaiah, who went forth and slew them. This, too, is recorded for our encouragement. No matter how strong and furious be our lusts, in the strength of the Lord we must attack and mortify them. “He went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow” (2Sa 23:20). Amid the frosts of winter our zeal is not to be relaxed. Nor must the soldiers of Christ expect to always have plain sailing—even when engaged in the best cause of all, formidable obstacles will be encountered, and the soldiers of Christ must learn to endure hardness and conduct themselves like men.

“And he slew an Egyptian, a goodly man: and the Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian’s hand, and slew him with his own spear” (2Sa 23:21). If his slaying of the lion is a figure of the servant of Christ successfully resisting the devil (1Pe 5:8), his vanquishing of this Egyptian (spoken of in 1Ch 11:23 as a “man of great stature”) may well be regarded as a type of the minister of God overcoming the world, for in Scripture “Egypt” is ever a symbol of that system which is hostile to God and His people. And how is victory over the world obtained? We need go no farther than this verse to learn the secret—by maintaining *our pilgrim character*, for the “staff” is the emblem of the pilgrim. If the heart be fixed upon that fair land to which we are journeying, then the shows of this “vanity fair” will possess no attraction for it. The world is overcome by “faith” (1Jo 5:4)—a faith which grasps the good of God’s promises enables us to reject the evils of this world.

“These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among three mighty men. He was more honourable than the thirty, but he attained not to the first three. And David set him over his guard” (2Sa 23:22-23). once again we are reminded that there is a gradation among the creatures and servants of God. There is no such thing as equality even among the angels. How wrong it is, then, for any of us to be dissatisfied with the status and position which the sovereign will of God has assigned to us. Let us rather seek grace from Him to faithfully discharge our duties, however exalted or lowly be our station in life. Our chapter ends with a list of thirty men who were in the third grade—the first being Asahel (2Sa 23:24) and the last Uriah (2Sa 23:39),

the former being murdered by Joab and the latter being sent to his death by David—deliverance from one danger is no guarantee that we shall escape from another.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

8. *Its Manifestation*

Next month (D.V.), we shall bring to a close our remarks upon this important and blessed aspect of our subject. What we are here treating of is God's making known in time that purpose of grace which He formed concerning the church in eternity past. The everlasting love of God unto His chosen people is discovered in a variety of ways and means, chief among them being the inestimable gifts of His Son for them and of His Spirit to them. Thus, we have so far dwelt upon, first, the incarnation and mission of Christ as the principal opening of the Father's heart unto His own, for while the glorification of the Godhead was His chief design therein, yet inseparably connected therewith was the blessing of His saints. Second, God's gracious design is manifested by the communication of the Spirit unto the elect, whereby they are made the subjects of a supernatural call. Third, this is made still further evident by the supernatural change wrought in them by the Spirit's regeneration and sanctification.

Fourth, by *divine preservation*. "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1Pe 5:10). This verse sets forth the wondrous and mighty grace of God dispensed to His elect in effectually calling them, in preserving them from temptation and sin, in strengthening and enabling them to persevere unto the end, and—notwithstanding all the opposition of the flesh, the world, and the devil—bring them at last securely unto eternal glory. For as Romans 8:30 declares, "Whom he called them he...also glorified." once again we shall draw freely from the most excellent writings of the Puritan, Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680), first, because his works are now out of print and unknown to our generation, and second, because having personally received so much help therefrom, we wish to share the same with our readers.

It is to be duly noted that in the immediate context (1Pe 5:8), the devil is set forth in all his terribleness as our "adversary" for malice, likened unto "a lion" for strength, unto a "roaring lion" for dread, "walketh about, seeking" such is his unwearied diligence, "whom he may devour," if God prevent not. Now observe the blessed and consolatory contrast, "But God," the Almighty, the self-sufficient and all-sufficient one, "the God of all grace" (1Pe 5:10). How comforting is the singling out of *this* attribute when we have to do with Satan at the point of temptation. If the God of grace be for us, who can be against us? When Paul was under temptation, a messenger (or angel), from Satan being sent to buffet him, what was it that God immediately set before him for relief? This—"My *grace* is sufficient for thee" (2Co 12:9)—the grace in God's heart toward him and the grace working in his own heart, both to assist him effectually.

But there is something yet more precious here in 1 Peter 5:10, "the God of *all* grace," which has reference first to the exceeding riches of grace that are in His nature, then to the benevolent designs which He has toward His own, and then to His gracious dealings with them. The grace in His nature is the fountain, the grace of His purpose or counsels is the wellhead, and the grace in His dispensations or dealings with us are the streams. God is an all-gracious God in Himself, even as He is the Almighty, which is an essential attribute. There is a limitless ocean of grace in Himself to feed all streams in which His purposes and designs of grace are to issue forth. Our

consolation from hence is that all the grace which is in the nature of God is in the promise of His being “the God of all grace” to His church, declared to be so engaged as to afford supplies unto them, yea, to the utmost expenditure of these riches as their needs shall require.

Nor is God known to be such only by His people in the New Testament era. David, who was the greatest subject as well as adorer of this grace that we find in the Old Testament, apprehended and acknowledged the same. “According to thine own heart, hast thou done all this greatness, in making known all these great things” (1Ch 17:19). And mark what immediately follows, “O LORD, there is none like thee, neither is there any God besides thee”—that is, Thou art the God of all grace, for it was a point of *grace*, high grace, David is there extolling, namely, God’s covenant of grace with him in Christ, just revealed to him. “What can David speak more?” (1Ch 17:18). Such divine favour is beyond him, just as Paul in Romans 8—“What shall we then say to these things?” When God pardons, He does so after the manner of a great God, full of all grace. He will “*abundantly* pardon” (Isa 55:7), not according to our thoughts says He (Isa 55:8-9) but according to His own.

That to which the old divines referred when they spoke of God’s purposing grace was this ocean thereof in His own nature, from which flow those beneficent designs which He has toward His people, designs which the prophet described as “thoughts of peace” (Jer 29:11), which He took up unto them or which He “thinks toward” them. It would be impossible to speak of all these thoughts, for as David declares, “Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order” (Psa 40:5). We must then summarize them and dwell only on those particulars which directly serve to the point before us, namely, our preservation, or God’s carrying us safely through all temptations unto everlasting glory.

1 Peter 5:10 manifestly speaks of God’s purposing grace, that grace which was in His heart toward His people before He called them, from which, in fact, that call proceeds and which moved Him thereunto, as it is expressly affirmed in 2 Timothy 1:1, 4. The first act of His purposing grace was in His choosing of us, His singling out of those persons whom He designed to be a God of grace unto. Choice of their persons is therefore styled “the election of grace” (Rom 11:5), that being the fundamental act of grace, upon which all others are built. To be a God of grace unto His church is to love its members merely because He chose to love them, for grace is the *freeness* of love. “Receive us graciously,” is the prayer of the church (Hos 14:2). “I will love them freely” (Hos 14:4), is the Lord’s response. Divine grace and human merits are as far apart as the poles, as Romans 11:6 shows, the one mutually excludes the other.

For God to be the God of all grace unto His people is for Him to resolve to love them, and that *forever*—to be unchanging in His love and never to have His heart taken from off them. This is clearly denoted in the language of 1 Peter 5:10, for He, “called us unto his eternal glory.” It is not simply that He has called us into His grace or favour, but into glory, and that, “*eternal* glory.” That is, by the effectual call, He estates us into the whole and full *right* thereof forever. What can this mean but that God called us out of such grace and love as He did and does resolve to be the God of all grace to us for everlasting, and therefore calls us without recall (Rom 11:29). This is clearly borne out by what immediately follows, “After that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1Pe 5:10).

This grace thus fixed in the divine will is the most sovereign and predominating principle in the heart of God. Overruling all other things, He wills, so as to effectually carry on and carry out His resolution of free grace. Grace, as it is the most resolute, so it is the most absolute principle in the heart of God, for unto it belongs the dominion. What else means “the *throne* of grace” (Heb

4:16)? Why else is grace said to “reign...unto eternal life” (Rom 5:21)? The same thing appears in the context of 1 Peter 5:10, “Humble yourselves [or submit] therefore under the mighty hand of God”—that is, to His sovereign power—“that he may exalt you in due time” (1Pe 5:6). He “careth for you” (1Pe 5:7), all of which is carried down to “the God of all grace” in verse 10, which is followed by, “To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1Pe 5:11), that is, to Him as “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10).

But it is as the God of all grace by way of execution or *performance* that we must now contemplate Him, in His gracious dispensations of all sorts, which are *the effects* of the ocean of grace in His nature and the purpose of grace in His heart. We may turn back for a moment to 1 Peter 5:5, “God...giveth grace to the humble,” which refers to His actual bestowment of grace. In like manner, James declares, “He giveth more grace” (Jam 4:6), where he quotes the same passage as Peter’s. In James it is spoken of in reference to subduing His people’s lusts, particularly lusting after envy. Truly this is grace indeed, that when lust is raging, the grace in God should move Him to give more grace whereby He subdues—unto them that humble themselves for their lusts, He gives more grace.

It will help us to a better understanding of this divine title, “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10), if we compare it with, “the God of all comfort,” in 2 Corinthians 1:3. Now that is spoken of in relation to *effects of* comfort, as the psalmist says, “Thou art good, and doest good,” so immediately after He is spoken of as “the God of all comfort,” it follows, “who comforteth us in all our tribulation” (2Co 1:4). He is “the God of all comfort” in relation unto all sorts of distresses, which the saints at any time have—in like manner, He is the God of all grace in respect of its gracious effects. Yet this may be added—for the due magnifying of free grace—that the two are not commensurate, for the dispensations of His grace are *wider* than the dispensations of His comfort. God often gives grace where He does not bestow comfort, so that He is the God of all grace to a larger extent than He is of all comfort.

Now since there is a fullness, an ocean, *all* dispensatory grace to be given forth by God, what necessarily follows? This, first, that there is no temptation that does or can befall a saint that is under the dominion of free grace, but God has a grace prepared to be applied when His hour arrives. It clearly implies that God has a grace fitted and suited as every need and occasion should arise. There is no sore in the heart but He has a plaster ready for it, to be laid thereon in due season. The very word “grace” is a relative to need and temptation, and so “*all* grace” must be a relative to *all* or any needs whatsoever. If there were any want in the large subjects of free grace of which they are capable, and God had not a special grace for it, He were not the God of *all* grace. But it can never be said that the misery of His people is more extensive than the scope of God’s grace.

As God has grace for all the manifold needs of His people, so He is the God of all grace in giving forth help as their occasions require, for such is the season for grace to be displayed. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in *time of need*” (Heb 4:16). So again, “That he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, *as the matter shall require*” (1Ki 8:59), which is to be viewed as a type of the intercession of the antitypical Solomon, the Prince of peace. Thus God’s favour is manifested unto His people at all times of need and in all manner of ways. If God were to fail His people in any season and help them not in any need, then He were not the God of all grace, for it is the chief manifestation of being gracious to relieve in time of greatest need.

The fact that He is the God of all grace in respect of dispensing the same, demonstrates that He takes not this title upon Himself potentially, but that He is so *actually*—it is not merely that He

has in Himself sufficient grace to meet all the varied needs of His people, but also that He really *does so*. By instances of all sorts, God gives full proof of the same. In the day to come, He will have the honour of being not only the God of all grace potentially, but really so in the performance of it, for it will then be seen that He fully made good that word, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but 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). The greatest and acutest need of the Christian springs out of his *indwelling* sin, yet ample provision is made here, too, for, “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom 5:20).

This superabounding of divine grace is gloriously displayed when God effectually calls His people. Let us mention one of two eminent details in proof. First, God then shows Himself to be the God of all grace in the *pardon* He bestows. Consider what an incalculable debt of sinning we had incurred! From earliest infancy the carnal mind is enmity against God, “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies” (Psa 58:3). Every thought from the first dawning of reason has been only evil continually. Our sins were more in number than the hairs of our head. Suppose, Christian reader, you had lived for twenty or thirty years before God effectually called you—during all that time you had done no good—not a single act acceptable to the thrice holy God—instead, all your ways were abominable to Him. Nor had you any concern about God’s being so grievously dishonoured, nor of the fearfulness of your estate. And then, lo!—wonder of wonders—by one act, in a single moment, God blotted out all your sins, “having forgiven you *all* trespasses” (Col 2:13).

Second, God showed Himself to be the God of all grace in bestowing on you a *righteousness* which met every requirement of His holy law—a perfect righteousness, even the righteousness of Christ, which contained in it all obedience. That infinitely meritorious righteousness was imputed to your account wholly and at once—not piecemeal, a bit at a time, but in one entire gift. “For if by one man’s offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:17). Verily, that was indeed “*abundance* of grace.” That perfect righteousness of Christ is fully commensurate with all the designs of grace in God’s heart toward you, and the whole of this you received at your calling, so that you may 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). It was the realization of this which moved Paul to extol the grace bestowed on him at his first conversion, “And the grace of our Lord was *exceeding abundant*” (1Ti 1:14).

Third, God showed Himself to be the God of all grace in *sanctifying* you. What that consists of we showed at length some time ago in our series of articles on that subject. Briefly, it includes first and foremost the bestowment of the Holy Spirit, who takes up His residence in the heart, so that your body is the temple of God, whereby you are set apart and consecrated to Him. In consequence of this, mortifying grace was bestowed, so that every lust then received its death-wound, “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24). Quickening grace was also imparted, whereby the spirit is enabled to resist the flesh, “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2Pe 1:3). Justification and sanctification are inseparably conjoined—as the former provides an inalienable standing for us, so the latter secures our state, and thereby is the foundation laid for our glorification.

These inestimable blessings were the pledges and earnest of your preservation, for “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phi 1:6). It is in no wise a question of your worthiness, but solely a matter of divine grace, “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it” (Ecc 3:14). True, sin is still left within you—to further humble your heart—and your lusts are ever active. Nevertheless, you may be fully assured with David, “The LORD *will perfect* that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever” (Psa 138:8). True, you have a most inadequate appreciation of such wondrous favour being shown you, and to your unutterable shame you must confess that your daily conduct is utterly unworthy thereof—nevertheless, that, too, serves to bring out the amazing grace which bears with so ungrateful and vile a creature.

THE HOLY SABBATH

3. *Its History*

In our examination of the original institution of the Holy Sabbath, we pondered the three acts of the Creator as recorded in Genesis 2:3, each of which had distinct and special reference to man. First, God “*rested* on the seventh day” (Gen 2:2), thereby giving an example for us to follow. But this was not left to be vaguely inferred, for second, “God *blessed* the seventh day” (Gen 2:3), setting on it a special dowry for all who should give due heed to its proper end and object. “What men may lose for the moment in productive employment, shall be amply compensated by the refreshment it will bring to his frame—by the enlargement and elevation of his soul—above all, by the spiritual fellowship and interest in God which becomes the abiding portion of those who follow Him in their ways, and perpetually return to Him as the supreme rest of their souls” (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874). Third, God “*sanctified* it,” setting it sacredly apart from the other six days, thus conferring on it a distinctive character.

But in their efforts to evade the obvious force of Genesis 2:3, some have raised the objection that Genesis 2 records no express *command* for man to keep the Sabbath. Really, such a cavil is undeserving of notice, yet as a few readers are disturbed by it, we will briefly answer the objection. First, it is plainly required of us in and by the law of nature that some part of our time (divinely given to us) should be set apart and devoted to God, for the solemn observance of His worship in the world. And where but in Genesis 2:3 could primitive man learn *which part* of that time was to be thus employed? That natural dictate is met by the Sabbath law requiring us to sanctify one day in seven. Second, this pretense of any obscurity that is in the command of Genesis 2:3 is easily removed by another instance of like antiquity. It has been universally acknowledged that a promise of Christ was given in Genesis 3:15 for the faith of the ancients, yet that very verse was addressed to the serpent in the form of a curse! With equal propriety, then, could we deny any *promise* in Genesis 3:15 and declare there is no *command* in Genesis 2:3—each is self-evidently implied.

Third, a yet more decisive consideration is found in our Lord’s words, “The sabbath was made for man” (Mar 2:27). This cannot mean less than that the Sabbath was made for man’s observance and for his benefit. God’s glory and our good are always inseparably connected—whatever He has appointed us to heed and do in order for His honour, it is equally our wisdom and gain to comply with. If, then, the Sabbath was made for man’s observance, it is self-evident that he is under divine authority to submit thereto. Ere passing from this verse, let it also be pointed out that

since the Sabbath was necessary and profitable for man in his first estate, when free from sin—remember that man was not exempt from labour in Eden, as the words “to dress it and to keep it” (Gen 2:15) prove!—then how much more so now in order to recover him from his corrupt condition!

In the remainder of this article, we shall devote our attention to the primitive observance of the Holy Sabbath, confining ourselves to its history in the earliest ages, namely, to the recognition thereof before its formal renewal in Exodus 20. It is frequently asserted that the Sabbath law originated at the time when JEHOVAH wrote the Ten Commandments on the tables of stone. But as we have shown, that is an error. The Sabbath was instituted before man fell. We would now inquire what evidence is there of men’s *keeping* the Sabbath prior to Israel’s reaching Sinai. Before answering this question, let it be pointed out that if there were none at all this would by no means convince us that the Sabbath was unknown before Exodus 20. An argument drawn from *silence* is always inconclusive. No mention is made of circumcision from the time of Joshua until the Babylonian captivity, yet how fallacious would be the inference that the rite had ceased to be practiced! Even though the Sabbath occupies so prominent a place in the institutions of Moses, yet it is never mentioned again till the days of Elijah (nearly seven hundred years later), and then only an incidental allusion is made to it (2Ki 4:23).

There would be no need to wonder, then, in such particularly brief compendiums of history as are given of antediluvian and patriarchal times, if there should be a similar silence to those mentioned above. But is there a complete silence? Is there nothing in Scripture to indicate whether or not men kept the Sabbath before Israel reached Sinai? In seeking an answer, we have to turn back to the book of Genesis and the first 18 chapters of Exodus, and ere we consult them, it is well to remember their general character. No less than twenty-five centuries of human history are covered by those first sixty-eight chapters of the Bible. Thus it is evident at once that the Holy Spirit has seen fit to give us little more than a bare outline of what transpired during the infancy of our race. Hence, we must not expect to find here anything more than a few references to the Sabbath, and these of the briefest nature. The same pertains to almost any other theme. There *are* unmistakable references to the Sabbath, but they are only *incidental* in character.

“And in process of time [*at the end of days*] it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock” (Gen 4:3-4). The very fact of Cain and Abel coming together, and this for the purpose of presenting an offering to the Lord, intimates that the time when they were thus engaged was a *stated* one, known to and recognized by them both—otherwise, what had induced the jealous Cain to unite with the pious Abel in this action? The bringing of offerings by Cain and Abel was the formal recognition of God. It was an act of devotion. Moreover, it is expressly stated that they worshipped God “at the end of days,” the divinely appointed season. And *when* was that? Exactly what is signified by “the end of days”? Surely the unprejudiced reader who comes to the Scriptures in childlike simplicity, desiring to learn the mind of God, will form only one concept here. He will naturally say, Why, the end of days must be the end *of the week*, and that, of course, is the Sabbath.

But can we prove what has just been advanced? Yes, by an appeal to the context. If the first three chapters of Genesis be read through, it will be found they mention one “end” and one only, and that is in Genesis 2:2, “on the seventh day God *ended his work* which he had made.” Now as Scripture ever interprets Scripture, as its terms are defined by the way in which they are used in other passages, and as the law of the context is whatever fixes the meaning of any given clause, so here in Genesis 4:3, the “end of days” can only mean the end of the working week—the Sabbath.

Thus this passage teaches us four things. First, that previous to the days of Cain and Abel a Sabbath had been instituted. Second, that this Sabbath came at the end of a week of work. Third, that it was recognized and owned by the sons of Adam and Eve. Fourth, that it was set apart for sacred use, namely, the worship of God.

We next turn to, “And he called his son Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our *work* and *toil* of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed” (Gen 5:29). Here we are told why Lamech named his son “Noah.” The very fact that the Holy Spirit has recorded this detail must be because some important truth is illustrated thereby. Names were not given in those early days at the idle caprice of the parents. They were pregnant with meaning, frequently given under divine guidance, often memorializing some event of importance. Plainly was this the case in our present instance. Lamech belonged to the godly line, being the son of Methuselah (whose name was certainly given under divine impulse), the grandson of Enoch. Lamech called his son Noah, which means *rest*, giving as his reason, “This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands” (Gen 5:29). In the light of Genesis 2:3-4, is not this profoundly suggestive? Did not Lamech, in the name given his son, express his gratitude to the great Creator for providing a weekly Sabbath as a rest from “work” and “toil”? It was a pious heart looking forward to *the rest* of which the weekly Sabbath was both the type and pledge.

“And it came to pass on *the seventh day* that the waters of the flood were upon the earth” (Gen 7:10, margin). This verse records the beginning of the great deluge and its terms are the more noteworthy because in the next verse we read, “In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the *seventeenth day* of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up and the windows of heaven were opened” (Gen 7:11). Surely the Spirit had some good reason for giving us *both* of these time-marks. The second of them is obviously the *historical* reference—why, then, are we first told that the flood began “on the seventh day”? Clearly because the reference here is a *moral* one, a word of explanation. It makes known to us one of the reasons, perhaps the chief one, why God visited the earth with such sore judgment. It conveys a solemn message to us—the flood began on the Sabbath Day! Is not the inference inescapable? Was it not an act of, what men term, poetic justice? Doubtless the antediluvians had flouted the Sabbath institution as they had every other law of God. They had desecrated His holy day, therefore, when the Lord visited His wrath upon them, it was on the Sabbath that the flood commenced!

“And he stayed yet other *seven days*...and he stayed yet other *seven days*” (Gen 8:10, 12). These references make it clear that way back in Noah’s day, the division of time into weeks was a recognized custom, for the repetition here makes it evident this was no casual or arbitrary act on his part. This fact has not received the attention it deserves. How was it, why was it, and when originated this division of time? We submit that this hebdomadal revolution of time furnishes another striking testimony to the primitive Sabbath. We quote now from the late Benajah H. Carroll (1843-1914), President of the S. W. Baptist Seminary,

“I ask you to notice this strange historical fact, that for all other divisions of time we have a reason in the motions of the heavenly bodies. The revolution of the earth around the sun marks the division of time into years. The moon’s revolution around the earth gives us the month. The day comes from the revolution of the earth upon its axis. But from what suggestion of nature do you get the division of time into *weeks*? It is a positive and arbitrary division. It is based on authority. The chronicles of the ages record its recognition. But how did it originate? Here in the oldest book, in the first account of man, you will find its origin and purpose. Noah twice recognized it in the ark, when he waited seven days each time to send out his dove. Jacob in the

days of his courtship found it prevalent when he looked for satisfaction in the laughing eyes of Rachel, and the stern father said, “Fulfil her week” (Gen 29:27). Why a week? How did he get it? It was God’s division of time.

Yes, it was *God’s* division of time. Why should our week have seven rather than six or ten days? and why have men everywhere adopted this measure? A primeval Sabbath explains it—it is the key to an otherwise insoluble enigma. Since there is no prominent natural phenomenon visible to every eye which can account for it, we are obliged to deduce some ancient institution coeval with our race, from which it spontaneously originated. That institution was the Sabbath, in which the Creator set apart one seventh of man’s days for the worship of Himself. Thus did the Architect of the universe write His signature across time itself and never shall it be erased.

In his masterly dissertations on the Sabbath, John Owen (1616-1683) showed that no impartial and pious mind can entertain any doubt that there was a free observance of the Sacred Day by the patriarchs. We give a very brief digest of his argument. The creation of the world was one of their principal articles of faith, as the apostle asserts in Hebrews 11:3—then how vain to imagine they had utterly lost the tradition of the rest of God upon the finishing of His works. That the patriarchs did observe the solemn worship of God in and with their families is clear from Genesis 18:19 and other passages, and for *that* some stated time was indispensably necessary. And what ground have we to suppose they were left without divine direction in this important matter? The testimony which is given to them, that they walked with God and obtained a good report, the fact that they are said to have kept “the way of the LORD” (Gen 18:19) and “his charge” (Gen 26:5), all point to the same conclusion.

“And Abraham set *seven* ewe lambs of the flock by themselves” (Gen 21:28). In this connection it is striking to note how that the ancients, universally, regarded the number seven as having a mystical significance. Seven times did Jacob bow before Esau in proof of his submission to him. Seven years did he serve Laban for Rachel, and seven more for Leah. The number seven had, for some reason or other, obtained special favour in the families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The same obtained also among other branches of the race of Shem. The history of Job, for example, who lived in the early times of the postdiluvian age, relates that when his friends came to comfort him they, “sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights” (Job 2:13)—and when (later) the Lord bade him offer sacrifice on their behalf, He said, “Take unto you now *seven* bullocks and *seven* rams, and go to my servant Job,” etc., (Job 42:8). Balaam evidenced the same mystical reverence for this number (Num 23:1). This writer is firmly convinced that the sacredness which from earliest times attached to the mystical “seven” has its roots in the primeval Sabbath.

There is yet another trace of the Sabbath in the early ages of the world to be found in Exodus—a most striking one it is, though it seems to have quite escaped the notice of those who have written on this subject. one reason for the deliverance of Israel from Egypt was that they might be free to keep the Sabbath and to offer those sacrifices and observe those ordinances which were connected with it. “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 my people go, that they may *serve me*” (Exo 9:1). Do not these words clearly imply that while sojourning in Egypt the Israelites had been prevented from observing their religious ordinances? Their merciless taskmasters had blotted out their Sabbath and made their life one ceaseless round of toil and misery. This is clearly confirmed by the words of Pharaoh to Moses and Aaron, “And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let [hinder] the people from their works? get you unto your burdens. And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them [not

“cease” but] REST from their burdens” (Exo 5:4-5). Evidently one of the first things the intrepid Moses did when he returned to Egypt was to insist that his brethren keep the Sabbath, and hence Pharaoh’s objection.

GOD’S GRACE AND PETER

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1Pe 5:10). Though we have drawn so freely in our current articles on the manifestation of election, from the most excellent exposition of this verse given by Thomas Goodwin, we feel that it will be glorifying to God and helpful to our readers if we here insert verbatim the striking introduction which that Puritan gave to his comments on this passage. First, because it contains a very beautiful linking up of one passage with another, serving to show how wondrously Scripture itself interprets Scripture. Second, because the case of Peter himself serves to supply such a blessed illustration and demonstration of what is here declared—if notwithstanding his sad lapse, the God of all grace preserved him unto eternal glory, this is a sure pledge that He will do so with all believers.—A.W.P.

Our apostle Peter had himself greatly suffered for a while. Satan sought to winnow and to devour him, but the God of all grace did, by Christ and His fore-warning of him, and through His prayer for him, graciously restore, strengthen, settle, stablish him, as the story of the evangelists and the Acts record. So all this was exemplified first in himself, and he, who himself hath been instructed in temptations and sufferings, is the ablest fore-warner and instructor of others. You know our Saviour did thereupon take occasion to command him, that, “When he should be converted or restored, he should strengthen his brethren” (see Luk 22:32). And this our holy apostle, you see, is carefully mindful of, and that to the utmost; and hath left it behind him for all his brethren to the end of the world, the greatest consolatory against Satan and all temptations that hath in so few words fallen from any apostle’s pen.

And when I more seriously compare things together, I am strongly inclined to think and believe that Peter, in uttering these words of exhortation and comfort in verses 8-10, had those very passages of Christ to himself in his eye and view—and be yourselves the judges, “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luk 22:31). Observe the parallel.

1. “Satan hath desired,” that is, obtained leave of God, by *seeking* “thee [Peter] to winnow thee” and shake forth all grace out of thee. Thus Christ to Peter. Correspondingly Peter here to us, “Satan, your adversary, goeth about *seeking* whom [of you] he may [have leave to] devour.” And as Christ gave Peter fore-warning there, so Peter here his brethren.

2. Christ prayed that his “faith fail not.” That was the matter of Christ’s prayer for him on that occasion. Faith’s not failing is Satan’s foiling. Answerably the subject matter of our apostle also in his exhortation here is, “whom resist steadfast in the faith,” as that which is the most effectual remedy and shield of resistance of all others (Eph 6:16). It is not “in the faith” as understanding the *doctrine of faith* only, as some would seem to restrain it, because of the article (in the Greek), but in the *grace of faith*, as Calvin (John, 1509-1564) more genuinely stated. And the grace of faith is so eminent in itself, and hath so great an hand, and bears so great a stress in this business of temptation, that it deserves here the honour of this article.

3. “Strengthen thy brethren.” There are but two words, yet both are here in *terminus*. “Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren in the world” (1Pe 5:9), there is the one, and then, “after that ye have suffered a while, God will strengthen you” (see 1Pe 5:10) there is the other. So publisheth he the comfort and concernment thereof to all his brethren in the world, and contents not himself to utter it barely in the very same word of strengthening, but further surroundeth that, for the more abundant consolation, for the multiplication of words to the same intent. He shall “restore you” (see Gal 6:1), that is, when you are fallen—“set you in joint again,” which was Peter’s very case—“stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1Pe 5:10).

4. Lastly, which is not to be neglected, Christ, in strengthening Peter’s faith against Satan, sets a, “*but* I have prayed,” as in direct opposition unto all that Satan could do. And Peter, when he had set forth Satan as our professed adversary in the greatest dreadfulness, he then in like manner of opposition, brings in his intended consolatory with a “*but* God, the God of all grace by Jesus Christ,” etc., set in full array and counter against him on our behalf, as our Undertaker, Guardian, and the strength of our hearts forever” (Thomas Goodwin).

N.B. It is indeed striking and most blessed to observe the particular instruments God employed as His penmen in the communicating of His Word, and how specially fitted and suited they were for their several tasks. Who, but Solomon was so well-qualified, experimentally, to write the book of Ecclesiastes—the man who had such exceptional opportunity to drink from all the poor cisterns of this world and then to record the fact that no satisfaction was to be found in any of them. Who was so eminently adapted to write upon the beautiful theme of divine love (as he does throughout the epistles) as the one who had been so peculiarly favoured as to lean upon the bosom of God’s Beloved! So here—who could so feelingly write upon “the God of all grace” as poor Peter! If Saul of Tarsus is the supreme example in New Testament times (for Manasseh is as remarkable a case in the Old Testament) of the wondrous *saving* grace of God, surely Simon is the most outstanding trophy in New Testament times (for David parallels him in the Old) of God’s *preserving* grace. And, my reader, it is the same today. When God calls any man into His service, He qualifies him for the particular work He has for him to do. Alas, how many run without being sent of Him.—A.W.P.



April

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

“Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (Psa 29:2). Holiness is the antithesis of sin and the beauty of holiness is in direct contrast from the ugliness of sin. Sin is a deformity, a monstrosity. Sin is repulsive, repellent to the infinitely pure God—that is why He selected leprosy, the most loathsome and horrible of all diseases, to be its emblem. When the prophet was divinely inspired to depict the condition of degenerate Israel it was in these words, “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). O that sin were sickening and hateful to us—not merely its grosser forms, but sin itself. At the opposite extreme from the hideousness of sin is “the *beauty* of holiness.” Holiness is lovely in the sight of God—necessarily so. It is the reflection of His own nature, for He is “glorious in holiness” (Exo 15:11). O that it may be increasingly attractive to and earnestly sought after by us. Perhaps the simplest way of bringing out the beauty of holiness will be to contrast it from the beauties of time and sense.

First, the beauty of holiness is *imperceptible to the natural man* and therein it differs radically from the beauties of mere nature. He can behold and admire a lovely glen, the softly flowing river, the mountain pines, the rushing waterfall, but for the excellence of spiritual graces he has no eyes. He regards one who (by grace) meekly submits to sore trials as a milksop. He looks upon one who denies self for Christ’s sake as a fool. He considers the man who adheres strictly to the narrow way as one who misses the best of this life. The natural man is totally incapable of discerning the excellence of that which is of great price in the sight of God. Do some think we are stating this too strongly? Then let them be reminded of the solemn fact that when the Holy one tabernacled here upon earth the unregenerate saw in Him “no beauty” that they should desire Him (Isa 53:2), and it is the same today. God must remove the scales from the eyes of our heart before we can perceive that holiness is beautiful.

Second, the beauty of holiness is *real and genuine*, and therein it differs radically from much of the beauty which is seen in this world. How much that appeals to the gaze of the natural man is artificial and fictitious. How much human beauty is made up, the product of the artifices of the salon. Even when physical beauty is natural, how rarely it is accompanied by moral virtues. No wonder our forefathers were accustomed to say, “Beauty is but skin deep.” Not so the beauty of holiness—it is rooted in the inner man and sheds its purifying influence over the entire being. “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain” (Pro 31:30). But holiness disappoints not its possessor, for its beauty is spiritual and divine. True, it has many counterfeits in the religious world, yet the genuine article has a ring to it which the godly cannot mistake.

Third, the beauty of holiness is *abiding* and therein it differs radically from all the beauty of earth. The wooded glen, whose varied tints are so pleasing in the summer sunlight, is leafless and

drab when winter comes. The glorious sunset which human skill can neither produce nor adequately reproduce disappears within a few minutes. The fairest human countenance quickly withers, “All her beauty is departed” (Lam 1:6). Even when it is preserved to the end of a short life, “Their beauty shall consume in the grave” (Psa 49:14). Yes, change and decay in all we see. The only beauty which is unfading and everlasting is the beauty of holiness. The fruit of the Spirit will never lose its bloom. Spiritual graces shall endure after this poor world has all gone up in smoke. How fervently, then, should we pray, “Let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us” (Psa 90:17).

Fourth, the beauty of holiness is *satisfying* and herein it differs radically from the beauty of the things of time and sense. Sooner or later they either pall on one or else leave an aching void. Take the globe-trotter who journeys east and west, north and south, seeking fresh scenes. How soon he tires, discovering that the loveliest landscape cannot supply contentment of mind and peace of heart. Man is more than a material creature and therefore it requires something else than material things—no matter how beautiful—to meet his needs. It is the things of the Spirit which alone afford satisfaction. “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1Ti 6:6). True, the Christian is never satisfied with his own holiness—rather does he continue to hunger and thirst after righteousness to the end of his wilderness journey. Nevertheless, the holier we are—the closer we walk with God—the more real rest of soul shall we enjoy. And the blessed sequel will demonstrate the contrast still more plainly—instead of discovering that we have only chased the shadows, the Christian has the assurance, “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psa 17:15).

Fifth, the beauty of holiness is *glorifying to God* and therein it differs radically from much of human beauty. To glorify his Maker is the bounden duty of man, and nothing honours Him so much as our walking in separation from all that is displeasing to Him. But alas, physical charms and spiritual graces are rarely found in the same persons. A notable example of this is seen in the case of Absalom, of whom it is recorded, “In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him” (2Sa 14:25). Yet he feared not God and perished in his sins. How many a woman has used her personal attractions to entice men rather than magnify God. How many a well-proportioned and handsome man has employed his gifts for self-glorification rather than the praise of God. But the beauty of holiness ever redounds to the honour of its Author.

“O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (Psa 96:9). This is the only kind of beauty which the Lord cares for in our devotions. “Godliness is to the soul as the light is to the world, to illustrate and adorn it. It is not greatness which sets us off before God, but goodness” (Thomas Watson, 1620-1686). Ornate architecture and expensive apparel God delights not in. It is the loveliness of inward purity and outward sanctity that pleases the thrice Holy one. Sincerity of heart, fervour of spirit, reverence of demeanour, the exercise of faith, the outgoings of love, are some of the elements which comprise the “beauty of holiness” in our worship.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

9. Christ and the Law—Matthew 5:17-20

“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). We

purpose to expound this verse by supplying answers to the following questions. First, who or what were the scribes and Pharisees? Second, what was the character of their righteousness? Third, what is the nature of that superior righteousness which Christ requires from His subjects? Fourth, how is it obtained? Fifth, how is it manifested? Sixth, wherein does it exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? Seventh, what is signified by, “Ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven”? Eighth, what is the relation of verse twenty to the context?

Before seeking an answer to the above questions, let us point out what a startling effect this statement of Christ’s must have produced upon His hearers. The scribes were the most renowned teachers of the law and the Pharisees had the reputation of being the most exemplary models of Judaism—and for our Lord to have solemnly affirmed that such righteousness as *they* possessed was altogether inadequate for entitling them to an entrance into the kingdom which He had come to set up, must have seemed a most radical and startling declaration. The Pharisees were looked up to as those who had attained to the very pinnacle of personal piety and the common people supposed that such heights of spirituality were quite beyond their reach. Men in general imagined that they could not be expected to equal *their* attainments. It was a proverb among the Jews that, “If but two men were to enter heaven, the one would be a scribe and the other a Pharisee.”

First, who were the scribes and Pharisees? The word “scribe” is a name of *office*, whereof there were two sorts among the Jews—civil and ecclesiastical. The former were public notaries, registering the affairs of state—such a one was Shimshai (Ezr 4:8). The latter were employed in expounding the Scriptures—such a one was Ezra (7:1, 5-6). It was to the latter Christ referred in this Gospel, see Matthew 13:52; 23:2—interpreters of the law of Moses. They were of the tribe of Levi. The name “Pharisee” betokens a *sect* and not an office. They differed from the scribes inasmuch as they formed a code of morals and of ceremonial acts more rigid than the law of Moses enjoined, basing it on the traditions of the fathers, and were held in highest esteem among the Jews, see Acts 23:6; 26:5. The scribes, then, were the doctors of the law; the Pharisees professing the purest practice of it.

Second, what was the character of their righteousness and wherein lay its defectiveness? First, the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was an *external* one only, consisting of certain outward observances of the law. They were strict in abstaining from such gross sins as adultery, theft, murder, and idolatry, but they made no conscience of impure thoughts, covetousness, hatred, and coldness of heart toward God. And therefore did Christ say unto them, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess” etc. (Mat 23:25, 27-28). Second, their observance of God’s law was a *partial* one. They laid far more stress upon its ceremonial precepts than upon its moral requirements, and therefore did Christ say unto them, “Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith” (Mat 23:23). Third, their actions proceeded from unsound principles—*self-interests*, rather than the glory of God was their ruling motive. They were forward in fasting, praying at street corners, and giving alms ostentatiously, but it was all done to enhance their reputation among men (Mat 23:5-7).

Righteousness of soul, purity of heart, the scribes and Pharisees had no regard for. In their religion we have an exemplification of what is the natural persuasion of men the world over, namely, that a religion of external performances will suffice to ensure a blissful eternity. True, there are many who would deny this in words, but in works they substantiate it. They bring their bodies to the house of prayer, but not their souls. They worship with their mouths, but not “in spirit and in truth.” They are sticklers for immersion or early morning communion, yet take no

thought of keeping their hearts with all diligence. Multitudes of professing Christians abstain from external acts of violence, yet hesitate not to rob their neighbours of a good name by spreading evil reports against them. Thousands who would not dare to rob openly, yet misrepresent their goods and cheat their customers—which shows they have more fear of breaking man's laws than they have of breaking those of God.

Third, what is the nature of that righteousness which Christ requires from His subjects? There are three kinds of righteousness spoken of in the Scriptures. First, *inherent*, which Adam had when he left the hands of his Maker (Ecc 7:29), which none possess by nature today. Second, *imputed* righteousness (Rom 4:6), which is the whole of our justification before God. Third, *imparted* righteousness (Eph 4:24), when God the Spirit makes us new creatures. Most of the older writers concluded that it was the second of these which Christ referred to here in Matthew 5:20, but we are satisfied this was a mistake. It is true that the sinner's title for heaven can consist only of the perfect righteousness of Christ being imputed to him upon his believing, yet there must be an experimental meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light as well as a legal right, and this we obtain through our regeneration and sanctification.

We fully agree with Mr. J. C. Philpot (1802-1869), when he pointed out in Matthew 5:20, "Christ did not mean an external righteousness, wrought out by His obedience to the law *for* them, but an internal righteousness wrought out by the Holy Spirit *in* them. Thus, we read of the inward as well as the outward apparel of the church, 'The King's daughter is all glorious *within*: her clothing is of wrought gold' (Psa 45:13). Two kinds of righteousness belong to the queen—her imputed righteousness is her outward robe, the 'clothing of wrought gold,' but imparted righteousness is her inward adorning, which makes her 'all glorious *within*.' This inward glory is the new man in the heart, with all his gifts and graces." This must be so if the church is conformed to her Head, for He was "without spot" externally and "without blemish" internally.

As this is a point which is much disputed, we must labour it a little further. That righteousness which will bring men to heaven is not a bare imputed one, but an imputed righteousness which is accompanied by an imparted one. Justification and sanctification must never be severed—wherever the former be pronounced, the other (in its fundamental aspect) has already been bestowed. The one concerns our standing before God, the other respects our state in ourselves. Romans 8 is just as vital and blessed a part of the Gospel as is Romans 5, and it is to the irreparable loss of the saint if the one be emphasized to the virtual exclusion of the other. Surety righteousness alone secures for us a standing before God, but evangelical righteousness is the certain proof thereof, and as the tree is known by its fruits so imputed righteousness can be recognized in no other way than by inward righteousness with its effects in the life.

To this writer the simplest and most conclusive way of ascertaining the nature of the righteousness which Christ requires from all who shall have part in His everlasting kingdom is to observe that it is placed in direct antithesis from the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Now as we have pointed out, the defects of the latter lay chiefly in three things. First, their righteousness was wholly an external one, but God requires truth in the *inward* parts, "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1Sa 16:7). Second, their righteousness was partial, stressing certain parts of the law which suited their tastes, while utterly ignoring or nullifying other vital features thereof. The righteousness which God requires is a universal obedience—a living by every word that proceedeth out of His mouth. Third, their righteousness issued from a foul spring. Instead of keeping the law from a desire to please and glorify its Giver, their observance of it was only in order to promote their reputation among men.

This superior righteousness, then, consists of an obedience to the divine law which would be acceptable to a holy but gracious God. Such an obedience must necessarily spring from the fear of God and love to God—that is, from a genuine reverence for His authority and from a true desire to please Him. It must comprise a strict conformity to the revealed will of God, without any self-invented and self-imposed additions thereto. It must give particular attention to the “weightier matters of the law,” namely, justice, mercy, and faith. It must be a sincere and not a feigned obedience, a filial and not a slavish one, a disinterested and not a selfish one. It must be a symmetrical or complete one, having respect to all God’s commandments. Such an obedience will not puff up or encourage self-righteousness, but will cause the one who sincerely aims thereat, to walk softly before the Lord, and will produce humility and denying of self.

Fourth, how is this superior righteousness obtained? Not by the strivings of a fallen creature, but by the effectual working of divine grace. Such an obedience as we have delineated above can only proceed from a heart that is reconciled to God, because, “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). Now as 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 so plainly teaches us, God’s reconciling us to Himself by Jesus Christ is the immediate outcome of our being made new creatures in Christ. Initially we become partakers of this righteousness at the new birth, when a holy nature is communicated by the Spirit, so that there is now a principle within us which “delights in the law of God” (Rom 7:22) and causes us to “serve” it (Rom 7:25). Progressively this inward righteousness is developed as we “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” which is through our using the appointed means and by learning to draw our strength from the Lord. Perfectly, this inward righteousness will only be consummated at our glorification, when we shall be filled with all the fullness of God.

Fifth, how is this evangelical righteousness manifested? Inasmuch as this inward righteousness consists of and proceeds from a new creation to holiness, it is known by the fruits it produces. A radical change is affected in the temper and life of its possessor, so that he now loathes and shuns what he formerly delighted in, and loves and seeks after the things he once disliked. It is evidenced by a real hatred of sin and an unfeigned love of God. It is known by the felt antagonism between the two natures in the believer. His indwelling corruptions continually war against this principle of righteousness, so that often he is prevented from doing the good which he desires and strives to perform. This conflict with the flesh humbles the Christian, causes him to mourn over his sad failures, and to confess he is but an unprofitable servant. Nevertheless, he continues in his efforts to mortify the old man and vivify the new. Another proof of indwelling righteousness is that its possessor has an ever-deepening appreciation of the forbearance of God and an increasing valuation of the precious blood of Christ.

Sixth, wherein does this righteousness “exceed” the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees? The superiority of the Christian’s righteousness has already been shown in some detail, but one or two other things may be pointed out in connection therewith. The Christian’s righteousness springs out of love and faith, whereas theirs issued from an evil heart of unbelief. The Christian’s righteousness is the result of his being made a partaker of the divine nature (2Pe 1:4), whereas theirs was altogether human. The defects of the Christian’s righteousness are covered by the infinite merits of Christ, whereas theirs has nothing to commend them unto God. Evangelical righteousness—according to the terms of the new covenant—is approved by God, but legal righteousness found no provision in the Siniatic Compact for its acceptance by the Most High. The righteousness of the Christian secures an entrance into heaven, but that of the Scribes and Pharisees will exclude them therefrom.

Seventh, what is signified by, “Ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:20)? which is the Lord’s verdict upon those who possess not this righteousness? In our comments upon verse 19, we pointed out that this expression, “the kingdom of heaven,” is wider than the church which is Christ’s body, covering the whole sphere of profession—Christendom—thus including the counterfeit as well as the genuine. But we were careful to qualify that definition by saying, This is its meaning in the “great majority of cases.” There are one or two notable exceptions, as for example, “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 18:3), where the kingdom of heaven must refer to the kingdom of glory. Such, too, is the case in our present verse—Christ was speaking of *real* righteousness and that alone will secure entrance into heaven.

Eighth, what is the relation of our verse to its context? Let us recall that in the whole of this passage our Lord was engaged in refuting the erroneous conception which had been formed of His mission. His detachment from the religious leader of His day, His disregard of the “traditions of the elders,” and His proclamation of *grace* in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luk 4:16-22), had inclined many to regard Him as the opponent of Moses. True, He had come to bring in something new, something vastly superior to that which then obtained in Israel, nevertheless there was no real conflict between Christianity and Judaism—though differing much in incidentals, there is really perfect accord in fundamentals. Alas that the spiritual unity of the two economies is now so little perceived, yea, is emphatically denied by most of the much-advertised “Bible teachers” of our day.

First, Christ plainly and emphatically declared He had not come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to “fulfil” them (Mat 5:17). In what ways He was to “fulfil” them we have endeavoured to show. Second, He solemnly affirmed the perpetuity and immutability of the law (Mat 5:18), asserting that not the smallest part thereof could pass away till all was fulfilled. Third, He insisted that His own servants must maintain the integrity of the law both by practice and by preaching (Mat 5:19), otherwise they would not receive His approval. Fourth, so far was He from being antagonistic to Moses, He demanded of His subjects a righteousness which surpassed that of the Scribes and Pharisees. Hereafter there was not the slightest occasion for any of His hearers to have any doubt of Christ’s attitude toward the law of God.

It is most important that we perceive clearly our Lord’s *design* in verse 20. It was not there His purpose to state the terms on which men might obtain the divine favour, rather was He describing the character of those who *already possessed* the same. No doubt many of the multitude which had there flocked around Him, supposed—such is poor human nature—that by attaching themselves to His cause, they would obtain greater latitude to indulge their lusts. It must therefore have been a real shock for them to learn that the morality and spirituality which was to distinguish the genuine citizens of His kingdom would be of a far more exalted character than that taught by the Scribes and exemplified by the Pharisees. He would not regard anyone as His subject unless *his* righteousness exceeded the righteousness of the *Scribes and Pharisees*. Thus, the nature and demand of His kingdom was proof positive that He honoured and maintained the law.

With regard to the relation of our passage to its yet wider context, we may note how that one of the principal designs of Christ throughout this sermon was to awaken His hearers to feel their deep need of that which alone could satisfy the requirements of a holy God. It was ignorance of the law which permitted Pharisaism to flourish, for they claimed to fulfil it in the outward letter, and consequently Christ here aimed to arouse conscience by enforcing its true import and requirements. It will be found that this Sermon returns again and again to one main idea—that of

awakening men to a sense of their wretchedness and shutting them up to the righteousness of God. That object could only be obtained by a spiritual application of the law and by enforcing its inviolable exactions. Thereby alone could they be prepared to appreciate and embrace the Gospel.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

88. *His Final Folly*

We are about to look at one more of the dark chapters in David's life, though it has a much brighter ending than had some of the others. It concerns an episode, which though simple and plain in some of its features, is in other respects shrouded in deep mystery—nor do we profess to be able to fully solve it. The incident which is narrated in 2 Samuel 24 concerns the purpose which David formed for numbering Israel and Judah, in order that he might know the exact fighting strength of his people. Apparently this was quite an innocent undertaking, yet it promptly met with disfavour and opposition from the commander and officers of his army. A little later David himself acknowledged that therein he had “sinned greatly” (see 2Sa 24:17), and the Lord Himself manifested His sore displeasure by slaying no less than 70,000 of David's men by a pestilence.

On two occasions the Lord Himself had directed Moses to number the people. First in connection with their encampment in the wilderness (Num 1:2) and later it was enjoined with special reference to the allotments which the different tribes were to receive in Canaan (Num 26:2). On each occasion Moses numbered the male Israelites from twenty years old and upwards, “all that were able to go forth to war”—the fighting strength of the congregation being thereby ascertained. We mention this because it would thus appear that David had clear precedent to warrant his procedure. It is true that after Israel settled in Canaan God never again issued a command for His people to be numbered, and while we are not informed that He gave any such order to our hero at this time, yet we *are* told that the Lord, “moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah” (2Sa 24:1).

We are not left in any doubt that on this occasion David committed a grave fault, yet wherein lay the evil of it is not so certain. Varied indeed have been the conjectures formed and the explanations advanced by different writers thereon. Some have drawn the inference from 1 Chronicles 27:23-24 that David's sin lay in numbering those who were *under* twenty years old (yet sufficiently developed as to be able to bear arms), and that because his act was thus illegal, it was not formally entered in the state records. Others conclude from the same passage that he erred in numbering the people at all, that his act sprang from *unbelief* in the promises of God to the patriarchs that their seed should be as innumerable as the sand of the seashore. Others think that he was guilty of presumption, acting without any instruction from God. Others think that the fault lay in his failure to require the half shekel, which was to be paid for the service of the sanctuary when the people were numbered, as “a ransom for their souls” (Exo 30:12).

Now we are not one of those who take pleasure in pitting the interpretations of one expositor against another, rather do we prefer to combine them when this seems permissible and helpful. In the absence of any authoritative word from God as to the precise nature of David's sin in the case before us, we shall, as we proceed to comment upon it, bear in mind these several views, which

may well supplement each other. one other explanation has been advanced, which impresses us personally most strongly of all, namely, that it was pride of heart which moved Israel's king to here commit such folly. If he was intoxicated with the successes which heaven had granted to his arms, and was more occupied with them than their Giver, then that would readily account for this disastrous lapse, for "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Some light may be cast on this mysterious episode by taking into account the relative period in David's history at which it occurred. As the previous chapters have informed us, the sword of David and of Israel had been successful over all their enemies. The Philistines had been subdued, Moab had brought gifts, garrisons had been stationed in Damascus, and the Syrians as well as the Edomites had become their servants. To such a remarkable extent had his arms been permitted to triumph, that we are told, "And the fame of David went out into all lands; and the LORD brought the fear of him upon all nations" (1Ch 14:17). Naught of the good of which JEHOVAH had spoken to him had failed. But David was human, a man of like passions with us. Man—no matter who he is—if left to himself is quite incapable of holding a blessing, as was clearly demonstrated in Eden at the beginning. The fuller be our cup of joy, the steadier the hand required to hold it.

The history of David's sin is stated thus, "And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah" (2Sa 24:1), or as 1 Chronicles 21:1 gives it, "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." Those two statements are not, as some have foolishly supposed, contradictory, but are complementary. Though God is not the author of sin, and can never be charged with evil, yet as the Governor of the universe He is the Controller and Director of it, so that when it serves His righteous purpose even Satan and his hosts are requisitioned by Him, 1 Kings 22:20-22; Ezekiel 14:9, etc. In this instance it is clear at least that God permitted Satan to tempt David and David being left to himself yielded to the temptation and sinned. Moreover, the fact that David yielded so readily, and so obstinately rejected the counsel of his servants, seems to indicate that he had not been walking with holy watchfulness before God.

It was a remarkable juncture in the history of David. The ancient foes of Israel, after centuries of conflict, had at last succumbed. Even the powerful sons of Goliath had been so crushed by his vanquisher that they no longer made any effort to antagonize. But not only had the surrounding nations been subdued, they were despoiled and the huge quantities of gold which had been taken from them was dedicated unto the Lord (see 1Ch 18:11; 20:2). "Triumphs had been gained and a rest attained such as Israel had never known before. The sword was about to be sheathed and the reign of Solomon (the typical Prince of Peace) was at hand. The ark of God, ceasing from its lengthy wanderings, was no longer to dwell in curtains. The temple was about to be built. Israel was to be gathered there in solemn and associated worship, and God's house was to be filled with His glory. It was a bright and blessed era, but it was only a typical and shadowy one" (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899).

Ah, that was the very point—this wonderful juncture in Israel's history was but "a typical and a shadowy" one, and therefore it made all the difference whether it were viewed by the eye of faith or with the eye of sense. To those who contemplated it with the eye of faith, and saw therein a blessed foreshadowment of a yet distant future, it afforded holy encouragement, strengthening them in patient endurance and hope. But to those who looked upon this successful period with the eye of sense, it could prove only a snare. As another has pointed out, "When the feelings of nature predominate (and they always do predominate when faith is not in vigorous exercise), triumph or success even when recognized as a gift of God's undeserved mercy, will, nevertheless, be so used

as to exalt ourselves. As weeds flourish under sunshine and showers, so when there is not watchfulness, the tendencies of our nature germinate under mercies.”

This, it seems to us, is the chief practical lesson inculcated by our present passage. It points a most solemn warning against *the dangers of success*. If adversity carries with it a measure of menace to the spiritual life, the perils of prosperity are far greater. If through our unwatchfulness, the former leads to discontent and murmuring, the latter will, unless we be doubly on our guard, issue in self-complacency and self-sufficiency. It is when we are brought low, by losses and trials, that we are the most cast upon God—as it is when success crowns our efforts and our barns are well-filled, that we are most apt to walk independently of Him. Little wonder, then, that the Lord trusts few of His people with much of this world’s goods. The same applies to spiritual blessings—if earnestness of a coming rest are granted, they will be regarded as realities instead of foreshadowings, and then we shall rest before our time to rest—instead of continuing to press forward.

It seems likely that David had fallen into this snare, encouraging imaginations which were completely at variance with the facts of both his own and Israel’s actual condition—that is, utterly inconsistent with the truth that their national propriety was but typical and transitory. In the first place, to number the people was but the natural act of one who had persuaded himself that Israel had entered upon a period of stable and permanent rest. In the second place, to number the people was an act indicative of ownership, and it was obviously wrong for David to regard Israel as though they were *his* people, whom it was legitimate to number as *his* inheritance and strength. Instead, he should have viewed them as the congregation and inheritance of JEHOVAH, to be numbered only when *He* gave the command. Finally, he ought to have looked upon them as JEHOVAH’s *redeemed* inheritance and therefore never to be numbered without a typical ransom for the soul of each being rendered to God.

The divine statute was very definite on this point, “When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man *a ransom for his soul* unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them....And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls” (Exo 30:12, 16). “The very mention of the ‘atonement money’ was sufficient to banish every feeling of pride or independence both from him who numbered and from those who were numbered amongst the congregation of JEHOVAH, for ‘according to JEHOVAH’s fear so is his wrath’ (see Psa 90:11)—that is, the nearer we draw to JEHOVAH to fear and to serve Him, the more do we supply occasions for His displeasure and wrath, for the higher and holier the service, the more does our natural sinful incompetence appear.

“The very fact of being His congregation, appointed to draw nigh to Him and serve Him in His holiness, must entail chastisement and plague on all numbered as His people, unless atonement interposed and provided a ransom for the soul. If David, unbidden, and in unholy elation of heart, presumed to number Israel as if there had been in them a strength that needed not to fear any chastisement, or dread any abasement, it is no wonder that the atonement money would have been withheld. It seems to have been utterly forgotten. No mention is made thereof. He seems not to have recollected the words ‘that there be no *plague* among them when thou numberest them.’ Israel was numbered as if they could forego that protection of grace which the atonement-money signified, and stand firm on the basis of that strength which in their recent triumphs had been so marvelously exhibited” (B. W. Newton).

But we must now look at this strange and solemn incident from another angle, from the side presented to us in 1 Chronicles 21:1, where we are permitted a glimpse behind the veil, “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.” Expositors have pointed out that these words, “stood up” (carefully compare Zec 3:1) have a forensic force, being an expression which alludes to the posture of those who accuse or charge another person with a crime in a court of law. In Revelation 12:10, Satan is expressly designated, “the accuser of our brethren,” which office we behold him discharging in Job 1:9-12. All these passages are admittedly deeply mysterious, yet in the light of them it appears that the spiritual condition of Israel at this time gave the adversary an advantage, and that he promptly used the same by representing their condition to the Lord as a reason why they should be *punished*. This seems to be clearly borne out by the terms of 2 Samuel 24:1.

“And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David *against them* to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.” “The Israelites had offended God by their ungrateful and repeated rebellions against David, by not duly profiting under the means employed for the revival of religion, and probably by that pride, luxury, and ungodliness, which generally springs from great prosperity. They had before, in a famine which lasted three years, experienced the effects of the divine displeasure, and it is likely they had not been amended by the correction. But some think that the sin immediately intended was the setting up of Absalom for king and rebelling against David. This, David had cordially forgiven, but it was a national defection from God, which He did not judge it proper to leave unpunished. So that again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and He permitted Satan to tempt and prevail against David, that in *chastising* him, He might *punish* them” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

The nation at large was not made up of those who walked by faith and trod the path of the divine statutes. Very far from it, as is clearly intimated by David’s prayer, “Help LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men” (Psa 12:1). From 2 Samuel 23:6, it is also plain that the “sons of Belial” were strong and numerous in the midst of Israel, so that we need not be surprised that the signal triumphs which had been vouchsafed them should have awakened in the hearts of the majority a proud and self-sufficient arrogance, which was bound to affect their fellows, and which thus called forth the sore displeasure of God. Nothing gives Satan so easy an approach to and such an advantage over us as when we are swelled by a sense of our self-importance. Few things are more detestable unto God than a heart that is inflated by egotism—note how the seven things which He hates is headed by “a proud look” (Pro 6:16-19). How urgently we need to heed the exhortation of Christ, and take His yoke upon us and learn of Him who is “meek and lowly in heart” (Mat 11:29).

It is indeed solemn to see one so near the end of his earthly pilgrimage, one who had (in the main) for many years walked so closely with God, now giving place to the devil and being overcome by him. What proof is this that neither age nor experience is (in itself) any safeguard against Satan’s attacks. As long as the believer is in this world the great enemy of our souls has access to us, is often permitted to work upon our corruptions, and under certain restrictions to tempt us. And therefore it is we are called upon to, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith” (1Pe 5:6-9). We have purposely quoted the whole of that passage because it is imperative that we heed the order of its several precepts—we cannot obey those in verse 8 unless and until we respond to those in verses 6-7.

There never comes a time, then, when the saint on earth can dispense with any part of the armour which God has provided, nor when he may relax his vigilance against his untiring and remorseless adversary. If the time of youth be dangerous because of hot passions, the season of old age is imperiled by the surgings of pride. Therefore must we watch and pray always lest we enter into temptation. And the higher be the rank of the saint, the more important and influential be the office he holds, then the greater is his need to be doubly on his guard. It has ever been Satan's way to level his principal attacks against those who are eminent for usefulness, knowing full well that if he can encompass *their* downfall, many others will be involved either in his sin or in his sufferings. We must leave for our next (D.V.) other important lessons taught by this incident.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

8. Its Manifestation

Before looking at some of the obstacles which might be supposed to stand in the way of the believer being carried safely through all temptation into eternal glory, we must guard against a possible misconception. It is not the prerogative of divine grace to save men, continue how they will in sin, out of an absolute sovereignty because it will save them. No indeed, God saves none without rule, much less against rule. The very verse which speaks of Him being the "God of all grace" (1Pe 5:10) adds, "who hath *called us*," and as 2 Timothy 1:9 declares, God calls us "with an *holy calling*...according to...his grace"—for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (see Heb 12:14). The Monarchy of Grace has fundamental laws, as all well-regulated monarchies have. Let the foundation of God be never so sure that "the Lord knoweth [loveth] them that are his," yet it is added, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2Ti 2:19).

On the other hand, we do unhesitatingly declare the Scriptures teach that the saving grace of God is an effectual, all-powerful, infallible principle in the hearts of the regenerate, enabling them to keep those rules that are essentially requisite to salvation. The one thing which Arminians suppose stands in the way of this is man's free will—as if God had made a creature which He was unable to rule. We are not ashamed to affirm that there is such a supremacy in divine grace that it engages all in God to its triumphant issue. on the one hand, grace complies with divine wisdom, justice, and holiness in setting rules. on the other hand, grace draws all other attributes of God into an engagement for the preserving of us, keeping our otherwise perverse wills within the compass of those rules, and overcoming all opposition to the contrary. Hence it is that God makes so absolute a covenant, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good...they shall not depart from me" (Jer 32:40).

We now desire to point out the arguments of comfort and support which may be drawn from this grand truth that the God of all grace will safely carry His people through all temptations. Having begun as the God of all grace in justifying them after this manner, and in sanctifying them at their effectual call, what is there which should divert and hinder Him from conducting them to eternal glory? Is it the *guilt* of sin, incurred by transgressions after calling? or the *power* of sin again recovering its strength in them? If neither of these, then nothing else remains. As both of them, at times, acutely distress the consciences and minds of Christians, it is advisable for us to

point out that there is nothing in either of them which can even *begin* to turn God's heart from off His beloved children. May the Lord graciously help us to make this quite clear.

If anything was calculated to provoke God *not* to continue His grace unto the Christian it would be the guilt of those sins committed after his calling. But that shall *not* be able to so do. If God justified them at the first from sins mountain high, and thereby became engaged to continue a God of all grace ever after to them, then surely He will not fail to pardon their after-sins. Compare matters as they stood in this respect before calling with the state thereof after. First, at our calling God pardoned a continued course of sinning for many years, wherein there had been laid up a multitude too great for us to number. But in pardoning our sins *after* conversion it is at worst but of backslidings, and those repaired by many sincere repentings coming between. If then, God pardoned an entire course of sinning, will He not much more easily continue to pardon backslidings intermingled with repentings, even though they are sins committed again and again?

“Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am *married* unto you” (Jer 3:14). Married Israel had been to God before, but she had gone a-whoring from Him. At his first conversion, God is espoused to the believer and He did then give up Himself to be a God of all grace to him. How marvellous is such grace to His unfaithful spouse! “Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am *merciful* saith the LORD” (Jer 3:12). So merciful is He that He pardons on the lowest terms we could desire, “only *acknowledge* thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice” (v. 13). The same is found again in Isaiah 57:17-18 and Hosea 14:4, where He promises to heal their backslidings.

Now if the God of all grace picked us up out of the mire when our hearts were wholly hard and impenitent, broke them, and forgave us all our years of sinning—then shall He not continue to melt our hearts when we backslide and recover us? Then He forgave you all your past sins in one immeasurable lump—now He distributes His pardon daily as you humble yourself for transgressions. That fountain opened “for sin and for uncleanness (Zec 13:1) is constantly available for us. Do you not confess your sins, plead the blood of Christ, seek for mercy at the throne of grace, and beg forgiveness through Christ's intercession? If so, you shall not seek in vain, for though God pardons not because of your humbling and seeking (as they are your doing), yet in this course runs His pardoning grace.

But will not those who have been effectually called, reply, Alas, my sins since conversion have been greater and grosser than any I committed before. Answer—first, you may have been very young when first converted, since then, as you have developed according to the course of nature, lusts, too, have grown, and you are more conscious of them than in early youth. Second, your circumstances may account for them, though not excuse them. Some do sin worse after conversion than before—Job and Jeremiah sinned more grievously in later life than during their earlier years, for their temptations grew much higher. Third, consider not only your awful sins, but your sincere repenting too—your earnest crying to God against them, which were not disregarded by Him—demonstrating again that He is “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10).

One other thing which might be supposed to obstruct the course of God's grace begun in us at effectual calling, causing His heart to be diverted from us, is the *power* and ragings of sin within the Christian. But if He did sanctify us at the first as the God of all grace, then surely that affords a sure ground of confirmation that, notwithstanding the hazards with which our remaining corruptions might seem to threaten us, He will assuredly preserve grace in us despite all the temptations we are subject to. At his sanctification, God laid in the soul of the Christian the seeds

of every grace and gracious disposition that he shall ever possess. Is He not well able to nourish and preserve this garden of His own planting? Listen to His most precious promise, “I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day” (Isa 27:3).

“Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (Jam 4:5-6). This clearly denotes that our fiercest and most perilous conflicts are with some particular lust or temptation, for so the apostle’s instance here carries it—the lust of envy. But when a regenerated soul is conscious of this corruption and does humble himself under it and for it, bewailing the same before God, this shows that a contrary grace is working within him, opposing the activities of that lust, *resisting* that envy (and the pride from which it springs), and therefore it is that he seeks for humility (the contrary grace to pride), and the Lord, as the God of all grace, gives him “more grace.”

But many a poor soul will reply—alas, I greatly fear that my condition is far worse now than ever it was previously. Answer—take the very worst condition that you have ever been in since conversion, and consider the frame of your heart therein, and then compare it with the best mood you were ever in before conversion. Honestly, would you exchange this now for that then? Before conversion, you had not the least iota of holy affection in you, no aim at the glory of God, but since conversion you have (take the whole course of your Christian life) had an eye unto God and sought to please Him. True, like David, you must say, “I have gone astray like [not a *sow*, but] a lost sheep,” yet can you also add with him, “Seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments” (Psa 119:176).

Before your conversion you never called upon God, unless as a formality, but now you often cry unto Him unfeignedly. Before, you had no real hatred of sin and no pursuit after holiness, but now you have, though falling far short of what you would be. You talk of lusts harrying you with temptations. Yes, but once you had the devil dwelling *within* you, as in his own house, in peace, and taking you captive at his will. You complain of coldness in the performance of spiritual duties. Yes, but once you were wholly dead. It may be your graces are not shining, and yet there are in you longings after God, desires to fear His name. There is, then, a living spiritual creature in you, which, like the mole underground, is working up towards the air, heaving up the earth.

A further proof (in 1Pe 5:10) that the God of all grace will carry safely through all suffering and temptations into heaven those whom He has called, is contained in the words “called us unto his *eternal glory*.” Though we are not yet in actual possession and full enjoyment thereof, nevertheless God has already invested us with a full and indefeasible right thereunto. This “glory” was the firstborn of all God’s thoughts and intentions concerning us, for it was the end or upshot of His gracious designs with us. Said the Lord Jesus, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luk 12:32), and He will exclaim in the day to come, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mat 25:34), which refers unto heaven itself, where God reigns as undisputed King.

Now God’s heart is so set upon this glory as His first and last end for His people that, when His electing grace is made known at our calling, He does then give us a full right thereto. Though He may suspend the giving us the full possession of it for some years, yet He does not suspend the complete title thereto, for the whole of salvation is then stated upon them. A beautiful (and designed) type of this is found in 1 Samuel 16:18. In the open view of his brethren, God sent Samuel to David while he was yet young, and anointed him king, thereby investing him unto a sure right to the kingdom of Israel—that anointing being the earnest and pledge of all the rest. But for many years David’s possession of the kingdom was delayed, and during that time he suffered

much at the hands of Saul, nevertheless, God miraculously preserved him and brought him safely into it.

But note well that God has not only called us unto His glory, but unto “His *eternal* glory” (1Pe 5:10), whereby is implied not simply that the glory is eternal as an adjunct of it—but that our calling and estate thereby is into the eternity of that glory, as well as unto the glory itself. This implies two things. First, he that is called of God has a spiritual life or glory begun in his soul which is eternal—note how the image of Christ wrought in the believer in this life is termed “glory” in 2 Corinthians 3:18. This glory or spiritual life in the Christian is indestructible, “Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (Joh 11:26). Second, it imports that when a man is called, he is put into possession of an eternal right of glory—not a present right to glory only, but a *perpetual* right—a present right that reaches to eternity. We are “made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Ti 3:7).

There is yet one other phrase in 1 Peter 5:10 which remains to be considered, “by Jesus Christ.” There is a security which Jesus Christ gives, as well as that of the Father’s, to confirm the believer’s faith that he shall be strengthened and enabled to persevere. God is the God of all grace to us *by Jesus Christ*, all His acts of grace towards us are in and through Him. He elected us at first and then loved us only as considered in Jesus Christ. God having thus laid Christ as the Mediator, or rather as the foundation of His grace, it is a sure ground of its continuance to us. All God’s purposes of grace were made in Christ, and all His promises are established and performed in and through Him.

There are two persons engaged for the preservation of saints unto glory—God the Father and Jesus Christ. We have seen what confirmation to our faith the interests that God the Father has to us does afford—equally full and strong is that supplied by the interest which Jesus Christ has to them. The making of our salvation sure and steadfast against all opposition is directly founded upon Him and committed to Him. Concerning Jesus Christ, God says, “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, *a sure foundation*: he that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa 28:16), or as the apostle explains, “shall not be confounded” (1Pe 2:6). We are “the called of Jesus Christ” (Rom 1:6). We have “eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:23). God “stablisheth us with you in Christ” (2Co 1:21).

Little space remains for us to consider the security which a due contemplation of Christ’s person, His relation to us, and office for us, affords to our faith that we shall be divinely strengthened to persevere unto the end. only a few details can therefore be mentioned. First, His *redemptive work*. This is of such infinite worth that it not only purchased for us our first calling into grace (Rom 5:2), but together therewith, our continuance in that grace. Christ meritoriously bought off all our temptations and an ability in Himself to succour and establish us to the end. “Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world” (Gal 1:4). “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Ti 2:14). While His precious blood retains its infinite value in the esteem of God, not one of His sheep can perish.

Second, Christ’s *tender pity*. “For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb 2:18). In the previous verse, it is declared that He is a “merciful high priest” to pity us, so that He has a heart and willingness to help His people. But in verse 18, it is added that He is able so to do. And mark, it is not affirmed that He is able in respect of His personal power, as He is God, but there is a further and acquired ability as He is man. He was made a frail man, subject to temptations, and the painful experiences through which He

passed in the days of His humiliation engages His heart to pity us when in distress, and because of this acquired tenderness, He is able to succour us in temptation.

Third, His *intercession*. “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom 5:10), that is, by His life for us in heaven. “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25). If, then, you have come unto God by Him, Christ’s intercession effectually secures your uttermost salvation. Because He has taken you into His heart, He has taken you into His prayers. once Christ takes us into His prayers, He will never leave us out, but prevail for us, whatever be our case or whatever we fall into (1Jo 2:1)—clear proof of this was furnished by the case of Peter. A man may be cast out of the prayers of a saint, as Saul was out of Samuel’s, but none was ever cast out of Christ’s prayers whom He once took in. His prayers will prevail to prevent you falling into such sins as God will not forgive.

Fourth, *Christ’s interest in that glory* we are called unto and our interest in Christ’s glory, for they are one. “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1Co 1:9)—that is, to be partakers of the same things (in our measure) that He is partaker of. “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (Rom 6:5). The apostle declares that God calls “you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2Th 2:14). It is Christ’s own glory—the reward of that wondrous work by which He so illustriously magnified the Father—which His people are brought into, for nothing short of this would satisfy the heart of Christ. “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory” (Joh 17:24).

Here, then, is how the secret election of God in eternity past is openly manifested unto His people in this time state—by a supernatural call and by miraculously bringing them through a world which is as hostile to their souls as Babylon’s furnace was to the bodies of the three Hebrews.

THE HOLY SABBATH

4. Its Renewal

In order to bridge the small gap between this article and last month’s, we must ponder a very striking passage in Exodus 16, from which we may learn some facts of deep importance concerning the existence and observance of the Holy Sabbath prior to Israel’s reaching Sinai. That chapter records God’s giving of the manna as Israel’s daily food while they were in the wilderness. First, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily” (Exo 16:4-5). From these verses it is unmistakably clear that a divine *law* was in existence *before* the ten commandments were inscribed on the tables of stone, and from what follows it is equally evident that the observance of the Sabbath was part of this self-same law. In no other way can these words of God to Moses be explained.

The Lord was about to give His people a daily supply of manna and made it known to Moses that a double supply should be furnished them on the sixth day—to make up for none being given them on the seventh. In this respect Exodus 16 is parallel with Genesis 2:2-3, inasmuch as once more we see the Creator condescending to be the Exemplar of His creatures—JEHOVAH manifested His regard for the Sabbath by withholding manna on that day. “We may here observe three miracles in honour of the Sabbath, and to secure it against desecration were wrought every week before the promulgation of the law at Sinai. Double the quantity of manna fell on the sixth day. None fell on the Sabbath. The manna preserved for that day did not corrupt” (Robert Haldane, 1764-1842).

Next we are told, “And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses” (Exo 16:22). Now note very particularly the definite language of Moses in reply, “This is that which the LORD hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD” (Exo 16:23). This is the *first express mention* of the “Sabbath” in the history of Israel, and the terms in which it is here introduced utterly precludes the absurd idea that the Sabbath was then, for the first time formally and legally instituted. No candid mind reading this chapter for the first time would ever conclude that here was a most important religious ordinance, quite unknown before, now given to the people. Rather is it not obvious to any careful reader that throughout the whole of this narrative two facts (unnamed) were in the mind of the writer, without regard to which the account is unintelligible—that a divine law was binding on the people (by which they were to be proved afresh) and that they had a sufficient knowledge thereof as to be expected to keep the Sabbath.

The words of Moses in verse 23 are brought in only incidentally, in answer to a question put to him by the elders—the substance of which is, the people have done quite right in gathering a double supply of manna on the sixth day. Moses was far from speaking in the style of one promulgating a new law, nor do we find him giving any detailed instructions as to the manner in which the seventh day was to be kept. The wilderness of Sin was far from being the birthplace of this blessed ordinance. These scenes described in Exodus 16 obviously point us back to an earlier and primeval appointment. But ere passing on, let us duly note that the words of Moses in verse 23 affirmed the three principal features of the Sabbath. First, it is designed for “rest;” second, it is “holy”—set apart from the six working days; third, it is to be kept “to the Lord”—that is, it is a day for divine worship and service.

“And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?” (Exo 16:27-28). Here we have illustrated the universal rebellion of the human heart. Here we have exemplified the common tendency to desecrate God’s holy day. Even after the most explicit instructions to rest on the seventh day (Exo 16:23), some of the people went out “for to gather.” And mark God’s response, “*How long* refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws.” This was not the first time that Israel had profaned the Sabbath—the words “how long” prove this.

They also confirm what we said above on verse 4, long before Sinai was reached, Israel had God’s commandments and laws. JEHOVAH Himself says so, and the man who denies it, no matter what his standing or reputation, is guilty of the awful sin of making God a liar. “How long refuse ye” looks back to the wicked conduct of Israel while in Egypt.

Finally, observe how verse 29 supplies one more proof that Sabbath observance was no new thing at this time, “See, for that the LORD hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his

place on the seventh day.” Mark the careful distinction in the verbs used here, “The LORD *hath given* you the Sabbath, therefore he *giveth* you on the sixth day the bread of two days.” What excuseless ignorance, then, is betrayed by those who affirm that the Sabbath was first instituted at Sinai. It is either ignorance or willful perversion of the Scriptures, and charity requires us to conclude that it must surely be the former.

We are now to consider the renewing or reinforcing of the Holy Sabbath at Sinai. “Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it” (Exo 20:8-11). The ten commandments were uttered immediately by the voice of God Himself in the hearing of all the people (Exo 19), whereas all the other laws (whether ceremonial or judicial) were given through Moses. Those ten commandments, and they alone, were twice written by the finger of God on tables of stone, to denote their durability and permanence. The ten commandments were put *inside* the sacred ark itself, whereas the other laws (written in a book by Moses) were only placed in its side.

But if God in those ways emphasized the supreme momentousness of the ten Words, giving them a place superior to all other laws, He also signalized in a peculiar way the outstanding importance and value of the fourth commandment. First, it is marked with a particular memento above the other commands, “Remember”—partly because of our proneness to neglect and partly because of its vast importance. Second, it is noticeable that the other nine are expressed simply, either negatively or positively, but this one *both* ways, “keep it holy...in it thou shalt not do any work,” as if God put particular care to fence it on all sides. Third, its striking position in the Decalogue—it is put at the close of the first table and before the beginning of the second, to signify the observance of both tables depends radically upon our obedience to this particular precept.

It is indeed instructive to observe—O that we may have ears to hear—how the Lord God has fenced this particular commandment with more hedges than any of the other nine, to prevent our violation thereof and to render excuseless any trifling therewith. In addition to what has been pointed out above, we note, fourth, this commandment has more reasons to enforce it than has any of the others. God has therein condescended to give three cogent arguments to press the observance of this law upon us. The first is taken from His own example, which certainly it is both our glory and our duty to imitate in all things in which He has proposed Himself to be our pattern—God rested on the seventh day and so must we. The second reason is taken from the bountiful portion of time which God has allowed us for the affairs of this life, namely, six-sevenths of our days, and therefore it is but fitting and equitable that the seventh should be devoted to God. Third, from the dedication of the seventh day to God’s immediate worship and service, “The Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.”

Let us observe that the character of those reasons wherewith God enforces the fourth commandment contain in them a most forcible argument to show that the Sabbath is *perpetually binding*. Negatively, we note there is nothing whatever in those reasons which suggest that the Sabbath ordinance was a ceremonial institution, or that it was to be regarded as being among those things which were typical of Christ to come in the flesh, which things were therefore to be abolished at His coming. Positively, there lies upon us today an obligation just as strong and binding as rested upon the Jews of old, for we equally with them are duty-bound to heed the

example which the Creator set His creatures at the beginning. We are clearly required to own God as the Lord of our time by devoting one seventh thereof to His worship, and we certainly need the blessings attendant on a due observance of the Sabbath as much as ever did the Israelites in Old Testament times.

It is often asserted that Sabbath observance was made binding on the Hebrews only. But this is a most serious error. Not only is the fourth commandment of perpetual force, but it is *universally binding*. The arguments made above for the former, apply with equal force to the latter. The tribute which the fourth commandment demands for God is unquestionably due Him from all His creatures alike. This commandment is “holy, and just” (Rom 7:12), and as the apostle shows in that chapter, is also “good” for Gentiles as much so as for Jews. We could imagine some reason for saying that the fifth commandment has an exclusive Jewish cast, because the promise subjoined to it refers to long life “in the land.” This it might be supposed was something spoken to the Jews alone. But such a supposition is immediately ruled out of court by Ephesians 6:1-2—note “this IS [not “was”] the first commandment with promise.”

“The ground on which the obligation to keep the Sabbath is based in the commandment is the most universal in its bearing that could possibly be conceived, ‘Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy...for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth’ (Exo 20:8, 11). There is manifestly nothing Jewish here, nothing connected with individual interests or even national history. The grand fact out of which the precept is made to grow is of equal significance to the whole world and why should not the precept be the same? It seems, indeed, as if God, in the appointment of this law, had taken especial precautions against the attempts which He foresaw would be made to get rid of the institution, and that on this account He based its foundations first in the original framework and constitution of nature” (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874). What spiritual mind can doubt that this was what regulated Him who knew the end from the beginning.

How utterly futile are all these quibblings of men. How baseless their contentions. How strikingly were they anticipated and refuted by the Lord from the start. Why the very terms of the fourth commandment itself bring its obligation to bear upon the Gentiles! So far from obedience to this precept being limited to the Jews, it legislated also for “the *stranger* that is within thy gates”! Observe how godly Nehemiah enforced the observance of it upon the Gentiles as well as the Jew, “There dwelt men of *Tyre* also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah....I commanded that the gate should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath” (Neh 13:16-19). It was the observance of it and not the obligation of it which was peculiar to the Jews. It was placed in their custody for the good of all mankind.

The fourth commandment *in the Decalogue* was not the original institution of the Sabbath, but rather its formal *renewal* and re-enforcement. As we have shown in previous articles, the actual sanctification and appointment of the sacred day of rest in worship takes us back to Eden itself, synchronizing with the very creation of man. It has also been shown that there are quite a number of unmistakable traces of the Sabbath being actually observed by God’s people in the very earliest days of human history (Gen 26:5). But after the family of Jacob settled down in Egypt, they soon learned the ways of the heathen, and to a considerable extent at least, abandoned the instituted worship of JEHOVAH. Ezekiel 20:4-8 leaves us in no doubt that it was because of their idolatry the Lord employed the Egyptians in so severely chastising them.

“And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a-whoring” (Lev 17:7). The reference here is to Israel’s wickedness while sojourning in the land of Pharaoh, as Joshua 24:14 tells us, “Put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side

of the flood (see vv. 2-3), and in *Egypt*,” and as Ezekiel 23:3 declares, “They committed whoredom in *Egypt*.” It was pure grace which moved the Lord to deliver His wayward people from the house of bondage and enter into a covenant with them. But grace ever reigns through righteousness and never at the expense of the requirements of holiness. Accordingly JEHOVAH, in a most awe-inspiring manner, renewed His law at Sinai and intimated its lasting character by inscribing it on stones by His own finger—in the very center of which He placed the Sabbath statute. God has given us liberty to follow our lawful callings throughout the six working days and therefore it is but little for us to devote the seventh to Him.

“Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy” (Exo 20:8). “Remember”—call to mind its original institution; cherish it in your affections; duly meet its just requirement, “The Sabbath”—the sacred rest—its merciful freedom from temporal toil, its opportunities for obtaining deliverance from bondage of sin, its foreshadowment of the eternal rest awaiting those who now walk obediently to the divine statutes. “To keep it holy”—sever it from common use and consecrate the same to the service of God. It is no less a sin than a sacrilegious stealing of that which is holy to purloin any part of that time which God has consecrated to Himself and to employ in it either sinful or secular activities. How the Sabbath is to be observed, what works are permissible and what are not, will be considered by us (D.V.) in future articles.

CHRIST FULFILLING THE LAW

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Mat 5:17). Though we have only just completed a more or less full exposition of the passage in which this verse occurs, we propose to quote some of the comments made thereon by one of the ablest Scottish divines of last century—principally because he treats of it from a different angle than we did and also because its grand theme is now so little believed. Our present author dealt with its doctrinal import, in relation to the atonement.—A.W.P.

1. In the fulfillment of the law and of the prophets, the Lord Jesus must be considered as acting in the capacity of *a surety or substitute*—and the obedience in both lights was, beyond doubt, *vicarious*. Hence His active obedience is for us, and reckoned to our account, not otherwise than if *we* had fulfilled it.

The entire obedience of Christ was a compliance with the will of God as expressed in the law. And His conscious aim in His mission, as He here expresses it, was to fulfil the law. If, according to the federal agreement, the law was the special sphere of Christ’s earthly work, it is obvious that without a clear conception of the law, not only in the extent of its claims, but also in the extent of the curse which it entails, we cannot adequately know His obedience in our stead. Hence we must look at the usual threefold division of human duty, in relation to God, to ourselves, and to our fellowmen, if we would adequately apprehend the extent and breadth of this obedience.

With regard to the duties toward God, the whole life of Christ shows that He was animated by supreme love to God (Joh 14:31), that a desire to glorify God was His grand aim in all things (Joh 17:4), and that, from love to His Father, He followed with an undeviating purpose the will of God in all things (Joh 15:10). He gives expression to this at the threshold of the greatest trial, “But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence” (Joh 14:31). The trust which He reposed in the Father, the prayers and the thanksgivings recorded in His history, all suffice to show this.

The second class of duties are those which we owe to ourselves. And these, too, Jesus fulfilled in a perfect purity of conduct, in a self-denial which distinguished Him as the meek and lowly one (Mat 11:29) and in that marked feature of His character by which He pleased not Himself (Rom 15:3).

As to the third class of duties, again, those toward our neighbour, and which are summed up in that word which Paul designates the fulfilling of the law—the Lord Jesus speaks of it when He says, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Joh 15:13). This He did and He went about during all His previous life doing good (Act 10:38). It was in the exercise of this love that He made intercession for His own (Joh 17:9) and prayed for His enemies (Luk 23:34). And among these duties must be comprehended that obedience to His parents to which there is an early allusion (Luk 2:51), and which shone out so brightly on the cross, just before the earthly relation toward his mother was dissolved forever (Joh 19:26).

Thus at every step we can trace the most prompt and undeviating fulfillment of the divine law. It was no common obedience, however, which was necessary to constitute the ground of our acceptance, but one which must needs pass through unparalleled difficulties and sorrows, which we can but faintly conceive of, and which must possess a value, on account of the dignity of His person, such as is nothing short of infinite. The grand commandment laid on Him, and the culmination of His whole obedience, was to die, And hence it was in the spontaneous oblation of His life that the greatness of the obedience was peculiarly displayed.

2. It was one *undivided obedience*, for Scripture knows of only one service or work in which all the elements of submission or obedience meet. It was not a double obedience. The entire life of Jesus must be apprehended as one connected deed. But the obligation was twofold, including the perfect obedience of His life, as well as the suffering of death, or the obedience unto death. The right formula, then, is not “to obey or suffer”—for the claim to a service of love with all the heart still unalterable devolves upon man as man, just as it did in man’s primeval state. Not only so—the person who expiates sin must of necessity accept the curse with the utmost alacrity and adoring love, and with a full sense that the infliction of it is to the glory of God. These two elements enter into the Lord’s obedience, and neither could be omitted. Hence only a person free from all moral defilement, and therefore not needing to satisfy for personal defects, was in a position to undergo the inconceivable suffering due to sin. What He did concurred with what He suffered, to satisfy the divine law, and to place man in the position which he occupied before the fall or rather, in a higher relation, because in a primal state and in a state of confirmation.

Had the church been left to herself without the attacks of error, the two elements of Christ’s obedience probably would not have been so much sundered as they have often unduly been. We may distinguish, but not divide, the parts of that obedience which is one. But the obedience of Christ before His final sufferings, and during them, or as it has been called, the active and passive obedience, may be vindicated, as two distinct but connected elements, in His propitiatory work. The active obedience belongs to the atonement, and is an essential part of the satisfaction to divine justice, in the wide and proper acceptation of the word justice. This is a question which has been canvassed long and earnestly, and we rather refer to it in connection with this passage, because the tendency to deny the element of the active obedience is so strong in modern theology. The question is not whether the holiness and active obedience of Christ were necessary to sanctify His sufferings, which no one will call in question, but whether they were available for this alone.

Nor is this the question—whether Christ’s passive obedience is the ground of our salvation, without the other. It is *not*, whether Christ’s holy obedience was necessary to His person as a due prerequisite to that atonement which He offered, but whether Christ, in His entire obedience as

well as in His expiatory work, won an unchallengeable title to life for such as are willing to be dependent on Him and who were unable personally to meet the law's demand—"This do, and thou shalt live" (Luk 10:28). The consequences of denying the active obedience of Christ are these—either God must be supposed to recede from His rights, which would just be tantamount to saying that He denied Himself, or man must be held to procure the title to heaven by some services of his own, which are imperfect in their nature. Either supposition is inconsistent with the Gospel. If, however, we dismiss scholastic terms, the matter may be put in the following Biblical way, to which no exception can be taken, The law must be kept, and sin must be punished—and divine wisdom and grace provided a man, that is, a God-man, who was in a position to accomplish both, and did so.

3. Christ's people are thus, through faith in Him, considered as if *they* had always fulfilled the divine law. This is the *second* fruit of Christ's satisfaction, as sin-bearing is the *first*. Thus, according to this essential element of divine truth, the Lord Jesus not only bore sin, but fulfilled all the claims of the divine law, and so put His people in possession of a perfect and immaculate righteousness, and secured for them its due reward. For as God could not have ceased to demand punishment at the hands of sinners, from the very perfection of His nature, so He cannot but *confer a reward* from the same rectitude of His nature, when His law has been fulfilled for them in so complete a way, and by a person so excellent.

But to all these Biblical views of divine truth not a few objections have been taken, and some of them of a nature that seem, at first sight, plausible and staggering.

a. Thus, it is asked, Was not Christ, as a man, bound, in common with every rational creature, to render obedience to God on His own account? The answer to this is not difficult. A right view of Christ's humiliation will suffice to show that He did not owe obedience on His own account and that He was not under the law by any necessity of nature. He owed obedience, not precisely because He took humanity, but because He willed to be made under the law for us. The law was not given for the human nature in union with a divine person, except as He condescended to be abased, and was made under it voluntarily, as a means to an end. Christ became man for no personal object of His own, but only to be a Mediator for others, and in that capacity to fulfil the law.

But for this, He would not have come into the world, or have become man, hence the obedience which He voluntarily discharged was only *for His people*, not for Himself. And Scripture never deduces His active obedience from any natural or inevitable obligation, but always regards it as the end and scope of His mission. Nor can we regard the Lord Jesus as a mere man. He was still the Son of God, neither bound to assume humanity, nor submit to the laws of humanity, nor to encounter any of those numerous temptations by which His obedience was to be exercised. And He did all this spontaneously and vicariously in a humanity which He had assumed, not to be a separate person, but merely as a rational and intelligent instrument or organ, by means of which that great work of vicarious obedience could be accomplished.

b. But it is asked again, How can one be righteous, because another was obedient? The answer is obvious. The entire constitution of our race, as contradistinguished from that of other orders of being, was of this nature—that it stood or fell *in a representative*—and Christ is the second man. Men may quarrel with this arrangement and destroy themselves by proud and petulant rebellion, but it will stand, notwithstanding. Believers are treated in Christ as perfectly righteous, and as if *they* had done all that *He* did. The race is saved on the same principle on which it was placed at first. And we who believe are the fulfillers of the law in the second man, the Lord from heaven.—George Smeaton (1814-1889).



May

MINISTERIAL THIEVES

We have often thought it might be interesting and instructive if we were to devote a short series of articles to some of the misunderstood and misinterpreted texts of the Bible. They are not few in number, nor are the mistakes made in their interpretation trivial in importance. There is nothing trivial in the Holy Scriptures, and it is always to our personal loss when we misapply them. Among those verses whose real meaning is often misunderstood is, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber” (Joh 10:1). Those words have been strangely wrested both by pulpit and pew, and there seems a real need to prayerfully ascertain their significance, for they contain a warning which is a very timely one for these days.

The reference in John 10:1 *is not* to unregenerate souls creeping into the church of God, still less to their obtaining an entrance to heaven. It is well-nigh unthinkable that any commentator should take such a view, for “thieves and robbers” never invade the celestial paradise (see Mat 6:20), nor does Christ lead His sheep out of the church, as He does from this “fold” (see Joh 10:3). It is not fictitious sheep but *false shepherds* our Lord is here depicting. It is not unregenerate souls attempting to steal salvation, but unregenerate preachers seeking to fleece the flock of Christ who are represented by these “thieves and robbers.” Sheep are quite incapable of “climbing up” high fences, but men who would prey upon them will stop at nothing in their determination to fatten at the expense of their victims.

Here, as everywhere, careful attention must be paid to the setting of our verse. John 10:1 forms part of a “parable” (v. 6) or proverb. It is manifestly a continuation of the previous chapter, and therefore the false teachers among the Jews (those who had cast out of the temple the one whose sight Christ had restored—Joh 9:35) were primarily intended by the “thieves and robbers” (Joh 10:8). The priests and scribes demanded of Christ by what authority He acted, seeing that He had received no commission from *them*. Here He turns the tables upon them and insists that *they* had no divine authority to officiate as the pastors of God’s people. In its wider application, the appellation, “thieves and robbers,” refers to all those who invade the pastoral office that are neither called nor equipped by God.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you” (Joh 10:1). The “you,” then, are the Pharisees of John 9:40. “He that entereth not in by the door into the sheepfold”—this “door” must not be confused with that of verse 9—here it is the door into the “sheepfold,” there it is the door of salvation. The “sheepfold” was Judaism, then degenerate—today it is Christendom, now apostate. The “door” into it denoted the *lawful* means of entrance—a divine call—being in contrast from “some other way” by which the thieves and robbers gained access. In styling the Pharisees “thieves and robbers,” Christ denounced them as false shepherds with no divine commission, in sharp

antithesis from Himself, who had (by His credentials) evidenced Himself to be the lawful and good Shepherd (Joh 10:2).

How diligently should they scrutinize their motives who think of entering the ministry, for thousands have abused this divine institution through love of ease, desire for authority and reputation, or love of money, and brought upon themselves “greater damnation” (see Jam 3:1). Thousands have invaded the pastoral office in an unauthorized manner, to fleece sheep rather than feed them, robbing Christ of His honour and starving His people. Solemn beyond words is it to observe how sternly our Lord denounced these false shepherds of His day. As Bishop J. C. Ryle (1816-1900) rightly said, “Nothing seemed so offensive to Christ as a false teacher of religion, a false prophet, or a false shepherd. Nothing ought to be so much feared by the church, be so plainly rebuked, opposed and exposed”—compare Matthew 23:27-28, 33. Says damnation

In conclusion it is pertinent to ask, what are the marks of a true shepherd, how are God’s people to *identify* those called and qualified by Him to minister unto His people? We answer, first, the genuine pastor has *the doctrine of Christ on his lips*. The ministers of the new covenant are described as those who had “renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness.” Christendom today is infested with men who are full of guile and hypocrisy, trimming their sails according to whatever direction the breeze of public opinion is blowing. “Nor handling the word of God deceitfully” (2Co 4:2). The true servant of Christ holds back nothing that is profitable, no matter how unpalatable it may be unto his hearers. He is one who magnifies not himself, nor his denomination, but *Christ*—His wondrous person, His atoning blood, His exacting claims.

Second, the genuine pastor has *the Spirit of Christ in his heart*. It is the Spirit who opens to him the mysteries of the Gospel, so that he is a “wise servant” (Mat 24:45). It is the Spirit of Christ who gives him a love for His sheep, so that it is his greatest delight to lead them into the green pastures of His Word. It is the Spirit of Christ who enables him to use “great plainness [margin “boldness”] of speech” (2Co 3:12), so that he shuns not to declare all the counsel of God. It is the Spirit of Christ who makes him “instant in season, out of season...exhort with all longsuffering” (2Ti 4:2). It is the Spirit of Christ who gives efficacy to his ministry, making it fruitful according to the sovereign pleasure of God.

Third, the genuine pastor has *the example of Christ in his life*, which is a conforming of him to the image of his Master. It is true, sadly true, that there is not one of them who does not fall far short both of the inward and outward image of Christ. Yet there *are* some faint tracings of His image visible in all His true servants, or why do God’s people love them, respect them, hear them? What other claims have they upon their attention? The image of Christ is seen in their words, spirit, actions—it may be broken, like the image of the sun in ruffled water, but it is *there*, otherwise we have no warrant to receive them as God’s servants. Find a man (no easy task today!) who has the doctrine of Christ on his lips, the Spirit of Christ in his heart, and the example of Christ in his life, and you find one of His genuine ministers—all destitute thereof are but “thieves and robbers.”

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

10. The Law and Murder—Matthew 5:21-27

“The discourse which our Lord delivered on this occasion entirely corresponds with the new era which it marked in the history of God’s dispensations. The revelation from Sinai, though

grafted on a covenant of grace (i.e., the Abrahamic, Gal 3:19—"added"), and uttered by God as the Redeemer of Israel, was emphatically a promulgation of law. Its direct and formal object was to raise aloft the claims of the divine righteousness, and meet with repressive and determined energy, the corrupt tendencies of human nature. The sermon on the mount, on the other hand, begins with blessing. It opens with a whole series of beatitudes, blessing after blessing pouring itself forth as from a full spring of beneficence, and seeking, with its varied and copious manifestations of goodness, to leave nothing unprovided for in the deep wants and longing desires of men. Yet, here, also, as in other things, the difference between the New and the Old is relative only, not absolute. There are the same fundamental elements in both, but these differently adjusted, so as fitly to adapt them to the ends they had to serve, and the times to which they respectively belonged.

"In the revelation of law there was a *substratum* of grace, recognized in the words which prefaced the ten commandments, and *promises* of grace and blessing intermingling with the stern prohibitions and injunctions of which they consist. And so, inversely, in the sermon on the mount, while it gives grace priority and prominence, is far from excluding the severer aspect of God's character and government. No sooner, indeed, had grace poured itself forth in a succession of beatitudes, than there appear the stern demands of righteousness and law—the very same law proclaimed from Sinai—and that law so explained and enforced as to bring fully under its sway the intents of the heart, as well as the actions of the life, and by men's relation to it determining their place and destinies in the Messiah's kingdom" (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874).

It is with these "stern demands of righteousness" we are now to be engaged. The transition point is found in Matthew 5:17, though in the verses preceding, our Lord had intimated the trend of what was to follow, by likening the ministry of His servants to the nature and action of "salt." Verses 17-20 contain the preface of all that follows to the end of chapter five. In affirming that He had come to "fulfil" the law, Christ signified, first, that it was His mission as the faithful witness of God and the Teacher of His church to expound the law in its purity and spirituality—and to rescue it from the corruptions of the false teachers of that day. Second, to exemplify its righteousness in His own conduct, by rendering to it a personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience, in thought and word and deed. Third, to endure its curse in His people's stead.

To understand a discourse, nothing is of greater importance than a clear grasp of its object and design. If this be not definitely understood, then the plainest statements may appear obscure, the most conclusive arguments unsatisfactory, and the most pertinent illustrations irrelevant. A great deal of the obscurity which, in most men's minds, rest on many passages of the Scriptures, is to be accounted for on this principle. They do not distinctly perceive or they altogether misapprehend the *purpose* of the inspired writer, consequently they fail to understand his arguments and true meaning. Considerable misapprehension has obtained in reference to those sections of our Lord's sermon which we are about to consider, in consequence of mistakes as to their *object* or design. Yet there is no excuse for this—by carefully weighing verses 17-20 the scope of what follows is obvious.

The words of Christ in verse 17 make it plain that He had not come here to antagonize or annul the law of God, as they equally exclude the idea that it was His design to replace it with a new law. Is it not strange, then, to find Mr. Darby (1800-1882) (in his "Synopsis"), after giving an outline of the contents of the sermon, subjoining a footnote to verses 17-48 in which he says, "In these the exigencies of the law and what Christ required are *contrasted*," which would be to pit the Son against the Father! In verse 20, the Lord Jesus enunciated a general principle, and from verse 21 onwards, He was engaged in illustrating, by varied examples, how and wherein the

righteousness of those whom He would own as subjects of His kingdom exceeded the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

It should be self-evident that the distinctions which Christ proceeded to draw between what had been said by the ancients on certain points of moral and religious duty, and that which He Himself solemnly affirmed, must have respect not to the *real* and actual teaching of the law and the prophets, but rather to the erroneous conclusions which had been drawn therefrom, and of the false notions founded thereon, which were currently entertained at His advent. It were blasphemy to imagine that Christ was so inconsistent as to contradict Himself on this occasion. After so definitely asserting His entire accord with the law and the prophets, and His own dependence upon them, we cannot believe for a moment that He would immediately afterwards set Himself in opposition to them. This must be settled at the outset if we are to have hearts prepared to weigh what follows.

“The scribes and Pharisees of that age had completely inverted the order of things. Their carnality and self-righteousness had led them to exalt the precepts respecting ceremonial observances to the highest place, and to throw the duties inculcated in the ten commandments comparatively into the background—thus treating the mere appendages of the covenant as of more account than its very ground and basis” (Patrick Fairbairn). Therefore it was that when He proceeded to expose the inadequacy and hollowness of “the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,” our Lord made His appeal to the testimony engraved on the two tables, and most commonly, though not exclusively, to the precepts of the second table, because He had to do more especially with hypocrites, whose defects might most readily be revealed by a reference to the duties of the *second* table—compare Matthew 19:16; Luke 10:25 and 18:18.

The first commandment brought forward by Christ on this occasion was the sixth of the Decalogue, “Thou shalt not kill.” All that the Pharisees understood by this was a prohibition of the act of murder, but our Lord insisted that the commandment in its true import prohibited not only the overt act, but every evil working of the heart and mind which led to it—such as unjust anger, with contempt and provoking language. Such an interpretation should not stand in need of any argument. The spiritual mind would rightly reason from such a law—if He who desireth truth in the inward parts (Psa 51:6) condemns murder, then it is evident we must abstain from all that might lead to that culmination of wickedness, and so it would be discovered that “Thou shalt not kill” (Exo 20:13) really signifies, “Thou shalt not hate.”

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment” (Mat 5:21). To what, or rather to whom, did our Lord *not* refer to in His, “them of old time?” (Mat 5:27). Certainly not Moses, nor to His Father, as the plural “them” unequivocally shows. Then to whom? In answering this question, let us also show wherein lay the special need for Christ to here expound and enforce the law. Unfortunately for the nation, there was ample opportunity for the scribes and Pharisees to corrupt God’s law, for the rank and file of the people were unable to read the Scriptures in their original tongue. When the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity, they had largely forgotten their own language and therefore could not read the Hebrew text.

Obviously, it was the duty of the learned to supply the people with a plain and simple translation of God’s Word into the Chaldee or Aramaic. But the proud and selfish Rabbis were concerned not with the glory of God and the good of the people, but with the exaltation of their own order. Therefore, instead of preparing a translation which could be read by the masses at large, they were accustomed, in the synagogues, to read off a loose rendering of the sacred text (alleged to be simpler than the original), intermingled with their own explanatory remarks. It was

this ancient paraphrase of the law, with the comments of the Rabbis, that the scribes and Pharisees reiterated, and to which our Lord alluded when He here mentioned “them of old time.”

God’s commandment, “Thou shalt not kill” (Exo 20:13), was capable of expansion into the widest spiritual meaning, prohibiting all hatred against our fellows. But the scribes and Pharisees restricted it to the bare act of murder as an external crime—as is quite clear from the next verse, where it is referred to as a crime for the consideration of the judicial courts of earth. Thus they were guilty of restricting the scope of God’s command, and by connecting it with earthly courts, both suggested to their hearers that only external deeds are sinful, and also removed the very wholesome fear of the judgment to come, when God shall lay bare not only the actual deeds of men, but even their innermost thoughts, and accuse the murderer in *desire* and intention equally guilty with the actual slayer of his fellow.

Ere passing on, let us make three remarks. First, how strangely has history repeated itself! The religious leaders of Israel refused to make a plain translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into the speech used by the people upon their exodus from the Babylonian captivity, keeping them in ignorance of the pure Word of God, determining to retain matters in their own hands and exalting their own order. So the Papacy (after the desolating persecution of the early church by the Roman emperors) refused to make an accurate translation of the Scriptures! They clung, instead, to the corrupt rendition of the Vulgate version, corrupting her dupes by the additions, restrictions, and alterations she made to divine revelation—her present-day prelates and priests reiterating what was said by their predecessors “in old time”!

Second, how worthless is antiquity as such! As there is a class of people who make a fetish of what is modern and despise anything of the past, so there is a certain type of mind which is strongly attracted by the antique and which venerates traditions. But antiquity is no infallible mark of true doctrine, for this exposition of the sixth commandment had obtained among the Jews for centuries past, yet Christ, the great Doctor of the church, rejected it as *false*, and therefore the argument which the Papists use, for the establishing of some of their dogmas and practices drawn from antiquity, is of no effect. Equally worthless are the appeals of Protestants to the Reformers and the Puritans unless they can show that their teachings rested upon a clear, “Thus saith the Lord.”

Third, how thankful we should be that we have the pure Word of God reliably translated into our mother tongue! To the multitudes of His day Christ said, “Ye have *heard* that it was said by *them* of old time” (Mat 5:27)—but to *us* He can exclaim, “Ye may *read* what *God* has said” (see Mat 22:31). This is a wondrous and inestimable privilege—purchased by the blood shedding of many of our forefathers—that the Holy Scriptures are no longer confined to the learned and the abbot of the monastery. They are accessible to the unlearned and the poor, everywhere, in simple English. But such a privilege carries with it, my reader, a solemn responsibility. What use are we making of this precious treasure? Do we search it daily, as did the noble Bereans (Act 17:11)? Are we nourishing our souls thereby? Is our conduct governed by its teaching? If not, double guilt lies at our door.

“But I say unto you, That whosoever that is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire” (Mat 5:22). This is far from being the easiest verse of Matthew 5 to interpret and the commentators vary in their explanations of its details, yet its general meaning is plain enough. With His royally authoritative, “I say unto you,” the Lord Jesus at once swept aside the rubbish of the rabbis and placed the law of God before His hearers in all its majesty and holiness, propounding the true interpretation of

the sixth commandment. No matter what you may have heard the scribes and Pharisees teach—whether from themselves or from the ancients—it was but the dulling of the sharp edge of God’s precept. I, the incarnate Son of God, who seeks only the glory of the Father and the good of souls, declare unto you that there are three degrees of hatred, falling short of the actual deed of murder, which expose a man to the judgment of God as a violator of the sixth commandment.

First, “Whosoever is angry against his brother without a cause” (Mat 5:22). “Brother” would be one Jew against another—for us, against a fellow-Christian—but in its widest scope, against a fellow-man, for by creation all are brethren. It is not anger simply which Christ here reprehends, but unwarrantable and immoderate anger. There is a holy anger as appears from the example of Christ (Mar 3:5) and the apostolic precept, “Be ye angry, and sin not” (Eph 4:26). Should it be asked, How are we to distinguish godly anger from that which is unlawful? The former proceeds from love of righteousness, has in view the *good* of him against whom it is exercised, and looks to the glory of God. Unholy anger issues from pride and desires the *injury* of the one against whom it is directed. Anger is lawful only when it burns against *sin*, and this is equivalent to zeal for the divine honour.

In His first singling out of unjust anger when expounding the sixth commandment, Christ did hereby teach us in *general* that whenever God forbids one sin, He at the same time forbids all sins of the same kind, with all the causes thereof. But He taught in *particular* that specific passion from which most murders proceed. Since, then, unjustified and immoderate anger is a breach of the Decalogue deserving of divine punishment, how diligently and constantly we should be on our guard, lest this headstrong affection break forth. We must seek grace to restrain and nip it in the bud. Now in order that we may subdue this lust that it prevail not, lay to heart this commandment which forbids rash anger, and frequently call to mind how patiently and mercifully God deals with us every day, and therefore we ought to be like-minded toward our brethren (Eph 4:31-32).

The second branch of the sin here condemned is, “Whosoever shall say to his brother Raca” (Mat 5:22), or as the margin renders it, “vain fellow.” What is here prohibited is that scorn, arising from uncontrolled temper, which leads to speaking contemptuously. All abusive language is forbidden by the sixth commandment, all expressions of malignity issuing from a bitter heart, for as Matthew Henry (1662-1714) rightly pointed out, “All malicious slanders and censures are adders’ poison under their lips” (Psa 140:3), and kills secretly and slowly. The Spirit of God refers to Ishmael’s jeering at Isaac as “persecution” (see Gal 4:29), and the same may be said of all bitter speaking. Yea, the prohibition here extends to the gestures of our body—a sneer, the wagging of our head (Mat 27:39). Therefore are we required to make conscience of every gesture, every casting of the eye (Gen 4:6), as well as every passionate word.

The third degree of murder mentioned by Christ is censorious reviling or calling our brother a “Fool.” It is not the simple use of this English word which renders us guilty of this crime as is clear from Luke 24:25; 1 Corinthians 15:36. A benevolent desire to make men sensible of their folly is a good work, but the reviling of them from ungovernable rage is wickedness. With the Jews “fool” (“moren”) signified a rebel against God, an apostate, so that the one using this term arrogated to himself the passing of judicial sentence, consigning his fellow to hell. This was the very word Moses used (in the plural form) in Numbers 20:10, and for which sin he was excluded from Canaan. It is to be observed that never once does the Lord designate His people “rebels,” though on several occasions He charges them with being rebellious.

One other thing remains to be mentioned. In the different degrees of penalty mentioned by Christ, He alluded unto the various courts of judgment in vogue among the Jews for

punishment—which He applied to the divine judgment which should fall upon those guilty of the sins He here condemned. And let us say in conclusion, there is no way of escaping the divine curse upon these sins except by humbling ourselves before God, penitently confessing the murderous passions of our hearts and the manifestation of the same in gesture and speech—begging for His pardon through the atoning blood of Christ.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

89. His Final Folly

The Word of God supplies us with two separate accounts of David's sin in numbering the people—one in 2 Samuel 24 and the other in 1 Chronicles 21, and both of them need to be carefully pondered by us if we are to have the advantage of all the light the Lord has vouchsafed us on this mysterious incident. Infidels have appealed to these two chapters in an endeavour to show that the Scriptures are unreliable, but their efforts to do so are utterly vain. What they, in their blindness, suppose to be discrepancies are in reality supplementary details, which enable us to obtain a more comprehensive view of the various factors entering into this incident. Thus, once more, God takes the wise in their own craftiness and makes the wrath of man to praise Him, for the attempt of His enemies to pit 1 Chronicles 21 against 2 Samuel 24 has served to call the attention of many of His people to a companion passage which otherwise they had probably overlooked.

The first help which 1 Chronicles 21 affords us is to indicate the moral connection between David's folly and that which *preceded* it. 1 Chronicles 21 opens with the word "And," which bids us look at the immediate context—one which is quite different from that of 2 Samuel 24. 1 Chronicles 20 closes with, "These were born unto the giant in Gath; and they fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants" (1Ch 20:8). That closes a record of notable exploits and victories which David and his mighty men had obtained over their foes. And then we read, "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel" (1Ch 21:1). Is not the connection obvious? Flushed with his successes, the heart of David was lifted up, and thus the door was opened for Satan to successfully tempt him. Let us seek to constantly bear in mind that the only place where we are safe from a fall is to lie in the dust before God.

Some have wondered wherein lay David's sin in taking this military census. But is it not plain that, as king over all Israel and victorious over all his enemies, he wished to know the full numerical strength of the nation—losing sight of the fact that his strength lay wholly in that one who had multiplied his power and *given* him such success? Would it not also serve to strike terror into the hearts of the surrounding nations for there to be publicly proclaimed the vast number of men capable of taking up arms that David had under him? But if this were one of the motives which actuated the king, it was equally unnecessary and unworthy of him, for God is well-able to cause His fear to fall upon those who oppose us without any fleshly efforts of ours to that end—efforts which would deprive *Him* of the glory were He to grant them success. What honour does *the Lord* get as the Protector of any nation while they boast of and rely on the vastness of their armaments?

But David was far from being alone in this folly, for as 2 Samuel 24:1 tells us, “And again the anger of the LORD was kindled *against Israel*, and he moved David against them” The Lord had a controversy with the nation. He had dealt governmentally with David and his house (chapters 12-21), as He had likewise with Saul and his house (21), and now His grievance is more immediately with Israel, whom He chastised through the act of their king—the “again” looks back to 21:1. No one particular sin of Israel’s is mentioned, but from David’s Psalms we have little difficulty in ascertaining the general state of his subjects. Ever prone to remove their eyes from JEHOVAH, there is little room for doubt that the temporal successes which God had granted them became an occasion to them of self-congratulation, and like the children of this world, in the unbelief of self-confidence, they were occupied with their own resources.

The second help which 1 Chronicles 21 affords us is the information which it supplies that *Satan* was instrumental in moving David to commit this great folly. Not that this in any way excused David or modified his guilt, but because it casts light on the governmental ways of God. “In the righteous government of God, rulers and their subjects have a reciprocal influence on one another. Like the members in the human body, they are interested in each other’s conduct and welfare and cannot sin or suffer without mutually affecting each other. When the wickedness of nations provokes God, He leaves princes to adopt pernicious measures, or to commit atrocious crimes, which bring calamities on the people. And when the ruler commits iniquity, he is punished by the diminution of his power, and by witnessing the distresses of his subjects. Instead, therefore, of mutual recriminations under public calamities, however occasioned, *all* parties should be reminded to repent of their own sins, and to practice their own duties. Princes should hence be instructed, even for their own sakes, to repress wickedness and to promote righteousness in their dominions, as well as to set a good example—and the people, for the public benefit, should concur in salutary measures, and pray continually for their rulers” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

The solemn principles which are illustrated in the above quotation are of wide ramification and go far to explain many a painful incident which often sorely puzzles the righteous. For example, only the day to come will reveal how many ministers were permitted by God to fall into public disgrace because He had a controversy with *the churches* over which they were set as pastors. God left David to himself to be tempted by Satan because He was displeased with his subjects and determined to chastise them. In like manner, He has left more than one minister of the Gospel to himself, to be tried and tripped up by the devil, because He had a grievance against the people he served, so that in the fall of their leader the pride of the people was humiliated. Yet, be it said emphatically, this is in nowise a case of making the *innocent* suffer because of the guilty—the pride of David’s own heart left him an easy prey to the enemy.

“For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which was with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people. And Joab said unto the king, Now the LORD thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing?” (2Sa 24:2-3). From the human side of things, it seems strange that Joab should have been the one to demur against David’s act of vain glory. As we have seen in earlier chapters, Joab was a man of blood and eminently one of the children of this world, as the whole of his career makes plain. Yet was he quick to see, on this occasion, that the step David proposed to take was one fraught with grave danger and therefore did he earnestly remonstrate with the king.

It is indeed striking to find that this infatuation of David's was met by an objection from the commander of his army. Not that it was the ungodliness of David's project which filled Joab with horror, rather that he realized the danger of it. As we pointed out in last month's article, after Israel entered into Canaan God never gave a command for the numbering of His people, and there was no occasion now for a military census to be taken. Joab was conscious of that and expostulated with his master. This serves to illustrate a solemn principle—many a man of the world exercises more common sense than does a saint who is out of communion with God and under the power of Satan. This fact is written large across the pages of Holy Writ and a number of examples will no doubt come to mind if the reader meditates thereon.

The force of Joab's objection to David's plan was, Why take delight in such a thing as ascertaining the precise numerical strength of your army and thereby run the danger of bringing down divine judgment upon us? Thus this child of the world perceived what David did not. Most solemn is the lesson which is here pointed for the Christian. It is in *God's light* that we "see light" (Psa 36:9), and when we turn away from Him we are left in spiritual darkness. And as the Lord Jesus exclaimed, "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Mat 6:23). A believer who is out of fellowship with the Lord will make the most stupid blunders and engage in crass folly such as a shrewd unbeliever would disdain. This is part of the price which he has to pay for wandering from the narrow path.

But we must now look at Joab's opposition of David's plan from the *divine* side. Had David been walking with holy watchfulness before the Lord, he would not have yielded so readily to Satan's temptation, still less had he been prepared to act contrary to the express requirements of Exodus 30:12-16. Nevertheless, God did not now utterly forsake David and give him up fully to his heart's lusts. Instead, He placed an obstacle in his path, in the form of Joab's (probably most unexpected) opposition, which rebuked his folly and rendered his sin still more excuseless. Behold here, then, the wondrous mingling of the workings of divine sovereignty and the enforcing of human responsibility. God decreed that Pilate should pass the death-sentence upon Christ, yet He gave him a most emphatic deterrent through his wife (Mat 27:19). In like manner, it was God's purpose to chastise Israel through the folly of their king, yet so far from approving of David's act, He rebuked him through Joab.

Yes, remarkable indeed are the varied factors entering into this equation, the different actors in this strange drama. If on the one hand, the Lord suffered Satan to tempt His servant, on the other hand He caused Joab to deter him. It was David's refusal to listen to Joab—backed up by his officers (2Sa 24:4)—which rendered his sin the greater. And is not the practical lesson plain for us?! When we are meditating folly and a man of the world counsels us against it, it is high time for us to "consider our ways." When the merciful providence of God places a hindrance in our path, even though it be in the form of a rebuke from an unbeliever, we should pause in our madness, for we are in imminent danger to ourselves and probably to others as well.

"Notwithstanding the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host" (2Sa 24:4). Joab perceived that David's purpose sprang from carnal ambition and that it was against the public interest, and accordingly he remonstrated with him. When that failed he summoned the additional pleas of the captains of the army. But all in vain. David's mind was fully made up and in self-will he committed this grievous sin. "When the mind, instead of taking a comprehensive view of all the circumstances before it, persists in viewing them partially in some favourite aspect, it is astonishing how blind it may become to things obvious as the day to everyone who has no such bias to warp his judgment. David's soul, whilst absorbed in contemplating the might and triumphs of Israel, had no desire to consider other circumstances, the

consideration of which would leave on the heart a sense of weakness—not of strength” (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899).

How merciful is God to raise up those who oppose us when we anticipate doing that which is displeasing to Him! Yet how often, in the pride of our hearts and the stubbornness of our wills do we resent such opposition. Everything that enters our lives contains a message from God if only we will pause and listen to it. Many a thorny path should we have escaped if only we had heeded that hedge which divine providence placed in our way. That hedge may take the form of a friendly word of advice from those around us, and though we are far from suggesting that we should always follow out the same, yet it is for our good that we prayerfully weigh it before God. If we do not, and in our self-will force our way through that hedge, then we must not be surprised if we get badly torn in the process. How much better had it been both for David and his subjects to have responded to the counsel of Joab and his officers.

“And Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel” (2Sa 24:4). On other occasions, Joab had lent himself readily to the furthering of the king’s evil designs (2Sa 11:16; 14:1-2), but this time he carried out his orders with great reluctance. How strongly he was opposed to David’s policy appears from “The king’s word was abominable to Joab” (1Ch 21:6). The service on which Joab now embarked was most distasteful to him, nevertheless he carried it out, for it was “of the LORD” (as 2Sa 24:1 shows) that he should do so. Yet that did not excuse him—the less so when he clearly perceived the wrongfulness of it. What God has decreed must come to pass, nevertheless the entire guilt of every wicked deed rests upon him who performs it. It is never right to do wrong, and Joab certainly ought to have declined having any part in such an evil course.

Joab commenced his distasteful task in the remotest sections of Palestine, and took his time about it, perhaps hoping that long ere it was completed the king would repent of his folly. The compilers of the census first numbered the inhabitants of the country to the east of the Jordan, from thence proceeding to the northern part of Canaan, and finishing up in the region to the west of the Jordan (2Sa 24:5-7). They compiled a complete register of all the men capable of taking up arms, excepting only the Levites and the Benjamites—the former because their sacred vocation exempted them from military service—the latter, probably because they could not yet be relied upon to render whole-hearted devotion to David (compare 2:25; 3:1, etc.). Nearly ten months were spent on this task. How patient the Lord is and how great His mercy in giving us “space for repentance”—alas, how great is our madness and sin in refusing to repent.

“So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men” (2Sa 24:8-9). The careful student will note that the figures given here are different from those found in 1 Chronicles 21:5—a variation which skeptics are quick to seize upon as one of the “errors the Bible is full of.” And most deplorable is it to find that some of the orthodox commentators solve “the difficulty” by suggesting that the records were “inaccurate.” The fact is that the two classifications are quite different, the one supplementing the other. It is to be carefully observed that 2 Samuel 24:9 qualifies the first total by, “There were in Israel eight hundred thousand *valiant men*,” whereas 1 Chronicles 21:5 only says 1,100,000 “men that drew the sword” in Israel, so that an additional number to the “valiant men” was there included! Again—in Chronicles the men of Judah “was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword,” whereas in 2 Samuel 24, the “men of Judah” were 500,000—evidently 30,000 drew *not* the sword.

It is striking to note that the Hebrews had not multiplied nearly so much during their 500 years' residence in Canaan as they did in their briefer sojourn in Egypt. Nevertheless, that such a vast multitude were sustained in such a narrow territory is greater evidence of the remarkable fertility of the country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Whether the total figures which Joab presented to his royal master reached his expectations or whether they mortified his pride, we are not told. But probably his subjects were not so numerous as he had expected. It usually follows that when we set our hearts upon the attaining of some earthly object, the actual realization of our quest proves to be but a chimera. But such disappointments ought only to serve in weaning our affections from things below, to fix them on things above, which alone can satisfy the soul. Alas, how slow we are to learn the lesson.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

9. Its Perception

Thus far we have dwelt mainly upon the *doctrinal* side of election—now we turn more directly to its experimental and practical aspect. The entire doctrine of Scripture is a perfect and harmonious unit, yet for our clearer apprehension thereof it may be considered distinctively in its component parts. Strictly speaking, it is inadmissible to talk of “the doctrines of grace,” for there is but one grand and divine doctrine of grace, though that precious diamond has many facets in it. We are not warranted by the language of Holy Writ to employ the expression the “doctrines” of election, regeneration, justification, and sanctification, for in reality they are but parts of one doctrine. Yet it is not easy to find an alternative term. When the plural “doctrines” is used in the Word of God, it alludes to what is false and erroneous—“doctrines of men” (Col 2:22), “doctrines of devils” (1Ti 4:1), “divers and strange doctrines” (Heb 13:9)—“divers” because there is not agreement among them.

In contrast from the false and conflicting doctrines of men, the truth of God is one grand and consistent whole, and it is uniformly spoken of as “the doctrine” (1Ti 4:16), “sound doctrine” (Ti 2:1). Its distinctive mark is described as “the doctrine which is according to godliness” (1Ti 6:3—the doctrine which produces and promotes godliness.) Every part of that doctrine is intensely practical and experimental in all its bearings. It is no mere abstraction addressed to the intellect, but when duly apprehended, exerts a spiritual influence upon the heart and life. Thus it is with that particular phase of God’s doctrine which is now before us. The blessed truth of election is revealed not for carnal speculation and controversy, but to yield the lovely fruits of holiness. The choice is God’s, but the salutary effects are in us. True, that doctrine must be applied by the power of the Holy Spirit to the soul before those effects are produced—for here, as everywhere, we are entirely dependent upon His gracious operations.

The first effect produced in the soul by the Spirit’s application of the truth of divine election is the promotion of true *humility*. Pride and presumption now receive their death wound—self-complacency is shattered and the subject of this experience is shaken to his very foundations. He may for years past have made a Christian profession, and entertained no serious doubts of the sincerity and genuineness thereof. He may have had a strong and unshaken assurance that he was journeying to heaven, and during that time he was utterly ignorant of the truth of election. But what a change has come over him! Now that he learns God has made an eternal choice from among the children of men, he is deeply concerned to ascertain whether or not *he* is one of

heaven's favourites. Realizing something of the tremendous issues involved, and painfully conscious of his own utter depravity, he is filled with fear and trembling. This is most painful and unsettling, for as yet he knows not that such exercises of soul are a healthy sign.

It is just because the preaching of election, when accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit (and what preaching is more calculated to *have* His blessing than that which most magnifies God and abases man!) produces such an harrowing of heart, that it is so distasteful to those who wish to be "at ease in Zion." Nothing is more calculated to expose an empty profession, to arouse the slumbering victims of Satan. But alas, those who have nothing better than a fleshly assurance do not wish to have their false peace disturbed, and consequently *they* are the very ones who are the loudest in their outcries against the proclamation of discriminating grace. But the howling and snapping of dogs is no reason why the children of God should be deprived of their necessary bread. And no matter how unpleasant be the first effects produced in him by the heart's reception of this truth, it will not be long before the humbled one will be truly thankful for that which causes him to dig more deeply and make sure that his hope is founded on the Rock of Ages.

Divine chastisement is a painful thing, nevertheless, to them that are exercised thereby, it afterwards yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness (see Heb 12:11). So it is a grievous thing for our complacency to be rudely shattered, but if the sequel be that we exchange a false confidence for a Scripturally-grounded assurance, we have indeed cause for fervent praise. To discover that God's purpose of grace is restricted to an elect people is alarming to one who has imagined that He loves all mankind alike. To be made to seriously wonder if I am one of those whom God chose in Christ before the foundation of the world raises a question which is not easy to answer satisfactorily. And to be made to diligently inquire into my actual state, to solemnly examine myself before God, is a task which no hypocrite will prosecute. Yet is it one which the regenerate will not shrink from, but on the contrary will pursue it with earnest zeal and fervent prayers to God for help therein.

It is not (as some foolishly suppose) that the one who is now so seriously concerned about his spiritual condition and eternal destiny is in such alarm because he doubts God's Word. Far from it. It is because he believes God's Word that he *doubts himself*, doubts the validity of his Christian profession. It is because he believes the Scriptures when they declare the Lord's flock is a "very little one" (Greek, Luke 12:32), he is fearful that he belongs not to it. It is because he *believes* God when He says, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" (Pro 30:12), and finding so much filth in his own soul, he trembles lest that be true of him. It is because he believes God when He says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9), that he is deeply exercised lest *he* be fatally deluded. Ah, my reader, the more firmly we believe God's Word, the more cause have we to doubt ourselves.

To obtain assurance that they have received a supernatural call from God, which has brought them from death unto life, is a matter of paramount concern to those who really value their souls. Those to whom God has imparted an honest heart abhor hypocrisy, refuse to take anything for granted, and greatly fear lest they impose upon themselves by passing a more favourable verdict than is warranted. Others may laugh at their concern and mock their fears, but this moves them not. Too much is at stake for such a matter to be lightly and hurriedly dismissed. They know full-well that it is one which must be settled in the presence of *God*, and if they are deceived, they beg Him to make them aware of it. It is God who has wounded them and He alone can heal. It is God who has disturbed their carnal complacency and none but He can bestow real spiritual rest.

Is it possible for a person, in this life, to really ascertain his eternal election of God? Papists reply dogmatically that no man can know his own election unless he is certified thereof by some special, immediate, and personal revelation from God. But this is manifestly false and erroneous. When the disciples of Christ returned from their preaching tour and reported to Him the wonders they had wrought and being elated that even the demons were subject to them, He bade them, “Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names *are written in heaven*” (Luk 10:20). Is it not perfectly plain in these words of our Saviour that men *may* attain unto a sure knowledge of their eternal election? Surely we cannot, nor do we, rejoice in things which are unknown or even in things uncertain.

Did not Paul bid the Corinthians, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2Co 13:5). Here it is certainly taken for granted that he who has faith may know that he has it, and therefore may also know his election, for saving faith is an infallible mark of election. “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Act 13:48). Would that more ministers took a page out of the apostle’s book and urged their hearers to real self-examination—true, it would not increase their present popularity, but it would probably result in thanksgiving from some of their hearers in a future day. Did not another of the apostles exhort his readers, “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (2Pe 1:10)? But what force would such an injunction possess if assurance be unattainable in this life? It would be utterly vain to use diligence if knowledge of our election is impossible without an extraordinary revelation from God!

But how may a man come to know his election? Certainly it is not by ascending up as it were into heaven, there to search into the counsels of God, and afterwards come down to himself. None of us can obtain access to the Lamb’s Book of Life—God’s decrees are a secret. Nevertheless, it is possible for the saints to know they are among that company whom God has predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. But *how*? Not by some extraordinary revelation from God, for Scripture nowhere promises any such thing to exercised souls. Spurgeon (1834-1892) put it bluntly when he said, “We know of some who imagine themselves to be elect because of the visions they have seen when they were asleep or when they were awake—for men have waking dreams—but these are as much value as cobwebs would be for a garment, they will be of as much service to them at the day of judgment as a thief’s convictions would be to him if he were in need of a character to commend him to mercy” (From sermon on 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6).

In order to ascertain our election, we have to descend into our own hearts and then go up from ourselves as it were by Jacob’s ladder to God’s eternal purpose. It is by the signs and testimonies described in the Scriptures, which we are to search for within ourselves, and from them discover the counsel of God concerning our salvation. In making this assertion, we are not unmindful of the satirical comment which it is likely to meet with in certain quarters. There is a class of professing Christians who entertain no doubts whatever about their salvation, who are fond of saying, as well look to an iceberg for heat or into a grave to find the tokens of life, as search within ourselves for proofs of the new birth. But is it not akin to blasphemy to suggest that God the Spirit can take up His residence in a person and yet for there to be no definite evidences of His presence?

There are two testifiers to the believer from which he may assuredly learn the eternal counsels of God respecting his salvation—the witness of God’s Spirit and the witness of his own spirit (see Rom 8:16). By what means does God’s Spirit furnish testimony to a Christian’s conscience of his divine sonship? Not by any extraordinary revelation separate from the Word, but rather by His application of the promises of the Gospel in the form of a syllogism—whosoever believes in

Christ is chosen to everlasting life. That proposition is clearly set forth in God's Word and is expressly propounded by His ministers of the Gospel. The Spirit of God accompanies their preaching with effectual power, so that the hearts of God's elect are opened to receive the truth, their eyes enlightened to perceive its blessedness, and their wills moved to renounce all other dependencies and give up themselves to the mercy of God in Christ.

But the question arises, How may I distinguish between the witness of the Spirit and Satan's delusive imitations? for as there is a sure persuasion of God's favour from His Spirit, so there are frauds of the devil whereby he flatters and soothes men in their sins. Moreover, there is in all men natural presumption which is often mistaken for faith—in fact there is far more of this mock-faith in the world than there is of true faith. It is really tragic to find what multitudes there are in the religious world today who are carried away by the "strange fire" of wild enthusiasm, supposing that the exciting of their animal spirits and emotions is sure proof that they have received the Spirit's "baptism" and thus are certain of heaven. At the other extreme is a large company who disdain and discredit all religious feelings and pin their faith to an, "I am resting on John 5:24," and boast that they have not had a doubt of their salvation for many years past.

Now the true witness of the Spirit may be discerned from natural presumption and Satanic deception *by its effects and fruits*. First, the Spirit bestows upon God's elect *praying hearts*. "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?" (Luk 18:7). Notice how right after making that statement the Lord Jesus went on to give an illustration of the *nature* of their praying. It is true that formalists and hypocrites pray, but vastly different is that from the crying of the sin-conscious, guilt-burdened, distressed people of God, as appears from the vivid contrast between the Pharisee and the publican. Ah, it is not until we are brought to feel our utter unworthiness and hell-deservingness, our ruin and wretchedness, our abject poverty and absolute dependency on God's sovereign bounty, that we begin to "cry" unto Him, and that, "day and night"—to pray experimentally, to pray perseveringly, to pray with "groanings which cannot be uttered," and thus, to pray effectually.

Let us look for a moment at a prayer of one of God's people, "Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation" (Psa 106:4). Now my reader, you are either earnestly seeking that favour by which the Lord remembers His people or you are not. It is only when we are brought to the place where we are pressed down with a sense of our sinfulness and vileness that we can say in our souls before God, "O visit me with thy salvation." But the psalmist did not stop there, nor must we. He went on to say, "That I may see the good of *thy chosen*, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance" (Psa 106:5). God's elect pray for and seek after that which no other men pray for and seek after—they long to *see* the good of God's chosen, they seek to be saved with His salvation, and to dwell in the order of His everlasting covenant and eternal establishment.

A second effect of the Spirit's witness is in bringing of us *to submit to God's sovereignty*. Not only do God's elect pray for something which no other men pray for, but they do so in a different manner from all others. They approach the Almighty not as equals, but as beggars. They make "requests" of Him, and not demands, and they present their requests in strict subservience to His own imperial will. How utterly different are their humble petitions from the arrogance and dictatorialness of empty professors. They know they have no claims upon the Lord, that they deserve no mercy at His hands, and therefore they raise no outcry against His express assertion, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Rom 9:15). That person whose heart is indwelt by the Spirit of God takes his place

in the dust, and says with pious Eli, “It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good” (1Sa 3:18).

We read in Matthew 20:3 of a number of men “standing idle in the marketplace,” which we understand to signify that they were not actively engaged in Satan’s service, but that they had not yet entered God’s service. Their attitude was indicative of a desire to be religious. Very well, said the Lord, go and work in My vineyard. But a little later the Lord of the vineyard displayed His *sovereignty*, and they were highly displeased. The Lord gave unto the last even as unto the first, and they murmured. The Lord answered, “I do thee no wrong....Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?” (Mat 20:13, 15). That was what offended them—they would not submit to His sovereignty, yet He exercised it notwithstanding. “Is thine eye evil, because I am good?”—He asked and still asks to everyone who in the pride and unbelief of his heart rises up against God’s discriminating grace. But not so with God’s elect. They bow before His throne and leave themselves entirely in His hands.

Third, God’s elect have imparted to them *a filial spirit*, so that they have the affections of dutiful children to their heavenly Father. It inspires them with an awe of His majesty, so that they make conscience of every evil way. It draws out their hearts in love to God, so that they crave for the conscious enjoyment of His smiling countenance, esteeming fellowship with Him high above all other privileges. That filial spirit produces confidence toward God so that they plead His promises, count on His mercy, and rely on His goodness. His high authority is respected and they tremble at His Word. That filial spirit produces subjection to Him, so that they desire to obey Him in all things, and sincerely endeavour to walk according to His commandments and precepts. True, they are yet very far from being what they *should* be, and what they *would* be could their earnest longings be realized. Nevertheless, it is their fervent desire to please Him in all their ways.

THE HOLY SABBATH

5. *Its Pollution*

The importance and value of the Sabbath is evidenced by the many, varied, and precious objects which, from the dawn of its institution, it was designed to accomplish. Under the patriarchal dispensation, it was a real and powerful witness for the existence of God, His creative power, His sovereignty over His creatures, and their responsibility to Him—truths which lie at the very foundation of all true religion. Under the Mosaic economy, the Sabbath not only bore continued testimony to those truths, but also to the providential and moral government of God in the preservation and renewal of the Holy Day and His indisputable title to the worship of His people. It bore testimony to His gracious concern for their temporal and spiritual welfare—it taught them to look, through its hallowed use, for blessings on themselves and their nation—it pointed to a future period of richer blessing and purer worship. Under the Christian era, while all these fundamental truths are still inculcated by the Sabbath, it has become also a memorial of redeeming love, a witness for the establishment of the better covenant, a remembrance of Him who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification.

It has often been pointed out that the Sabbath is not secured from man’s pollution by any natural fences. The winter prevents much labour, obliging employers in many cases to reduce the tasks of their employees. Night is still more obstructive of toil, and consequently, still more conducive to needful repose. In the absence of light, the fields cannot be plowed, the crops

harvested, nor homes built—and thus darkness serves to protect the couch of the heavy laden. But the Sabbath has no such bulwarks. It comes without any cosmic herald of its advent, and all nature fulfils its functions on that day as on any other day. The weather may be so inclement as to present no temptation to engage in outdoor sports. on the other hand, the day may be one of cloudless sunshine, alluring into the wide open spaces. Thus the Sabbath is like a vine when bereft of its hedges, which any boar out of the wood may waste and any beast of the field devour.

While the institution of the Sabbath is itself a fence to the general interests of religion and a divine bulwark thrown up to repress the floods of ungodliness, yet the Sacred Day is not secured from profanation by any defenses furnished by the natural world. Thus we may perceive how admirably the fourth commandment serves *as a trial* of the attitude of the creature toward his Creator. There are few, if any, of the divine ordinances that more definitely operate as a moral and religious test of the children of men than the one we are here considering. The conduct of men with reference to the Lord's day most clearly discovers either their love or their hatred, their loyalty or their rooted enmity to JEHOVAH, their sovereign Lord. In proportion as nations, churches, or individuals increase in spirituality and morality, they venerate and improve this holy day—and to the degree in which they decline from the love of God and belief of His truth, they despise and pollute it. The whole of human history forcibly illustrates that fact.

Allusion has been made by us to the natural obstacles which the seasons present to labour, and the protection they are designed to afford the labourer, yet these have been forced to yield to the pressure of greed and the merciless grind of commerce. During winter, at any rate in “civilized” (?) countries like our own, labour is never given a prolonged holiday, but instead its tasks are *varied*. And now the night (still more indispensable to our feeble frames) is disturbed and abridged, till it inadequately suffices for its gracious purpose. As the day comes to a close, artificial light is requisitioned, and in numberless instances the artisan is compelled to work “overtime”—and what compensation for the undermining of his health, and what is far worse, the degrading of his soul, is the extra wages he draws? How far the transportation of the workers and the noise of the “night shifts” interfere with the slumbers of other toilers, it is impossible to estimate—no wonder that institutions for nervous wrecks and mental cases are multiplying.

If, then, the protected seasons of nature have been ruthlessly invaded and trampled upon by graspers after gold, then much more is the unprotected Sabbath exposed to very special and imminent jeopardy. But the very fact that it is so exposed only serves to make more real the *test* it furnishes for the state of our hearts. Private gardens are railed off, and thus are secured from the carelessness and vandalism of the rank and file of the people. But those parks and downs, which are open to the general public, furnish a criterion to the manners and conscientiousness of those who use them, or abuse them—as the litter they leave behind bears witness. Thus it is with the Holy Sabbath. The righteous call it “a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable,” and they honour Him by not “doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words” (Isa 58:13). But the ungodly say, “When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?” (Amo 8:5).

At no one point has the depravity of fallen men been more conspicuously, more blatantly, and more constantly displayed, than by their profanation of the Sabbath. From earliest times they have discovered their awful rebellion against their Creator and Governor by trampling upon His holy institution. As we have pointed out earlier, there is good reason to believe that one of the principal grievances which the Lord had against the antediluvians was their disregard for and desecration of this primitive ordinance. So, too, with the descendants of Jacob after they settled in Egypt—as the language used by JEHOVAH in Exodus 16:28 so plainly implies. For centuries past, the Hebrews

had despised His law and dishonoured His sabbaths, and for that very reason His anger waxed hot against them and they were made to suffer His sore judgments (Eze 20:8, etc.) And as we shall now see, there was little or no improvement in the later conduct of the nation as a whole.

After the Lord had acted with such wondrous grace toward His refractory people, and by His mighty power delivered them from the house of bondage, one would have thought their hearts would have been so affected that their subsequent ways were amended. Moreover, the awe-inspiring display which JEHOVAH gave of His majesty on Sinai and the covenant which He there entered into with the nation, ought surely to have resulted in a radical change of their behaviour. But alas, neither the goodness nor the severity of God makes any real and lasting impression upon men until they are born again. No matter what mercies they may be the recipients of, no matter how wondrously God deals in providence with them, and no matter how solemnly He makes known to them His sovereignty and holiness, they continue unchanged, unmoved, till they be renewed in their *souls*. Clear and awful proof of this was furnished by them in the wilderness.

In order to obtain a complete picture of Israel's conduct in the wilderness, not only must we attend diligently to the historical accounts furnished by the Pentateuch, but we must also search for the additional information supplied by the prophets, for in many instances their retrospective statements supplement the former. Here, as everywhere, Scripture must be compared with Scripture. It is to Ezekiel that we are again indebted for fuller light on the point now before us. Reviewing the past, the Lord said through him, "I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt. Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes, and showed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover, also *I gave them my sabbaths*, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them" (Eze 20:9-12). And what was their response to such grace on His part?

Here is the sad answer to our question, "But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and *my sabbaths they greatly polluted*: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out. Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands; because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but *polluted my sabbaths*" (Eze 20:13-16). What a tragic picture does that present to us of the generation of Israel which came out of Egypt! How it discovers to us the inveterate wickedness of the human heart. Unaffected by the divine goodness, they now despised God's statutes and polluted His sabbaths. And how heavily punished were they for their disobedience? They were excluded from the land of promise and condemned to die in the wilderness. Ah, my reader, God is not to be mocked with impunity—and remember, this divine judgment of Israel is recorded as a warning for us today.

And what effect did that fearful deprivation have upon their children? Did *they* profit from the warning? Did they turn from the evil ways of their fathers, which had so sorely displeased JEHOVAH? Surely, surely, with such a solemn judgment before their eyes, they would turn it to good account. Every opportunity to do so was then given to them, "Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness. But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their

judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols: I am the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and *hallow my sabbaths*; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God” (Eze 20:17-20).

Alas, the younger generation were no better than the old—no more amenable to JEHOVAH’s exhortations, no more restrained by fear of His judgments. “Notwithstanding, the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; *they polluted my sabbaths*; then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness. Nevertheless, I withdrew mine hand, and wrought for my name’s sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth. I lifted up mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries; because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had *polluted my sabbaths*, and their eyes were after their fathers’ idols” (Eze 20:21-24). It is to be duly noted that in each of these passages the Lord, while making the general complaint that Israel rebelled and walked not in His statutes, specifically singles out for mention the heinous crime that they had “polluted his sabbath,” for *that* is something which He will by no means tolerate and fearful indeed are His judgments upon those who are guilty of such an high offense.

Nor was there any improvement after Israel entered and was established in Canaan. To the people of Ezekiel’s own day, the Lord complained, “Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast *profaned my sabbaths*” (Eze 22:8). The order of those two things is solemn. It is because we despise the things of God that we pollute them. But still worse is what we read of in verse 26 of this chapter, “Her *priests* have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things...And have hid their eyes from my sabbaths.” Not only was the general public guilty of this sin, but the ministers of God were offenders too. They turned a blind eye to the requirements of the Sacred Day, conniving at the joining in of its profanation. Those religious leaders esteemed not those who kept the sabbath and winked at those who did servile work therein.

So, too, we find the Lord saying through Jeremiah, “Hear ye the word of the LORD, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates: thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers” (Jer 17:20-22). Note this message was addressed first to the “king’s of Judah,” the heads of the nation, for the heaviest weight of responsibility ever rests on those in the chief places of governmental power, and second, to the people at large. And what was Israel’s response to this divine call? This, “But *they obeyed not*, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction” (Jer 17:23). Alas, what is man? The same in every age, under all circumstances—self-willed, defiant, refusing to be in subjection to his Maker, blind to his own interests, forsaking his own mercies, deaf to all reproof and admonition.

Patiently and faithfully did the Lord expostulate with His wayward people, setting before them the certain alternatives of their conduct, “And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the LORD, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein; then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain forever. And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south,

bringing burnt offerings, and sacrifices, and meat offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise unto the house of the LORD” (Jer 17:24-26). What inducements were these to render loyal and loving allegiance to their King! The Lord is no Egyptian taskmaster. Not only is His yoke easy and His burden light, but He gives most liberal wages to those who serve Him. True is this for individuals and communities alike. Here is another Scripture which makes it abundantly clear that the chief thing on which *national prosperity turns* is its careful observance of the sabbath.

If, on the one hand, Israel would not be moved to obedience by promises of rich reward, perhaps they might be deterred from disobedience by threats of terrible judgment. Accordingly, JEHOVAH concluded by saying, “But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle *a fire* in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched” (Jer 17:27). Alas, Israel was as indifferent to the latter as they had been to the former. How strictly God made good His threat appears from, “came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: and he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king’s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man’s house burnt he *with fire*” (2Ki 25:8-9). This was a national calamity in consequence of national pollution of the sabbath. Following upon the destruction of the temple and the razing of Jerusalem, the people were carried into Babylon.

Seventy years later, God, in His mercy, opened a way of escape for the people from their captivity, and thousands of their descendants returned to Jerusalem. Had they *at last* learned their lesson? Did they now hearken to the voice of God’s rod and mend their ways? No, they were incorrigible. Hardly had they arrived back in the holy land than Nehemiah had to complain, “In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals” (Neh 13:15). And then he added, “Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring *more wrath* upon Israel *by profaning the sabbath*” (Neh 13:18).

Thus it was all through the long centuries of Israel’s history. Nor has the conduct and career of Christendom been any better. While today it is far worse than for generations past. Here, in Great Britain, sabbath desecration is now almost as rife as it is on the Continent, and only here and there is a feeble voice raised in protest. Sad to say, *the heads* of the nation often set a bad example by travelling on the sabbath day. The flood of Sunday newspapers which deluges the land, the irreligious rubbish which is being broadcast over the air, the increasing number of public places open for sport and entertainment, and the millions of people who turn the Holy Day into one of pleasure and “joyriding” is surely heaping up for us wrath against the day of wrath unless we, as a people, repent and reform.

“THE MOTHER OF JESUS”

The touching incident of our Lord on the cross, commending His mother to the care of John, has often been the subject of comment, and always with the object of pointing out His tender filial care for her, and His wish that she should not be left desolate. Doubtless such was His purpose—but was it all, or nearly all? Had this been all, would He be likely to have chosen almost His last moment, and the most public occasion possible, for the fulfillment of a private family duty, besides using a most strange and peculiar form of expression? Surely not. There seems to be a far deeper purpose, which may appear if we trace the Lord's treatment of His earthly parent from the beginning. The first recorded words uttered by the Lord to His mother were a gentle remonstrance, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about *my Father's* business?" (Luk 2:49). "*Thy father* and I" (Luk 2:48), had said Mary. She seemed to have been leaving the heavenly Father for a moment out of sight and a reminder was necessary. Though the Child Jesus returned and was "subject unto them," and eighteen quiet years of loving communion followed—the first strand of the tie which had united Mother and Son had been parted, and their relation to one another can never have been quite the same as before.

The next recorded conversation was at the marriage at Cana, "Woman, *what have I to do with thee?*" (Joh 2:8). The words sound strangely stern. Doubtless they were softened by the tenderest tone and manner, but they were, for all that, a sharp reminder that Mary's maternal authority was now at an end. Another strand was parted, this one at the opening of His public ministry, as the first one was at the opening of His life or manhood. A little later on, His mother and His brethren stood without desiring to speak with Him, seeking to lay hands on Him, for they said, "He is beside himself" (Mar 3:21, 31). The Lord's reply was startling, for it placed His mother on an absolute level with the humblest believers, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" "Whosoever shall do the will of my *Father* which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mat 12:48-53)! Another strand was gone! The last mention of Mary in the Gospels is the one with which we started, and which is now seen in a stronger light.

One by one we have seen the ties which bound together divine Son and human mother severed by His own hand, now the last is touched, and she is His no longer. "Woman, behold thy *son!*" said the dying Saviour. "Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy *mother!*" (Joh 19:26-27). A remarkable form of expression it seems. *We* should have expected Him to say, "I commend unto thee my mother," but never once is it recorded that the Lord either addressed Mary or spoke of her as *My mother*, and now as He is about to lay down His earthly life and afterwards assume His resurrection glory, He sets the human relationship aside forever. And Mary, who was wont to ponder things in her heart, seems to have meekly acquiesced, though doubtless this was one of the sharpest thrusts of the sword which pierced through her soul. "From that hour," apparently an early hour, "that disciple took her unto his own home" (Joh 19:27). Perhaps she did not see Him die. Certainly her name is not among those present at the empty grave. Indeed it is not *recorded* that she ever saw Him in His resurrection body.

Once more does Mary appear in Holy Writ—Acts 1:14, where, she is seen among the little company of humble believers who continued in prayer and supplication, waiting for the promise of the Father—and then we altogether lose sight of her. Each of the occasions on which our Lord repudiated Mary's interference was a *public* one, as if to emphasize and provide ample testimony to His action, and the last was the most public of all, when He finally *relinquished* the filial relationship and transferred it to another man. Preachers have taken much pains to minimize and explain away the apparent distance of our Lord towards Mary—but that it existed there can be no manner of doubt, and we can see the "needs be" of it. The time was coming when the poor humble human instrument of His incarnation would be styled "the Mother of God" and the

“Queen of Heaven” and would be accorded idolatrous reverence, and the Lord foreseeing it took strong measures to discountenance such misplaced devotion. And hard as it may have seemed to Mary at the time, she will understand it all, and “magnify the Lord” for it in that day when she shall “awake” with His “likeness” and be “satisfied.”—(A.M. 1902).

THE TWO NATURES

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Joh 3:6). “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other” (Gal 5:17). These and similar passages clearly connote that there are two distinct and diverse springs of action in the Christian, from which proceed evil and good works. The older expositors were accustomed to speak of these springs of action as “principles”—the principles of evil and holiness. Modern writers more frequently refer to them as “the two natures in the believer.” We have no objection against this form of expression, provided it be used to represent Scriptural realities and not human fancies. But it appears to us that there are not a few today who speak of the “two natures” and yet have no clear conception of what the term signifies, often conveying a faulty idea to the minds of their hearers.

In ordinary parlance, “nature” expresses, first, the result of what we have by our origin, and second, the qualities that are developed in us by growth. Thus, we talk of anything bestial or devilish as being contrary to human nature—alas that the beasts so often put us to shame. More distinctly, we speak of a lion’s nature (ferocity), a vulture’s nature (feeding on carrion), a lamb’s nature (gentleness). A “nature,” then, describes what a creature is by birth and disposition. Now the Christian has experienced two births and is subject to two growths. Two sets of moral qualities belong to him—the one as born of Adam, the other as born of God. But much caution needs to be exercised at this point, lest on the one hand we carnalize our conception of the new birth, or on the other hand, dwell so much on the two natures that we lose sight of the *person* who possesses them and thus practically deny his responsibility.

In the interests of clarity we must contemplate these two natures separately, considering first what we are as children of men and then what we are as children of God. In contemplating what we are as men, we must distinguish sharply between what we are by God’s creation, and what we became by our fall from that uprightness in which we were originally made, for fallen human nature is radically different from our primitive condition. But here, too, great care must be taken in defining that difference. Man *did not lose* any component part of his being by the fall. He still consists of “spirit and soul and body.” No essential element of his constitution was forfeited, none of his faculties were destroyed. Rather was his entire being vitiated and corrupted, stricken with a loathsome disease. A potato is still a potato when frozen—an apple remains an apple when decayed within, though no longer edible. By the fall, man relinquished his honour and glory, lost his holiness, and forfeited the favour of God, but he still retained his *human nature*.

It cannot be insisted upon too strongly that no essential part of man’s complex make-up, no faculty of his being, was destroyed at the fall, for multitudes are seeking to shelter behind a misconception at this very point. They suppose that man lost some vital part of his nature when Adam ate of the forbidden fruit and that it is *this* loss which accounts for all his failures. Man imagines he is far more to be pitied than blamed. The blame, he supposes, belongs to his first parent and he is to be pitied because deprived of his capability of working righteousness. It is in

such a manner that Satan succeeds in deceiving many of his victims, and it is the bounden duty of the Christian minister to expose such a sophistry and drive the ungodly out of their refuge of lies. The truth is that man today possesses identically the same faculties as those with which Adam was originally created, and his accountability lies in the *use* he makes of those faculties, and his criminality consists in his abuse of the same.

On the other hand, there are not a few who believe that at the fall man *received a nature* which he did not possess before and in his efforts to evade his responsibility he throws all the blame of his lawless actions on that evil nature. Equally erroneous and equally vain is such a subterfuge. No material addition was made to man's being at the fall, any more than that some part was taken from it. That which entered man's being at the fall was *sin*, and sin has defiled every part of his person—but for *that* we are to be blamed and not pitied. Nor has fallen man become so helplessly the victim of sin that his accountability is cancelled—rather does God hold him responsible to resist and reject every inclination unto evil and will justly punish him because he fails to do so. Every attempt to negate human responsibility must be steadfastly resisted by us.

The youth differs much from the infant and the man from the immature youth—nevertheless it is *the same* individual, the same human person, who passes through these stages. Men we are, and shall ever remain. Whatever internal change we may be subject to at regeneration, and whatever change awaits the body at resurrection, we shall never lose our essential identity as God created us at the first. Let this be clearly understood and firmly grasped. (To be completed, D.V., in the June issue).



June

FAITHFULNESS

“It is required in stewards, that a man be found *faithful*” (1Co 4:2). From the preceding verse, it is clear that the apostle was having reference to the ministers of Christ, those whom He has appointed to act as officers in His churches. Other virtues are desirable, but fidelity is imperative. No matter how gifted a man may be, if he is untrue to this trust, he is an offense unto Christ and a stumblingblock to His people. Ministerial faithfulness includes loyalty to his Master, devotion to His interests, steadfast adherence to the preaching of His Word, dispensing the truth unto those whose souls are committed to Him, not mixing it with speculations, much less substituting false doctrine. A far higher motive than the pleasing of his hearers must actuate and regulate ministerial service.

Those who have been much used of God have ever been men in whom this grace of faithfulness was outstandingly prominent. The father of all who believe is expressly designated “faithful Abraham” (Gal 3:9). Concerning Moses the Lord testified, “who is faithful in all his house” (Num 12:7). What a blessed witness is that borne to Daniel, “Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was *faithful*” (Dan 6:4). of himself Paul wrote, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me *faithful*, putting me into the ministry” (1Ti 1:12). Concerning Timothy he testified, “For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and *faithful* in the Lord” (1Co 4:17). What is now being recorded in the Lord’s “book of remembrance” of you and me, fellow minister?

Loyalty to God has always been a costly matter, but individual faithfulness has never involved more personal sacrifice than it does in this day of abounding disloyalty, hypocrisy, and compromise. Faithful preaching will render the minister unpopular, and will *empty*, not “fill” churches. It will close doors against him, and if he be without a charge, he will find his services are not wanted. It cost Joseph something to be faithful! It did Daniel, it did Paul, and it does every minister of Christ in this degenerate and adulterous age. How necessary it is then for the minister to strengthen his heart by laying hold of those *promises* which are specially given to faithfulness. Here is one of them—“The LORD *preserveth* the faithful” (Psa 31:23)—from those rocks upon which so many self-seeker’s make shipwreck.

“He that hath my word, let him speak my word *faithfully*” (Jer 23:28)—no matter how unpalatable it may be to the flesh, how much of a weariness to those who wish to have their ears tickled with novelties, or how loud be the outcry against it. “A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health” (Pro 13:17), that is, he maintains his own soul in good health and exerts a healing influence upon others. “A faithful witness will not lie” (Pro 14:5). He who maintains a pure conscience before God will not dare to give forth a testimony

which he knows to be untrue. Nor will he, to obtain the goodwill of men, represent anything to be other than it is. Consequently, “He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness” (Pro 12:17), that is, by making conscience of veracity and integrity, he makes it clear that he is governed by the principle of righteousness.

How much there is in Scripture to stimulate the minister unto fidelity! “A true [Hebrew, “faithful”] witness *delivereth souls*” (Pro 14:25), and he is the only one who ever does so. Souls are caught fast in the meshes of Satan’s lies and nothing but the sword of God’s truth can cut them free. However unpopular he may be among men, the faithful witness is approved of and is pleasing *to God*. “As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters” (Pro 25:13). Yes, such are “a sweet savour to God” (see 2Co 2:15). What holy encouragement is there here for the hearts of the Lord’s servants! What rich compensation for the slights and sneers of men!

“For there is no faithfulness in their mouth...they flatter with their tongues” (Psa 5:9). *There* is the identifying mark of the “hireling,” the false witness. He aims at pleasing his hearers, making them feel satisfied with themselves, ever patting them on the back. But what are the springs from which integrity and fidelity issue? First, *faith*. It is striking to note that both in the Hebrew and the Greek the same word does duty for both “faith” (the noun) and “faithfulness” (the adjective). Unbelief, then, is the root of unfaithfulness. Second *the fear of God*, “I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many” (Neh 7:2). There is nothing like the fear of God to deliver us from the fear of men. Third, *love of God*, for where that is warm there must be the desire to please Him at all costs.

But let not the reader suppose that this grace is something restricted to Christ’s ministers—not so, God requires it from *all* His people. This is clear from the opening verses of Ephesians, which is distinctly addressed to “the faithful in Christ Jesus.” Much of what has been said above applies with equal force to the rank and file of the saints. They, too, will find that loyalty to God and fidelity to His Word will cost them not a little in the world today, where there is so much pretence, sham, and double dealing. It will result in their receiving the “cold shoulder” even from many of those who profess to be fellow Christians. But this must not deter them, “Be thou faithful *unto death*, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev 2:10), is the grand word to lay hold of.

Faithful people have always been in a marked minority. “Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men” (Psa 12:1), cried David. Note how those two characteristics are conjoined, for piety and honesty are inseparable—compare “good and faithful servant” (Mat 25:23). So, too, Solomon exclaimed, “Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a *faithful man who can find*” (Pro 20:6). Why is this? Because it is the part of fallen human nature to take the line of least resistance and choose the path easiest to the flesh. But remember, my reader, whoever you be, “Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly [Hebrew, “faithfully”] are his *delight*” (Pro 12:22). Here is another of the divine promises specially addressed to the faithful, “A faithful man shall abound with blessings” (Pro 28:20). The true way to be happy is to be holy and honest. He who is true to God and man will be blest of Him. O that it may be said of us, “Beloved, thou doest faithfully *whatsoever thou doest* to the brethren, and to strangers” (3Jo 1:5).

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

10. The Law and Murder—Matthew 5:21-27

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Mat 5:23-24). Christ here drew a practical conclusion from what He had declared in the preceding verses, in which He enforces the duty of preserving Christian love and peace between brethren. First, He held up to view the false interpretation of the sixth commandment given by the ancient rabbis and perpetuated by the scribes and Pharisees (Mat 5:21). Second, He gave the true meaning of it (Mat 5:22). And third, He here propounded certain rules of concord between those that be at variance. Even a secret feeling of anger, and much more so a contemptuous or maledictory reproach, constitutes in God’s sight a breach of His law, and He will not accept the worship of those guilty of such a crime. We must, therefore, without delay, remove every root of bitterness that might spring up and produce so deadly a fruit.

Our Lord here spoke in the language of the dispensation then in force, but the principles He enunciated on this occasion apply equally to Christian ordinances, especially the Lord’s supper. The maintenance of righteousness and amity between one another is indispensable to fellowship with the thrice holy God. “It was the doctrine of the scribes, and the practice of the Pharisees corresponded with it, that anger, hatred, and the expression of these, if they did not go so far as an overt act of violence, were among the minor faults, and that God would not severely judge men for these, if they were but regular in presenting their sacrifices, and observing the other external duties of religion. In opposition to this, our Lord teaches that, according to the righteousness of His kingdom, having one’s mind not subject to the law of justice and love would render all external religious services unacceptable to God” (John Brown, 1784-1858).

Under the Mosaic law, various gifts and sacrifices were presented to JEHOVAH, some of them being absolutely obligatory, others optional—“freewill offerings.” Broadly speaking, those gifts were of two kinds—propitiatory and eucharistic—the one for obtaining divine forgiveness, the other as expressions of thanksgiving. Christ alludes here only to the latter, but under it He comprehended all manner of true outward worship, whether legal or evangelistic. The Lord Jesus had not yet offered Himself to God as the great antitypical sacrifice, and therefore He conveyed His lesson through the terms of the ceremonial law. But we have no difficulty in transferring what He then affirmed unto ourselves. It was as though He said, If thou comest to worship God in any way, either by prayer, hearing His Word, offering sacrifices of praise, or celebrating the Lord’s supper, you must live in peace with your brethren, or your worship will be rejected.

It is indeed solemn and searching to ponder the important practical principle which our Lord here enunciated. How deceptive is the human heart and what numbers impose upon themselves in this matter. But we cannot impose upon that one before whom everything is naked and open. of old the Jews were guilty of this very thing. “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks....and when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear” (Isa 1:11, 15). Why? “Your hands are full of blood.” While they cruelly oppressed their brethren, the worship they offered unto God was an abomination unto Him. So again in Isaiah 58:5-6, we find JEHOVAH despising the religious fasts of Israel because they omitted those acts of mercy which He required and instead were guilty of evilly-treating their fellows.

The Lord charged the people with the same sins in the time of Jeremiah, “Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely...and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name?” (Jer 7:9-10). Other passages might be quoted, but these are sufficient if we duly lay them to heart. From them we may learn that the performance of any outward service unto God is displeasing to Him if it be separated from unfeigned love of the brethren. To serve God acceptably, we must perform not only the duties of the first table of the law, but also those of the second. Make no mistake, my reader, the Holy one abhors all professions of piety from those who make no conscience of endeavouring to live in peace with their brethren.

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar” (Mat 5:23-24). The words “thy brother hath aught against thee” clearly signifies, “If *you* have done him some injury,” or *he* has cause of complaint (either real or fancied) against you. If you have treated him in some way inconsistent with the fraternal relationship, if he is conscious that you have wronged him, then you must promptly seek to right that wrong, no matter what the cost may be to your pride or interests. It may be that you were guilty of what some would lightly dismiss as “only an outburst of temper,” and which you regretted afterwards. Nevertheless, peace has been disrupted and God requires you to do everything in your power to lawfully restore it.

Does not failure to heed this rule go far to explain why the supplications of so many of the Lord’s people remain *unanswered*? What number’s fondly imagine that so long as they are regular in their attendance in the house of prayer and maintain a reverent demeanor therein, that their petitions will prevail—even though they be at enmity against some of their brethren. Not so, the words of the psalmist on this are much too pointed to be misunderstood, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psa 66:18). Before bending the knee in prayer, let us call to mind that we are about to draw near unto Him who is as much the Father of the offended brother as He is ours, and that He cannot receive us while we continue casting a stumblingblock in the way of the other. No worship or service can be acceptable to God while we are under the influence of a malicious spirit.

“Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother” (Mat 5:24). This means there must be a sincere and penitent acknowledgment of the offense committed and proper restitution made for any injury done, so that by all proper means and reasonable concessions we seek forgiveness from the one offended. “In this case the person, instead of offering his gift, is to go immediately to his brother, and be reconciled to him. Dismissing all malignant feeling from his mind, he is to repair the injury he has done to his brother. If he has deprived him of his property, he is to restore it. If he has slandered him, he is to do all that lies in his power to counteract the effect of his calumny, and acknowledge his regret for having acted so unbrotherly. In this way he is likely to be reconciled to his brother, that is, to be restored to his brother’s favour” (John Brown).

The question may be raised, What can be done in a case where the one whom I have offended is no longer accessible to me?—one perhaps who has moved to far distant parts. Answer—every effort must be made to obtain his or her address, and then write them a confession of your fault and your grief for the same, as frankly as though you were speaking to them. But suppose their address be unobtainable? Then in such a case you are hindered by divine providence and God will accept the will for the deed, if there be a willing mind, providing you have done all you could to right the wrong, and have humbly confessed the same unto God and sought *His* forgiveness.

It should be pointed out that in this rule concerning reconciliation with an aggrieved brother, the Lord furnished a third direction for the expounding of God's commandments. First, He showed that under any *one* sin prohibited in the commandment, God forbids *all* sins of the same kind, with all the causes thereof (Mat 5:22). Second, that to the breach of any commandment there is *annexed a curse*, whether it be specifically expressed or not (Mat 5:22). And now, third, that where any vice is forbidden, there the contrary virtue is enjoined, and on the contrary, where any virtue is commanded, the opposite vice is reprehended. Herein the divine laws evidence their superiority to human, for man's laws are satisfied by abstaining from the crime prohibited, though the contrary virtue be not practiced. So long as we abstain from murder, it matters not though we fail to love our brethren. But God requires not only abstention from vice, but also the practice of virtue.

Another general principle is brought out in the verses before us, one which is of considerable importance in the correct interpreting of many New Testament passages, namely, that to be "reconciled" to another does not signify so much to cherish kindly feelings towards one with whom we have been offended, as to be restored to the favour of one we have offended. This throws light on such a statement as, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom 5:10). The primary reference is to the Redeemer's propitiating God and obtaining for us His blessing—the same holds good equally of Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:21. In like manner, "Be ye reconciled to God" (2Co 5:20) means not only throw down the weapons of your warfare against Him, but primarily, be restored to His favour.

one other important principle enforced by Christ in our passage is there are *degrees* of value in the several duties of divine worship—all are not equal, but some are more and some less necessary. The highest degree of holy worship is prescribed in the first commandment—to love, fear, and rejoice in God above all, trusting Him and His promises. The second degree is to love our neighbours as ourselves, living in harmony with them, and seeking reconciliation when any division exists. The third degree consists of the outward ceremonial duties of God's worship, and that these are inferior to the other is clear from Christ's, "first be reconciled to thy brother." Even the outward solemnities of sabbath-keeping are to give place to the works of love. God esteems mercy above sacrifice. Alas, how many today are sticklers for the details of baptism and the Lord's supper who will not even speak to some of their brethren.

"First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Mat 5:24). This is far from implying that the regaining of his brother's esteem is a good work which entitles him to the favour of God. No—the man who rests his hope of the acceptance of his religious services on the consciousness that his brethren have nothing against him, is leaning on a broken reed. The only valid ground of hope for the acceptance of either our persons or our worship is the free grace of God. But it means that, when peace has been restored, he must not forget to return and offer his gift. For although God will not receive our worship unless—so far as in us lies—we are on loving terms with our neighbours, yet the performance of our duty to men in nowise frees us from the obligation of direct service to God.

"Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing" (Mat 5:25-26). This is one of the passages appealed to by the Papists in support of their Christ-insulting dogma of purgatory. That they have to apply to such verses as

these in order to bolster up their error shows how hard-pressed they are to find anything in the Scriptures which even appears to favour their vile tenets.

The Roman expositors are not even agreed among themselves. Some take the “adversary” to be the devil, and the “judge” God Himself. Others among them suppose the “adversary” to be God administering His law, the “judge” they regard as Christ, the “officer” an angel, and the “prison” to be purgatory, “the way” the span of our life on earth. “Agree with God while you are in this life, lest you come before Christ in judgment, and He cause His angels to cast you into purgatory, and there you remain till you have made full satisfaction for all your venial sins.” But such a concept utterly ignores the context, where Christ lays down a rule of reconciliation between man and man, and not between God and man. Moreover, such an interpretation (?) pits the Father against the Son. Finally, it denies the sufficiency of Christ’s atonement, making the sinner himself the one who provides satisfaction for his venial sins.

Many Protestant commentators regard verses 25 and 26 as a parable, which portrays the grave peril of the sinner and his urgent need of believing the Gospel. Injurious conduct toward our fellow men renders us noxious to the wrath of God, who is our Adversary-at-law. We are on the way to the judgment seat and our time here is but short at best. But a way of reconciliation is revealed in the Gospel and of this we should avail ourselves immediately. If it be neglected and despised, then we forsake our own mercies and close the door of hope against us. If we die with our sins unpardoned, then nothing awaits us but a certain judgment, and we shall be cast into the prison of hell, and being unable to offer any satisfaction to divine justice, we must there suffer the due reward of our iniquities forever and ever. Such a concept may evidence the ingenuity of the commentator, but where is the slightest hint in the passage that Christ was speaking a parable?

Personally, we see no reason whatever for not understanding our Lord’s words here *literally*. Christ had exhorted the party doing wrong to seek to be reconciled with his brother, by acknowledging the offense and making reparation according to the injury inflicted. In support thereof, He had advanced the solemn consideration that until this be done, communion with God is broken and our worship is unacceptable to Him. Here (knowing how proud and obstinate the human heart is, and how slow men are to yield and submit to this duty) Christ descended to a lower level, and points out another reason why it is highly expedient for the offending believer to put matters right with him whom he has wronged, namely, lest the aggrieved one go to the law, and this involve him in costly litigation, or even procure his imprisonment.

“Agree with thine adversary” (Mat 5:25) is just the same as, “Be reconciled to thy brother” (Mat 5:24), for “adversary” is a general name applied to all persons in common who have a controversy or are at variance with each other. “Agree with” the one you have provoked, seek restoration to his favour—by repairing the injury you have done him. An injured one, or a creditor, might at any time sue him, demanding that his case be tried in the magistrate’s court. While on their way to court, there was still time to come to an amicable agreement between themselves, but once they appeared before the magistrate the matter would pass out of their hands, and be subject to the decision of the court, whose business it is to see that strict justice be impartially enforced.

The view given above was held by the renowned Calvin (1509-1564), “If in this place the judge signify God, the adversary the devil, the officer an angel, the prison purgatory, I will readily subscribe to them (the Papists). But if it be evident to everyone that Christ thus intended to show how many dangers and calamities persons expose themselves, who prefer obstinately exerting the rigour of the law to acting upon the principles of equity and kindness, in order the more earnestly to exhort His disciples to an equitable concord, pray where will purgatory be found?” Verses 26

and 27 are to be regarded as a warning of what may befall those who heed not the command in verses 24 and 25. If we refuse to humble ourselves and strive to preserve peace, we must not be surprised if others deal harshly with us and sue us. In closing, it may be observed that Christ here approves of the magisterial office, his proceeding against the guilty, and of imprisonment.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

90. His Wise Decision

“When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them” (Exo 30:12). In the absence of any commission from God to do so, David not only did wrong in yielding to the pride of his heart by insisting that a military census should be taken of Israel, but he also erred grievously in the way it was carried out. This it is which explains to us why divine judgment followed upon his being so remiss, and why that plague fell on all the nation, for the law laid the responsibility on every individual alike. The amount of the required “ransom” was so small (a shilling—a quarter) that it lay within the capacity of the poorest. “The rich were not allowed to give more, thus teaching us that all mankind are, in this matter, equal. All had sinned and come short of the glory of God, therefore all needed, equally needed, a ransom.

“This numbering was a solemn ceremonial that could not be done quickly, as we see by the first chapter in the book called Numbers. Therefore there was time for the officers to have looked up in the law what was required of them. For a man to present himself to God without a ransom was a solemn and dangerous thing to do. The fact that the result, which they were warned by this law to avoid, came upon them, shows us that we are expected to read the Word, and that God will not contradict His own Word. As Paul warns us, ‘If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself,’ 2 Timothy 2:13” (C. H. Bright). How loudly ought this incident to speak unto us in this flesh-pleasing and God-defying age—to ignore the requirements of the divine law is to court certain disaster—true alike for the individual and for the nation.

“So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king” (2Sa 24:8-9). For nine long months the pride of David’s heart deceived him, as alas, lust had before dimmed his eyes the same length of time (2Sa 11:12). During this season his conscience slumbered and there was no exercise of it before God over his action—such is ever the case when we are caught in the coils of Satan. Does it strike us as incredible that one so favoured of God, and one who had so signally honoured Him in the general course of his life, should now have such a deplorable and protracted lapse? Let each of us answer the question out of his checkered experience. We doubt not that the majority of our Christian readers will hang their heads with shame, as they are conscious of similar backslidings in their own history—and if perchance a minority have been preserved from such falls, well may they marvel at the distinguishing mercy which has been vouchsafed them.

“And David’s heart smote him after that he had numbered the people” (2Sa 24:10). This indicated that he was a regenerate soul, for it is ever one of the marks of a true believer to repent of his misdeeds. Though on the one hand the flesh lusts against the spirit, on the other, the spirit (the nature received at the new birth) is contrary to the flesh and delights not in its works. For

almost a year David appears to have been indifferent to his sin, but now he is conscious of his wickedness, without, so far as we are informed, any human instrument convicting him of the evil which he had done. It is good to see that though he had remained so long in the path of self-will, his heart was not obdurate—though his conscience had indeed slumbered, yet it was not dead. It is cause for real thanksgiving when we find that we have hearts which smite us for wrong-doing.

We are not here told what it was that aroused David from his spiritual stupor and caused his heart to smite him—simply the bare fact is stated. Here again is where we receive help by comparing the supplementary account furnished by 1 Chronicles 21, for there we are told, “And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel. And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly” (1Ch 21:7-8). In 2 Samuel 24:10, David’s confession of his sin *followed* his contrition, so that a careful comparison of the two passages enables us to ascertain that the chiding from his heart was the effect of the Lord’s being displeased at what he had done. This is one of many illustrations which serves to bring out the characteristic differences of the two books—the one is mainly exoteric, the other largely esoteric. That is to say, 1 and 2 Samuel narrate the historical facts, whereas 1 and 2 Chronicles generally reveal the hidden springs from which the actions proceed.

“And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel” (1Ch 21:7). Here we learn how *God* regarded the policy David had pursued—He was offended, for His law had been completely disregarded. “And he smote Israel”: observe particularly that this comes before David’s confession of his sin (2Sa 24:8) and before God “sent pestilence upon Israel” (2Sa 24:14). Ere God caused the plague to fall upon the nation, He first smote David’s heart! He did not turn His back upon David! As another has pointed out, “The whole system of Israel, by this national transgression, was now defiled and tainted, and ripe for severity of judgment. This pride was the giving up of God, and God would have been dealing righteously had He at once laid Israel aside, as He did Adam, in such a case.” Instead, He acted here in sovereign grace.

No, the Lord was far from utterly forsaking David. Put together the two statements, and in this order, “And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel” (1Ch 21:7), “And David’s heart smote him after he had numbered the people” (2Sa 24:10). Do not these two statements stand related as cause to effect? The one revealing the Lord’s working, the other showing the result produced in his servant. God now smote David’s heart, making him to feel His sore displeasure. David, as a child of God, might be tempted, overtaken in a fault, and thus brought to shame and grief, but could he be left impenitent? No; no more than Peter was (Luk 22:32). The reprobate are given up to hardness of heart, but not so the righteous. The Lord would not suffer David to remain indifferent to his sin, but graciously wrought conviction and contrition within him. And so far from David’s conscience being as one which had been “seared with a hot iron” (1Ti 4:2), it was sensitive and quick to respond to the influences of God’s Spirit.

“And David’s heart smote him after that he had numbered the people” (2Sa 24:10). What a warning is this for us! How it should speak to *our* hearts! What a solemn and salutary lesson does it point—the very thing which David imagined would bring him pleasure, caused him pain! This is ever the case. To listen to Satan’s temptations is to court certain trouble, to be attracted by the glitter on the bait he dangles before us, will be to our inevitable undoing. It was so with Eve, with Dinah (Gen 34:1), with Achan (Jos 7:1). Indulging the pride of his heart, David fondly supposed that to secure an accurate count of the full military strength of his kingdom would prove gratifying. Instead, he now grieves over his folly. What insanity it is for us to invest folly with the garb of satisfaction—not only will a sense of sin dampen the Christian’s carnal joy, but “At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder” (Pro 23:32).

“And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly” (2Sa 24:10). David had been convicted by the Spirit, and a heavy sense of guilt oppressed him—ever an intolerable burden to a renewed soul. Sensible of his wrong-doing, he earnestly sought forgiveness of the Lord. Where divine grace possesses the heart, the conscience of a saint, upon reflection, will reprove him for his transgressions. It is at this point there appears the great difference between the regenerate and the empty professor or religious hypocrite. The latter may afterwards have a realization of his madness and suffer keen remorse therefrom, but he will not get down in the dust before God and unsparingly condemn himself. Instead, he invariably excuses himself by blaming his circumstances, his associates, or those lusts which are now his master. This is one of the outstanding characteristics of depraved human nature. Adam took not upon himself the blame for his fall, but sought to throw the onus of it upon his wife, and she upon the serpent.

But it is far otherwise with those who have been made the subjects of a miracle of grace. one who is born again has been given an honest heart, and one of the plainest evidences of this is that its possessor is honest with himself, with his fellows, and above all, with God. An honest soul is sincere, open, candid, abhorring deception and lies. Therefore, in unmistakable contrast from the hypocrite the genuine believer will, upon realizing his transgressions, humble himself before the Lord, and with unfeigned contrition and fervent prayers seek His forgiveness, sincerely purposing by His grace to return no more to his folly. Wondrous indeed is the ministry which grace performs, making our very pride to be an occasion of increasing our humility! Thus it was with David. The same appears again in the case of Hezekiah, “Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding, Hezekiah *humbled* himself for the *pride* of his heart” (2Ch 32:25-26).

“And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly” (2Sa 24:10). It is by the depth of his conviction, the sincerity of his repentance, and the heartiness of his confession, that the child of God is identified. So far from making any attempt to extenuate himself, so far from throwing the blame upon Satan (who had tempted him), David unsparingly condemned *himself*. To others it might seem a small thing that he had done. But David felt he had “sinned greatly.” Ah, he now saw his deed in the light of God’s holiness. In true confession of sin we do not spare ourselves or minimize our misdemeanors, but frankly and feelingly acknowledge the enormity of them. “I have done very foolishly,” David owned, for what he had done was in the pride of his heart, and it was veritable madness for him to be proud of his subjects when they were *God’s* people, as it is insane for the Christian to be proud of the gifts and graces which the Spirit has bestowed upon him.

“For [Hebrew “And”] when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David’s seer” (2Sa 24:11). This seems to indicate that David’s confession had been made during the hours of darkness. God “giveth his beloved sleep” (Psa 127:2), and likewise He withholds it when it serves His purpose. And it is always for our *good* (Rom 8:28) that He does so, whether we perceive it or not. Sometimes He “giveth songs in the night” (Job 35:10). We read too of “visions of the night” (Job 4:13), but at other times God removes sleep from our eyes and speaks to us about our sins. Then it is we can say with Asaph, “My sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted” (Psa 77:2). And then it is that we have a taste of David’s experience, “I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water

my couch with my tears” (Psa 6:6). But whatever be God’s object in withholding sleep, it is blessed when we can say, “By night on my bed I *sought him* whom my soul loveth” (Song 3:1).

“And when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David’s seer, saying, Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee” (2Sa 24:11-12). The solemn exercises of David’s heart during the night season were to prepare him for God’s message of judgment. He had been made to taste something of the bitterness of his folly while others were slumbering, but now he is to know more definitely how sorely displeased God was. When the Lord is about to send us a special message, be it one of cheer or of reproof, He first fits the heart to receive it. When the morning broke, the Lord commissioned Gad to deliver His ultimatum to the king. Gad was a prophet, and he is here designated “David’s seer,” because he was one who, on certain occasions, was wont to counsel him in the things of God. At this time he had to deliver a far from pleasant message—such often falls to the lot of God’s servants.

His heavenly Father must correct David, yet He graciously gave him leave to make a choice whether it should be by famine, war, or pestilence, whether it should be a long-protracted judgment or a very brief yet terribly severe one. Matthew Henry (1662-1714) suggested that the Lord had a fourfold design in this. First, to humble David the more for his sin, which he would see to be exceeding sinful, when he came to consider that each of the judgments were exceeding dreadful. Second, to upbraid him for the proud conceit he had entertained of his own sovereignty over Israel. He had become so great a monarch that he might now do whatever he would. Very well, says God, choose which of these three things you prefer. Third, to grant him some encouragement under the chastisement. So far from the Lord having utterly disfellowshipped him, He let him decide what He should do. Fourth, that he might more patiently endure the rod seeing it was one of his own selection.

“So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days’ pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me” (2Sa 24:13). Here is the third thing connected with this incident which is apt to greatly puzzle the casual reader. First, that such an apparently trifling act on David’s part should have so sorely displeased the Lord. Second, that He suffered Satan to tempt David, and then was angry with him for doing as the tempter suggested. These we have already considered. And now, after David had been convicted of his sin, sincerely repented of the same, had confessed it, and sought the Lord’s forgiveness, that judgment should fall so heavily upon him. It is really surprising that so many of the commentators when dealing with this “difficulty” fail to bear in mind the opening sentence of the chapter—the key to all that follows, “And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against *Israel*” (2Sa 24:1).

God had a controversy with the nation and this it is which accounts for the character of His governmental dealings with them. His judgment could not be averted, and therefore He punished their pride and rebellion by leaving them to suffer the consequences of their king’s following-out the natural impulse of his heart. But there are several other aspects of the case which must be borne in mind. David’s sin had not been a private but a *public* one, and though God forgave him as to his personal concern, yet he had to be publicly humiliated. Again, while God remits the penal and eternal consequences of sin unto a contrite saint, yet even penitents are chastised and often made to smart severely in this world for their folly. Though God be longsuffering, He will by no means clear the guilty. True, His gifts and calling are without repentance (Rom 11:29), and

unto His own “His compassions fail not” (Lam 3:22), yet, the righteousness of His government must be vindicated.

What has last been pointed out holds good in all dispensations, for God’s “ways” change not. Correction is ever a characteristic of the covenant, “for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth” (Heb 12:6). Had David walked in his integrity and in humility before God, he would have been spared severe discipline, but now he must bear the rod. “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” (Psa 89:32-33)—that clearly states the principle. “And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man” (2Sa 24:14). Here was his wise decision, the meaning and blessedness of which we must leave for consideration (D.V.) in our next.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

9. Its Perception

“The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom 8:16). The office of a “witness” is to give testimony or supply evidence for the purpose of adducing proof, either of innocence or guilt. This may be seen from, “which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another” (Rom 2:15). Though the heathen had not received a written revelation from God (as was the case with the Jews), nevertheless they were His creatures, accountable to Him, subject to His authority, and will yet be judged by Him. The grounds on which their responsibility rest are—the revelation which God has made of Himself in nature which renders them “without excuse” (Rom 1:19-20) and the work of the law written on their hearts, which is rationality or “the light of nature.” Their moral instincts instruct them in the difference between right and wrong, and warn of a future day of reckoning. While their conscience also “bears witness,” supplies evidence that God is their Governor and Judge.

Now the Christian has a renewed conscience, and it supplies proof that he is a renewed person, and consequently, one of God’s elect. “We trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly” (Heb 13:18). The bent of his heart was for God and obedience to Him. Not only does the Christian sincerely desire to honour God and be honest with his fellows, but he makes a genuine endeavour thereunto, “Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men” (Act 24:16). And it is the office of a good conscience to witness favourably for us and unto us. To it the Christian may appeal. Paul did so again and again. For example, in Romans 9:1, we find him declaring, “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,” which means that his conscience testified to his sincerity in the matter. Thus we see again how Scripture interprets Scripture, Romans 2:15 and 9:1 define the meaning of “our spirit bearing witness”—adducing evidence, establishing the verity of a case.

Romans 8:16 declares that our spirit (supported by the Holy Spirit) furnishes proof that we are “the children of God,” and as the apostle goes on to show, if children, “then heirs” (Rom 8:17) and “God’s elect” (Rom 8:33). Now this witness of our spirit is the testimony of our heart and conscience, purged and sanctified by the blood of Christ. It testifies in two ways—by inward

tokens in itself and by outward proofs. As this is so little understood today, we must enlarge thereon. Those inward tokens are certain special graces implanted in our spirit at the new birth, whereby a person may be certainly assured of His divine adoption and therefore of his election to salvation. Those tokens regard first our sins and second the mercy of God in Christ. And for the sake of clarity, we will consider the former in connection with our sins past, present, and to come.

The token or sign in our “spirit” or heart which concerns *sins past* is “godly sorrow” (2Co 7:10), which is really a mother grace of many other gifts and graces from God. The nature of it may the better be conceived if we compare it with its opposite. *Worldly* sorrow issues from sin, and is nothing else but *terror* of conscience and an apprehension of the wrath of God for the same. Whereas *godly* sorrow, though it be indeed occasioned by our sins, springs from a *grief* of conscience caused by a sense of the goodness and grace of God. Worldly sorrow is horror only in respect of the punishment, whereas godly sorrow is grief for sin as sin, which is increased by the realization that there will be no personal punishment for it since that was inflicted upon Christ in my stead. In order that no one may deceive himself in discerning this “godly sorrow,” the Holy Spirit in 2 Corinthians 7:11 has given us seven marks by which it may be identified.

The first is, “For behold this selfsame thing [“godly sorrow”], that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you.” The word for “carefulness” signifies first “haste” and then diligence—the opposite of negligence and indifference. There is not only mourning over, but going to work with a will so as to rectify the misconduct. Second, “yea, what clearing of yourselves.” The Greek word signifies “to apologize,” seeking forgiveness. It is the reverse of self-extenuation. Third, “yea, what indignation,” instead of unconcern. The penitent one is exceedingly angry with himself for committing such offenses. Fourth, “yea, what fear,” lest there be any repetition of the same. It is an anxiety of mind against a further lapse. Fifth, “yea, what vehement desire,” for divine assistance and strength against any recurrence of it. Sixth, “yea, what zeal,” in performing the holy duties which are the opposite of those sins. Seventh, “yea, what revenge,” upon himself, by daily mortifying his members. When a man finds these fruits in himself, he need not doubt the “godliness” of his repentance.

The token in our spirit with respect of *sins present* is the resistance made by the new nature against the old, or the principle of holiness against that of evil, see Galatians 5:17. This is proper to the regenerate as they are dual creatures—children of men and children of God. It is far more than the checks of conscience which all men, both good and bad, find in themselves as often as they offend God. No—it is that striving and fighting of the mind, affections, and will *with themselves*, whereby as far as they are renewed and sanctified they carry the man one way, and as they are still corrupt they carry him the contrary. It is this painful and protracted warfare which the Christian discovers to be going on within himself, which evidences him to be a new creature in Christ. If he reviews and recalls the past, he will find in his experience nothing like this before his regeneration.

Everything in the natural adumbrates spiritual realities, did we but have eyes to see and understandings to properly interpret them. There is a disease called *ephialtes* which causes its victims when they are half-asleep to feel as though some heavy weight is lying across their chest, bearing them down. And they strive with hands and feet, with all their might, to remove that weight, but cannot. Such is the case of the genuine Christian—he is conscious of something within that drags him down, which clips the wings of faith and hope, which hinders his affections being set upon things above. It oppresses him and he wrestles with it, but in vain. It is the “flesh,” his inborn corruptions, indwelling sin, against which all the graces of the new nature strive and

struggle. It is an intolerable burden which disturbs his rest and prevents him from doing the things which he would.

The token in our spirit which respects *sins to come* is an earnest care to prevent them. That this is a mark of God's children appears from, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1Jo 5:18). Note carefully the tense of the verb—it is not, "he does not sin," but "sinneth not"—as a regular practice and constant course. From that he "keepeth himself." This carefulness consists not only in the ordering of our outward conduct, but extends to the very thoughts of the heart. It was to this the apostle referred when he said, "I keep under my body, but bring it into subjection" (1Co 9:27)—not his physical body, but the body of sin within him. The more we make conscience of evil thoughts and unlawful imaginations, the more we sit in judgment upon our motives—the less likely is our external behaviour to be displeasing unto God.

We turn now to consider the tokens or signs in the Christian's spirit with respect to *God's mercy*, tokens which evidence him to be one of God's elect. The first one is when a man feels himself to be heavily burdened and deeply disturbed with the guilt and pollution of his iniquities, and when he apprehends the heavy displeasure of God in his conscience for them. This far outweighs any physical ills or temporal calamities which he may be subject to. Sin is now his greatest burden of all, making him quite unable to enjoy worldly pleasures or relish the society of worldly companions. Now it is he feels his urgent need of Christ and pants after Him as the parched hart does for the refreshing stream. Carnal ambitions and worldly hopes fade into utter insignificance before this overwhelming yearning for reconciliation with God through the merits of the Redeemer. "Give me Christ or else I die," is now his agonizing cry.

Now to all such sin-sick, conscience-tormented, Spirit-convicted souls, Christ has made some exceedingly great and precious promises—promises which pertain unto none but the quickened elect of God. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (Joh 7:37-38). Is not that exactly suited to the deep needs of one who feels the flames of hell upon his conscience? He hungers and thirsts after righteousness, for he knows that he has none of his own. He thirsts for peace, for he has none night or day. He thirsts for pardon and cleansing, for he sees himself to be a leprous felon. Then come to Me, says Christ, and I will meet your every need. "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Rev 21:6). And mark what follows his coming to Christ, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst" (Joh 4:14).

The second token is *a new affection* which is implanted in the heart by the Holy Spirit, whereby a man does so esteem and value and set such a high price upon the blood and righteousness of Christ that he accounts the most precious things of this world as but dross and dung in comparison. This affection was evidenced by Paul, see Philippians 3:7-8. Now it is true that almost every professor will say that he values the person and work of Christ high above all the things of this world, when the fact is that the vast majority of them are of Esau's mind, preferring a mess of pottage to Jacob's portion. With very, very few exceptions, those who bear the name of Christians much prefer the fleshpots of Egypt to the blessings of God in the land of promise. Their actions and their lives demonstrate it, for where a man's treasure is there is his heart also.

That no man may deceive himself in connection with this particular sign of regeneration and election, God has given us two identifying and corroborating marks. First, when there is a genuine prizing of and delighting in Christ above all other objects, there is an unfeigned love for

His members. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1Jo 3:14)—that is, such as are members of the mystical body of Christ, and because they are so. Those who are dear to God must be dear to His people. No matter what differences there may be between them in nationality, social position, personal temperament—there is a *spiritual* bond which unites them. If Christ be dwelling in my heart, then my affections will necessarily be drawn forth unto all in whom I perceive, however faintly, the shape of His holy image. And just so far as I allow the spirit of animosity to alienate me from them, will my evidence of election be overclouded.

The second corroborating mark of a genuine valuing of Christ is a love and longing for *His coming*—whether it be by death or by His second advent. Though nature shrinks from physical dissolution, and though the sin which indwells the Christian renders him uneasy at the thought of being ushered into the immediate presence of the Holy one of God, nevertheless, the actings of the new nature carries the soul above these obstacles. A renewed heart cannot rest satisfied with its present, fitful, and imperfect communion with his Beloved. He yearns for full and complete fellowship with Him. This was clearly the case with Paul, “Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phi 1:23). That this was not peculiar to himself, but that it is something which is common to the entire election of grace appears from his word, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto *all* them also that *love his appearing*” (2Ti 4:8).

Next we turn to the *external* token of our adoption. This is evangelical obedience, whereby the believer sincerely endeavours to obey God’s commands in his daily life. “*Hereby we do know* that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1Jo 2:3). God does not judge disobedience by the rigour of the law, for then it would be no token of grace but a means of damnation. Rather does God esteem and consider that obedience according to the tenor of the new covenant. Concerning those who fear Him the Lord declares, “I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him” (Mal 3:17). God regards the things done not by their effects or absolute doing of them, but by *the affection* of the doer. It is at the heart God chiefly looks. And yet, lest any be deceived on this point, let the following qualifications be prayerfully pondered.

That external obedience which God requires of His children, and which for Christ’s sake He accepts from them, is not one which has respect to only a few of the divine commands, but unto all, without exception. Herod heard the Baptist gladly, and did many things (Mar 6:20), but he drew the line at complying with the seventh commandment to leave his brother, Philip’s, wife. Judas forsook the world for Christ and became a preacher of the Gospel, yet he failed to mortify the lust of covetousness, and perished. on the contrary, David exclaimed, “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments” (Psa 119:6). He that repents of one sin truly repents of all sins, and he that lives in any one known sin without repentance, actually repents of no sin at all

Again—for our external obedience to be acceptable to God, it must extend itself to the whole course of a Christian’s life after conversion. We are not to judge ourselves (or anyone else) by a few odd actions, but by the general tenor of our lives. As the course of a man’s life is, such is the man himself—though he, because of the sin which still indwells him, fails in this or that particular action, yet does it not prejudice his estate before God, so long as he renews his repentance for his offenses—not lying down in any one sin. Finally, it is required that this external obedience proceed from the whole man—all that is within him is to show forth God’s praises. At the new birth all the faculties of the soul are renewed, and henceforth are to be employed in the service of God, as formerly they had been in the service of sin.

Let it be said once more that it is most important that the Christian should be quite clear as to exactly *what it is* his spirit bears witness unto. It is not to any improvement in his carnal nature, nor to sin being less active within him. Rather is it to the fact that he is a child of God, as is evident from his heart going out after Him, yearning for fellowship with Him, and his sincere endeavour to please Him. Just as an affectionate and dutiful child has within his own bosom proof of the peculiar relationship which he stands in to his father, so the filial inclinations and aspirations of the believer prove that God is his heavenly Father. True, there is still much in him which is constantly rising up in opposition to God, nevertheless, there is something else which was not in him by nature.

Let us here anticipate an objection—some say that it is a sin for the Christian to question his acceptance with God because he is still so depraved, or to doubt his salvation because he can perceive little or no holiness within. They say that such doubting is to call God's truth and faithfulness into question, for He has assured us of His love and His readiness to save all who believe in His Son. They deny that it is our duty to examine our hearts and say that we shall never obtain any assurance by so doing, that we must look to Christ alone and rest on His naked Word. But this is a serious mistake. We *do* rest on His Word when we search for those evidences which that Word itself describe as the marks of a child of God. Said the apostle, "For our rejoicing is this, *the testimony of our conscience*, etc." (2Co 1:12). "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And *hereby* we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him" (1Jo 3:18-19).

But notwithstanding the evidences which a Christian has of his divine sonship, he finds it no easy matter to be assured of his sincerity or to establish solid comfort in his soul. His moods are fitful, his frames variable. It is at this very point the blessed Spirit of God helps our infirmities. He adds *His* witness to the testimony of our renewed conscience, so that at times the Christian is assured of his salvation, and can say, "*My conscience* also bearing me witness in *the Holy Ghost*" (Rom 9:1).

THE HOLY SABBATH

6. Its Perpetuation

We now approach what is to us, upon whom the ends of the ages are come (1Co 10:11), the most pertinent and important aspect of our subject. It is therefore necessary to proceed slowly and enter more into detail, especially as there is so much confusion and error at this point. In seeking to open up this branch of our theme, we feel that we cannot do better than follow more or less closely the lucid and helpful writings of Patrick Fairbairn (1805-1874) thereon. We would like to quote him at length, but this would occupy too much space, so we content ourself by summarizing his able exposition thereof, intermingling and adding some remarks and conclusions of our own.

First, a Christian Sabbath was clearly anticipated by Old Testament prophecy. Or to put it another way, the prophets plainly intimated that the Holy Sabbath would be perpetuated throughout the Christian dispensation. Thus we have a natural bridge which connects the Old and New Testaments together. A wide field is here opened for investigation, but for the sake of brevity and clarity, we shall confine our attention to two predictions—the first one enunciating the basic general principle, the second furnishing more explicit details. We have discussed the

former passage under the covenant articles in our *Studies in the Scriptures*, but for the sake of new readers, and particularly as it bears upon our present theme, we must again look at it.

Before turning to those ancient evangelic testimonies, it should be pointed out that a considerable portion of the prophetic writings pertains rather to the New, than to the Old Testament dispensation. They were designed to deliver the Jews from dwelling too exclusively in their thoughts on their present regime—on which they were ever prone to settle with a carnal and exclusive regard, and to direct the eye of faith forward to those better things which were to come, and which were to be disclosed in “the dispensation of the fullness of times” (Eph 1:10). It was of those very things, the prophecies we are to consider, spoke. They were “the testimony of Jesus,” witnessing beforehand of the work He was to do, the nature of that kingdom which He would establish, and the character of those blessings He should confer.

In proof of our contention that the Sabbath obtains for the Christian dispensation, we appeal first to, “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the [spiritual] house of Israel, and with the [spiritual] house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more” (Jer 31:31-34). That the new covenant here mentioned is that brought in by Christ is expressly affirmed in the eighth chapter of Hebrews, so that there can be no doubt of this being one of those prophecies which had immediate reference to the Gospel economy.

Now the leading characteristic of this new covenant, as contradistinguished from that which was made with carnal Israel at Sinai, is that God’s law is now written on the hearts of His people, whereas it was formerly written on tables of stone. In this the law is transmitted internally, in that, the nation had it externally. Yet, let it be said emphatically, it is identically *the same law*—the moral law, not the ceremonial, for so far from that being exalted into a higher place by Christ, it was in Him abolished, passing away like the shadow when the substance comes. Nor is the ceremonial law ever designated absolutely “the law of God,” and least of all could that be meant when the law and the covenant are viewed (as they are here) as in great measure identical. That which is preeminently called “*the law*” in the Pentateuch, and which formed exclusively the old covenant, was simply the Ten Commandments—those wholly and those alone.

It was the Ten Commandments, then, which the spirit of prophecy (through Jeremiah) foretold should one day, namely, in the Gospel dispensation—be inscribed by the finger of God upon the hearts of His people. By a miracle of grace being wrought in them, they would, after the inward man, delight in and serve God’s law (Rom 7:22-25). It could not be otherwise, for God has predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29)—initially so now, fully so in glory. If then the Head could say, “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:8), so in their measure can the members of His mystical body say the same. Yet there is this great difference—for in all things He has the pre-eminence. Christ was born (“that holy thing,” Luk 1:35) with God’s law in His heart, whereas it is only written in ours at the new birth.

Now if the Ten Commandments as a whole be written upon the hearts of Christians, it must be true of each individual part—*the fourth* as well as any of the rest. That commandment was most

certainly included as an essential part of the law or covenant which was formerly written without and set before the nation of Israel, but is now written within and infused with living power in the affections of the souls of God's people. And is not that very fact attested by Christian experience? How uniformly do they who are admitted into the privileges of the new covenant love and delight in the day of God! Nay, the more deeply anyone drinks into the spirit of the Gospel and experiences the grace of God writing the law of holiness on the tablet of his heart, the more invariably does he count the Sabbath "the holy of the LORD, honourable" (Isa 58:13).

So far from a renewed soul chafing at the restraints which the day of rest throws upon his conduct, and hankering after a larger freedom amid the pleasures and business of the world, he gladly hails its hallowed employments, and finds its weekly returns as so many "spring days" in his spiritual nature. He thinks and feels with the poet:

"Sweet day of rest! for thee I'd wait,
Emblem and earnest of a state
Where saints are fully blest!
For thee I'd look, for thee I'd sigh.
I'd count the days till thou art nigh
Sweet day of sacred rest!"

The second passage to which we appeal for proof of the Sabbath in this dispensation is, "Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people" (Isa 56:3-7).

Now it should be unmistakably evident to all that the above prediction does and could not refer to Jewish but must relate to *Gospel times*. First, this is clear from the place it occupies in the chain of prophecy, and of which it is a part—i.e., beginning at Isaiah 54:1, immediately after the atoning death of Christ in chapter 53. Second, it is directly connected with the revelation of "God's righteousness" and the "coming near of his salvation" (see Isa 56:1), which can only be understood of Gospel times (see Rom 1:16-17), and is so regarded by all sound interpreters. Third, express mention is here made of the keeping of the sabbath as a characteristic mark of godliness on the part of the "strangers" (Isa 56:6), that is, *the Gentiles* who should join themselves to the Lord—"to the LORD," and not to the nation of Israel!

It is also to be noted that the duty and blessedness of observing the sabbath are spoken of in Isaiah 56:4 as belonging to the "eunuchs," who under the Mosaic dispensation were *excluded* from the congregation of the Lord, as also were the "strangers" as a body. Now the calling of the Gentiles and the removal of all outward, personal disabilities in God's sight, are emphatically marks of the New Testament church, yet of such a church it was definitely predicted that the observance of *the sabbath* would form a distinctive characteristic. Finally, not only is the observance of the sabbath three times repeated with singular emphasis, but it is coupled with laying hold of the covenant, doing justice, and loving the name of the Lord—clearly importing

that the sabbath has its place with the most important and permanent appointments of God's kingdom.

Ere passing on, perhaps it will be well for us to anticipate an objection which some may be inclined to make against what has just been advanced. The dispensationalists, who are so fond of allocating to a Jewish "millennium" those prophecies which receive their fulfillment under this Christian economy, are likely to say Isaiah 56:3-7 cannot be understood as receiving its accomplishment in Gospel times, but must be regarded as describing conditions under a future and restored Judaism, because verse 7 says, "Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar." From this and other passages the grotesque conclusion is drawn that an era yet to come is to witness a revival of the ancient Levitical ritual—a thing which is not only without a vestige of New Testament support, but which is expressly refuted by the entire contents of the Hebrews' epistle, the special design of which is to show that the Aaronic priesthood has been forever set aside, superseded by the more excellent priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchizedek.

Surely only those who are blinded by prejudice could fail to see that so far from Isaiah 56:7 containing anything in favour of a future restored Judaism, the whole passage in which that verse occurs makes dead against such a preposterous view. Why, if there be any one thing more than another which outstandingly characterized the exclusiveness of Judaism, it was that the priestly functions were rigidly confined *to the family of Aaron*. "Therefore thou [Aaron] and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for every thing of the altar, and within the vail; and ye shall serve: I have given your priest's office unto *you* as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death" (Num 18:7 and cf. 3:10, 38). In passage after passage, "death" is threatened the "stranger" (Gentile) who dared to approach that altar. So strict was JEHOVAH in the enforcement of this restrictive statute, that even when one of Israel's own kings dared to usurp sacerdotal functions by burning incense upon the altar, He smote him with leprosy (2Ch 26:16)!

What shall be thought, then, of those "renowned Bible teachers," who are supposed to have so much more light than the rank and file of ministers, when they display such ignorance of one of the most elementary principles of Judaism, and give forth such a carnal and absurd interpretation of the prophetic Scriptures? Why, to put it as charitably and mildly as possible, that they are unsafe guides in spiritual things, and that though they may be able to amuse the curious, they cannot edify those seeking a closer walk with God. This childish and slavish "literalism" is so far from honouring God, that it brings His Holy Word into disrepute among soberminded people. Anyone who possesses spiritual discernment and who is at all acquainted with the New Testament, should at once perceive that the "burnt offerings" of Isaiah 56:7 are the same, as the "*spiritual* sacrifices" of 1 Peter 2:5, expressed in the terminology of the Old Covenant.

What a blessed picture does Isaiah 56 furnish of the distinctive and special blessings of Gospel times! New Covenant privileges are portrayed under the figures of Old Covenant institutions, yet such remarkable contrasts are drawn that there is no excuse for mistaking their purport. Both eunuchs and strangers were expressly excluded from the sacred precincts of Israel's tabernacle and temple, and to here affirm that the Lord would give them a "place in His house," is only the Old Testament way of saying that the "middle wall of partition" would be broken down." When in verse 6 it says, "The sons of the stranger that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him," the same Hebrew word is used as signifies the service *of the altar*. In other words, it was a prophetic announcement that the redeemed from the Gentiles were made "a royal priesthood" (1Pe 2:9) to offer no material and outward sacrifices, but spiritual and inward ones, the holy exercises of

renewed hearts. The wild idea that it is “millennial” blessings which are here portrayed, is conclusively discountenanced by, “I will give them an everlasting name” (Isa 56:5).

But to proceed—that the sabbath should be continued throughout our own dispensation is just what might be expected, for the merciful nature and tendencies of the weekly day of rest is in perfect accord with the character and genius of Christianity. If a day of stated rest, on which all labour was forbidden as unlawful, and nothing permitted save what ministered to the life and well-being of the soul (with the exception only of works of necessity and mercy), was appointed by God for the good of His creatures under the Old Covenant, then certainly such a gracious provision is equally suited to the character and design of the New Covenant. If there be any feature of Christianity in its connection with human society, more prominent than another, it is the tenderness it breathes toward the poor and needy, and the beneficent influence it is fitted to exert on the conditions of those who require most of sympathy and kindness.

Christ Himself gave it as the leading characteristic of His work on earth that thereby the objects of deepest compassion were relieved, and that the poor had the Gospel preached unto them (Mat 11:4-5). There was in His heart an infinite tenderness and fellow-feeling for such, even in regard to temporal evils, which often excited the wonder of His immediate followers and rebuked their comparative indifference. And is not a weekly Sabbath, bringing a periodical release from the toils and burdens of life, permitting the most weary and oppressed a season of repose in the bosom of their families, and to attend to what they must otherwise neglect, namely, the higher interests of their being—is not *such* a day an unspeakable boon to the great bulk of mankind? Has not the Sabbath been one of the most wise and benevolent gifts the Creator has bestowed upon His creatures, testifying His care both for their bodies and their spirits, by providing relaxation for the one and refreshment for the other?

Undoubtedly that is the real character of the Sabbath. And if Christianity has done anything to destroy the foundations on which such a blessed institution rests, it must surely in this particular, be strangely inconsistent with its general tendency and design. In its care for the poor and oppressed—it must then actually rank lower than Judaism, and be chargeable with removing one of the noblest bulwarks of the weak against the strong—of the labouring classes of society against the greed and grind of the monopolists. That the Gospel of the grace of God was intended to produce such an unfavourable effect, or can be made to do so otherwise than by some gross perversion of its meaning, will not readily be believed by any who know what the spirit of the Gospel is. The benevolent character of the Gospel, viewed in connection with the equally benevolent character of the Sabbath, amounts to a strong presumption that so far from subverting, the one must rather establish and support the other.

1 PETER 2:25

“For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (1Pe 2:25). How distinctly this shows that those sinners who trust in the Lord Jesus for salvation were already His sheep, when as yet they had not been brought to know their need of the great salvation accomplished for them by their “Good Shepherd.” “Ye are now returned unto the Shepherd”—how distinctly this shows the sure results of *grace*, through the quickening work of the Holy Spirit. As the result of that work, the Lord Jesus possesses the chief attraction for them. “My sheep hear my voice...and they follow me” (Joh 10:27). They now seek no other place

of refuge, no other Guide but Himself. They may possess but little comfort. They have but a very faint assurance of their interest in His love. Great may be the depths of inbred evil over which they have to mourn, yet withal they can truly say that their eyes are toward Him and the desire of their hearts is after Him. The sure evidence this, that His eyes were previously towards them, and His desire first after them, and that His voice has effectually called them to Himself.

“Them also I *must* bring, and they *shall* hear my voice” (Joh 10:16). How emphatic! How certain is the Shepherd’s language! How complete are the arrangements of the everlasting covenant! How irresistible are the workings of sovereign electing grace! So is it always. He begins the work in the soul of His beloved and it is He who carries on that work unto the end. Both the beginning and the end shall evermore be to the glory of His matchless, free, and unmerited grace.—Thomas Moore.

There are two points in the above quotation, most blessed and important, yet little understood today, which perhaps call for a brief amplification. First, the fact that those who savingly believe in Christ are His “sheep” before ever they turn unto Him, for it is to be duly noted that 1 Peter 2:25 is not treating of the recovery of backslidden Christians, but of their first coming to the Saviour. As our Lord so plainly declared, “Other sheep I have [not “shall have”]...them also I must bring” (Joh 10:16). They belonged to Him from all eternity. They were His by the Father’s election and by His gift of them to His Son. But it may be objected, these sheep are said to “return” to Christ, so they must previously have been in the fold. The answer is simple, Christ’s sheep *went astray* from Him when they fell in Adam, their natural head, and consequently they were born in sin.

Second, the voice of the verb. It is not “ye *have* returned unto the shepherd,” but “*are* now returned” (1Pe 2:25). This denotes they were completely *passive* therein. The work of regeneration is entirely divine and nothing of man enters into it. It is wrought in us and not done by us. The active follows the passive, as the results of life follow the bestowment of life. Our coming to Christ is the consequence of His having drawn us. It is a sovereign act of divine power which brings us from death unto life, in which we are completely passive.

THE TWO NATURES

(Continued from the May issue)

At the outset—we are the same persons all through. Neither the deprivation of spiritual life at the Fall, nor the communication of spiritual life at the new birth, affects the reality of our being in possession of what we commonly call human nature. By the Fall, we did not become less than men—by regeneration, we do not become more than men. That which essentially constitutes our manhood was not lost, and no matter whatever be imparted to us at regeneration, our individuality is never changed.

If the above distinctions be carefully borne in mind, particularly between what our nature essentially consists of and what it “accidentally” became by virtue of the changes passing upon it, then there should be less difficulty in our understanding what is signified by the Lord’s assuming *our nature*. When the Son of God became incarnate, He took to Himself human nature. He was in every respect true Man, possessing spirit and soul and body, “In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren” (Heb 2:17). This does not explain the miracle and mystery of the divine incarnation, for that is incomprehensible, but it states the fundamental fact of it. Christ did

not inherit our corruption, for that was not an essential of manhood. He was born and ever remained immaculately pure and holy, nevertheless, He took upon Him our nature intrinsically considered.

Reverting for a moment to our opening passage, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Here “the flesh” is the name given to human nature as fallen—it must not be restricted to the body (as in a few passages it is), but understood (as generally in the New Testament) of the entire human constitution. In affirming, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh” (Joh 3:6), Christ reiterated the basic and unchanging principle—repeated no less than nine times in Genesis 1—that every creature brings forth “after his kind.” The quality of the fruit is determined by the nature of the tree that bears it—an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. Man’s fallen nature cannot yield that which is sinless. No matter how much fallen man may be educated, civilized, or religionized, in his natural state, he cannot produce that which is acceptable to the thrice holy God. In order to that he must be born again—a new and sinless nature imparted to him.

“And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Joh 3:6). A new, a spiritual life is communicated, from which the grand moral change in its subject proceeds. This communication of divine life to the soul is viewed in the New Testament under various figures. It is likened to the implanting of an incorruptible “seed” in the soul (1Pe 1:23; 1Jo 3:9); to a cleansing of the heart, a “washing of water by the word” (Ti 3:5; Eph 5:26); to a renovation of the will or a writing of God’s law in the mind (Heb 8:10). The figure of the “seed” conveys the idea of a subsequent growth; the washing of water suggests a process of cleansing only commenced; while that of God’s writing His law in our minds intimates the durability and permanence of His work of grace. It is from this new life or nature, imparted by the Spirit, that all spiritual life proceeds.

We have no desire to belittle the marvel and miracle of the new birth—so far from it, we freely accept our Lord’s declaration that it is a mystery beyond man’s power to solve (Joh 3:8). If the communication of natural life be an enigma to human understanding, much more so is the impartation of spiritual life. Thus, in our efforts to simplify one aspect of regeneration we seek to guard against falsifying it at another. What we wish to make clear is, that at the new birth no new faculties are added to man’s soul, no addition is made to his essential threefold constitution. Previously, he possessed a spirit and soul and body—he does not now have a fourth thing bestowed upon him. It is the man himself who is born again. As at the Fall his person was vitiated, now his person is regenerated—the full effects of which will only appear at his glorification.

Having thus considered, very briefly, the two natures in the Christian, we must now distinguish sharply between them and the individual in whom they reside. A *nature* and a *person* are in many respects widely different. Whether unconverted or converted, the person is constitutionally the same—it is the one who was dead in trespasses and sins who has been divinely quickened. It is identically the same individual who formerly was a child of disobedience, under condemnation, who is now justified and sanctified. And my reader, it is to the *person* and not to his nature that accountability attaches. Deeds belong to the individual and not to his nature. No amount of quibbling can gainsay the fact that in his heart even the unregenerate is conscious that he is responsible to act and live contrary to his fallen nature, and that he is justly culpable if he yields to his depraved inclinations. It is on this very ground that God will judge him in the day to come, and so self-evidently righteous will this be that “every mouth will be stopped” (Rom 3:19) and God “will be clear when he judges” (see Psa 51:4).

Plain and simple though it be, yet we feel we must labour the point a little further. How many professing Christians today speak of “the flesh,” in themselves and in others, in such a way as if

its being an exhibition of the flesh thoroughly explained matters. Were one to rebuke another for conduct unbecoming a child of God, and he replied, Yes, that is the flesh working in me, such language would plainly evidence an attempt *to escape* responsibility. If evil deeds by a Christian were excusable on the ground that the flesh still remains within him, then by parity of reason every sinner on earth could excuse himself, and how then could God judge the world? In point of fact the unregenerate do, everywhere, fall back on their sinful nature to escape condemnation, whereas if they listened to conscience they would certainly know that their nature never compelled them to commit a single sin. It inclined them, but they were responsible to control and resist it, and the essence of their guilt is that they did not.

It is *the man*, then, who sins and is the sinner. It is the man who needs to be forgiven and justified. It is the man who is responsible to walk not in the flesh but in the Spirit. It is the same person all through. It is the man who is born again and not a nature. True, at the new birth he receives a new life or nature, so that he now has two natures, and his responsibility is to mortify the old and feed, strengthen, and be governed by the new. The flesh is in no wise improved by the presence of the “spirit,” any more than weeds are bettered by planting flowers in their midst. The flesh and the spirit are contrary to each other, and my responsibility lies in making no provision for the former, acting according to the dictates of the latter.



July

BIBLE STUDY

From our correspondence we gather that in these strenuous days, there are not a few who deplore the fact that they do not now have the time available for serious reading which they once had. Working conditions are so exacting, competition is so keen and ruthless, the pace has become so feverish, that the majority are too exhausted at the close of the day to apply themselves in the evening to anything which involves much effort. We sympathize with these weary toilers, and would offer to them the following remarks. First, God is no Egyptian taskmaster, laying upon us a burden grievous to be borne. Second, there is nothing more restful to the nerves and relief-bringing to an over-taxed mind than half an hour spent alone with God—say five minutes in reading a Psalm or a portion from the Gospels, fifteen or twenty minutes at the throne of grace—thanking God for the mercies of the day, pouring out to Him our troubles, seeking fresh supplies of grace, and then reading a chapter from the epistles. Third, retire to rest half an hour sooner than you have been doing, and rise that much earlier in the morning, so as to spend it with God, preparing yourself for the demands of the day. Fourth, be most particular in seeing to it that you spend several hours on the Sabbath over God’s Word and reading edifying books. It is not honouring to the Lord for you to rush from one meeting to another and leave yourself little opportunity for private devotions.

But there is another class of young people or those not so hardly pressed by the exigencies of modern life, who write and ask us what we consider to be “the best way to study the Bible.” Recently it has struck us that the term “study” in this relation has an egotistical sound and savours of carnality. Is it not almost irreverent to employ this language here—a dragging down of the holy and unique Word of God to the level of mere human productions? Is it a clear brain or a sensitive conscience which is most essential for profiting from divine revelation? and which is more likely to be called into exercise by close “study”? “What method do you recommend for studying the Bible?” Does not such a question seem to indicate that the inquirer supposes the Sacred Scriptures to be addressed chiefly to the intellect? The questioner may not be conscious of this (for the heart is very deceitful), yet is not that what is really implied? Can you imagine one who had received a missive from his sweetheart proposing to sit down and “study” it? Would not that expression be altogether incongruous in such a connection?

But has not God Himself exhorted us to “study” His Word? Where? In what passage? The actual term “study” occurs but five times in the Bible. Twice in Proverbs (15:28; 24:2) where it signifies to “meditate” beforehand; once in Ecclesiastes 12:12; again in 1 Thessalonians 4:11—“Study to be quiet;” and finally, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2Ti 2:15), which is addressed to the preacher, and means he is to make it his paramount concern to endeavour to please God in all

things, and is to spare no pains in equipping himself to minister the Word in season to needy souls, so that each may receive a suitable portion. Neither the verse itself nor the context has any reference to partitioning off the Scriptures, allotting one book to this dispensation and another book to that dispensation—which is a subtle device of the enemy to rob God’s children of many needed parts of their spiritual bread.

Are we intimating, then, that the rank and file of God’s people should devote less time to the Scriptures or that they should be encouraged to scan them superficially? No, indeed—God forbid! That against which we are here protesting is the God-dishonouring idea that His Word is merely a piece of literature, which may be “mastered” by a course of “study.” That which we would warn against is an undue occupation with the technical aspects of the Bible. By all means read and re-read the whole Bible through consecutively, so as to become acquainted with its contents. By all means, “Search the scriptures daily” (see Act 17:11) in order to test all you hear and read—“compare” one part with another, so that you may obtain fuller light upon what is before you. Pray constantly for the guidance and illumination of the Spirit, that He may open to you its divine mysteries—slowly ponder each word in every verse. Above all, beg God to write His Word more legibly and fully upon the tablets of your heart.

God’s blessed Word is not for dissection by the knife of cold intellectuality, but is to be laid to heart. It is not given for us to display our cleverness and “brilliance” upon, but to be bowed before in true humility. It is not designed for mental entertainment, but for the regulation of our daily lives. Far, far more important than “method” is our *motive* when approaching the Word. Not to acquire that which will puff us up in our own conceits, but that which will subdue pride and bring us as supplicants to the footstool of mercy, is what we should seek. of what value is a knowledge of the original Hebrew and Greek, or a thorough acquaintance with the history, geography, and chronology of the Bible, if the heart be left cold and hard toward its Author? We very much doubt then, if this word “study” is an appropriate one to apply unto our perusal of the inspired page. What would be thought of a child, away from home, saying he was going to “study” the letters he had received from his parents? And the Bible consists of a series of letters from the heavenly Father to His dear children. Then let us cherish them as such and act accordingly.

As we wrote recently to two young friends in the U.S.A., “I wonder if you will be surprised when I say that, I seriously doubt if God has called or requires *you* to ‘study’ His Word—what you need to do is FEED thereon. How much nourishment would your body derive from a study of the chemical properties of cereals and fruits, or from seeking to ascertain the various sorts of soil in which they are grown, or the different types from which they are derived, or the meaning of their Latin names? None whatever. And I am persuaded that much of the modern ‘study of the Bible’ is equally profitless spiritually. True, such a study as I have mentioned above, would feed pride—acquiring a knowledge which many of your fellows possess not—but would it aid digestion?

“Would it not be more practicable to pay closer attention to securing a nutritious and *balanced* diet? Would it not be more profitable if you gave greater attention to the mastication of your food? So it is, dear friends, with our spiritual food.” “Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1Pe 2:2). That is the only nutritive food for the soul! Dwell not so exclusively upon favourite books of Scripture that you neglect others equally needful, but vary your reading, and then you will obtain a balanced diet. Memorize a verse or two every day and meditate thereon whenever you have a few spare moments, even when journeying to and from your work, and then you will masticate your food. Put the precepts into practice, heed the warnings of Scripture, and then you will assimilate what you have fed upon.

N.B.—It should hardly be necessary for us to point out that this brief editorial is not designed for preachers and teachers.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

11. The Law and Adultery—Matthew 5:27-32

Let us begin by pointing out once more that the several distinctions drawn by Christ in this discourse between what had been said in ancient times upon a number of matters of moral and religious duty, and what He now affirmed, must have respect not to the real teaching of the law and the prophets but to the inadequate and erroneous views entertained of their teaching by the Rabbis and the false notions founded upon them. After so solemnly and expressly declaring His entire harmony with the law and the prophets (Mat 5:17-20), we must regard with abhorrence the idea that Christ, immediately after, proceeded to pit Himself against them, affirming that Moses taught one thing and He quite another. No—in every instance where a commandment is quoted as among the things said in former times, it was the understanding and views entertained thereof against which the Lord directed His authoritative deliverances. It is not the law *per se* which is under consideration, but the carnal interpretations of it made by the Pharisees.

It should prove a real help to the reader if he looks upon Matthew 5:20 as the text of this third division of the sermon, and all that follows to the end of chapter *five* as an enlargement thereof. That verse enunciated a most important practical truth, and the verses which immediately follow contain a series of illustrative examples of how and wherein the righteousness of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. First, the Law-giver Himself had freed the sixth commandment from the rubbish which carnal men had heaped upon it (Mat 5:21-26), and now He proceeded to restore the seventh commandment to its true sense and meaning, and therefore to its proper use, purging it from the false interpretation of the Jews. Thus in the verses which are now before us we have the Saviour contrasting the righteousness of His kingdom with the righteousness of the religious leaders of His day respecting the all-important matter of chastity.

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Mat 5:27). Again we would carefully note that Christ did not say, “Ye know that God said at Sinai,” but instead, “Ye have heard that it was said by *them* of old time” (Mat 5:27). This makes it quite clear that He was continuing to refute the injurious traditions which the Jews had accepted from their elders, “Them of old time,” referring to the ancient teachers—compare our comments on verse 21. “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Mat 5:27), those were indeed the actual words of the Holy Spirit, but the preceding clause makes it plain that our Lord was alluding to them in the sense in which the scribes and Pharisees understood them. They saw in the seventh commandment nothing more than the bare injunction, “No man shall lie with another man’s wife,” and hence they thought that so long as men abstained from that particular sin, they met the requirements of this precept.

The ancient rabbis, echoed by the Pharisees, restricted the scope of the seventh commandment to the bare act of unlawful intercourse with a married woman. But they should have perceived, as in the case of the sixth commandment, the seventh spoke specifically of only the culminating crime, leaving the conscience of the hearer to infer that *anything* which partook of its nature or was calculated to lead up to the overt deed was also and equally forbidden, even the secret

thought of unlawful lust. That the Pharisees *did* narrow the meaning of the seventh commandment to the mere outward act of impurity, is evident from our Lord's contrastive exposition of it in the next verse, where He insists that its true intent had a much wider scope, reaching also to the inward affections, prohibiting all impure thoughts and desires of the heart.

Once more we are shown the vast difference there is between the spiritual requirements of a holy God and the low standard which is deemed sufficient by His fallen creatures. The religion of carnal and worldly men is merely *political*—so far as good and evil affects society, they are in some measure concerned—but as to the honour and glory of God, they have no regard. So long as the outside of the cup and of the platter be clean, they are indifferent to whatever filth may exist within (Mat 23:25-26). So long as the external conduct of its citizens be law-abiding, the state is satisfied, no matter what iniquity may be seething in their minds. Different by far is it with the Judge of all the earth—"The LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on *the heart*" (1Sa 16:7). That which the world pays no attention to, God regards as of first importance, for "out of it [the heart] are the issues of life" (Pro 4:23). It is only "the pure in heart" who shall ever see—commune with, and eternally enjoy—God (Mat 5:8).

In what has just been before us, we may see a very real warning against a *slavish literalism*, which has ever been the refuge into which not a few errorists have betaken themselves. In this instance, the Pharisees kept themselves close to the letter of the Word, but sadly failed to understand and insist upon its *spiritual* purport. Papists seek to justify their erroneous dogma of transubstantiation by an appeal to the very words of Christ, "this is my body," insisting on the literal sense of His language. Unitarians seek to shelter behind His declaration, "My Father is greater than I" (Joh 14:28), arguing therefrom the essential inferiority of the Son. In like manner, the ancient rabbis took the words of the seventh commandment at their face value only, failing to enter into the full spiritual meaning of them. Let premillennialists heed this warning against a slavish literalism or being deceived by the mere *sound* of words, instead of ascertaining their *sense*.

The great Teacher of the church here supplied us with an invaluable canon of exegesis or rule of interpretation by teaching us that God's commandment "is exceeding broad" (Psa 119:96), and that human language becomes invested with a far fuller and richer meaning when used by God than it does on the lips of men. This of itself should be sufficient to silence those who condemn the servants of God when they spiritualize Old Testament prophecies, objecting that they are reading into those prophecies what is not there, and unwarrantably departing from their plain sense. When the Lord Jesus affirmed, "But I say unto you, That whoso looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart,"—had not the Pharisees as much occasion to demur, and say "The seventh commandment says nothing about lustful *looks*—You are reading into it what is not there."

Ere passing on, a few words need to be said on the special heinousness of this particular crime. Adultery is the breach of wedlock. Even the Pharisees condemned it, for though they made light of disobedience to parents (Mat 15:4-6), yet they clamoured for the death of the woman guilty of this sin of adultery (Joh 8:4-5). The grievousness of this offense appears in that it breaks the solemn covenant entered into between husband and wife and God, it robs another of the precious ornament of chastity, it defiles the body and ruins the soul, it brings down the vengeance of God upon the posterity, which Job called "a fire that consumeth to destruction" (Job 31:12). "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers...shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1Co 6:9-10). "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb 13:4).

“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Mat 5:28). Here we have an exposition of the seventh commandment by the supreme prophet of God, wherein He reveals the height, depth, and breadth of the spirituality of the divine law. That commandment not only forbids all acts of uncleanness, but also the desire of them. The Pharisees made it extend no further than to the outward and physical act, supposing that if the iniquity were restricted to the mind, God would be indifferent. Yet their own Scriptures declared, “If I regard iniquity *in my heart*, the Lord will not hear me” (Psa 66:18), and Christ here made it known that if a man allows himself to gaze upon a woman till his appetites are excited and sexual thoughts are engendered, then the holy law of God judges him to be guilty of adultery and subject to its curse. And if he indulges his licentious imagination so as to devise means for the gratification thereof, then is his guilt that much greater, even though providence thwart the execution of his plans.

Our Lord here declared that the seventh commandment is broken even by a secret though unexpressed desire. There is, then, such a thing as *heart adultery*—alas that this is so rarely made conscience of today. Impure thoughts and wanton imaginations, which never issue in the culminating act, are breaches of the divine law. All lusting after the forbidden object is condemned. Where the lascivious desire is rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, it is the commission of the act so far as the heart is concerned, for there is then lacking nothing but a convenient opportunity for the crime itself. He who weighs the spirits, judges the going out of the heart after that which is evil, as sin, so they who cherish irregular desires are transgressors of the law of purity.

“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Mat 5:28). It is not an involuntary glance which constitutes the sin, but when evil thoughts are thereby prompted by our depraved natures. The first step and degree, then, of this crime is when lust stirs within us. The second stage and degree is when we deliberately *approach unto*—a feeding of the eye with the sight of the forbidden fruit, where further satisfaction cannot be obtained. Then if this lust be not sternly mortified, the heart swiftly becomes enthralled and the soul is brought into complete bondage to Satan, so that it is fettered by chains which no human power can break. Such was the deplorable condition of those mentioned by the apostle, “Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin” (2Pe 2:14).

Well did Matthew Henry (1662-1714) point out, “The eye is both the inlet and the outlet of a great deal of wickedness of this kind—witness Joseph’s mistress (Gen 39:7), Samson (Jdg 16:1), David (2Sa 11:2). What need have we, therefore, with holy Job, to ‘make a covenant with our eyes’ (see Job 31:1) to make this bargain with them—that they should have the pleasure of beholding the light of the sun and the works of God, provided that they would never fasten or dwell upon anything that might occasion impure imaginations or desires. And under this penalty, that if they did, they must smart for it in penitential tears. What have we the covering of our eyes for, but to restrain corrupt glances and to keep out defiling impressions?” How much sorrow and humiliation would be avoided if such wholesome counsel was duly laid to heart and carried out into practice!?

By clear and necessary implication Christ here also forbade the using of any other of our senses and members to stir up lust. If ensnaring looks be reprehensible, then so much more unclean conversation and wanton dalliances, which are the fuel of this hellish fire. Again, if lustful looking be so grievous a sin, then those who dress and expose themselves with desires to be looked at and lusted after—as Jezebel, who painted her face, tired her head, and looked out of

the window (2Ki 9:30)—are not less, but even more guilty. In this matter it is only too often the case that men sin, but women tempt them so to do. How great, then, must be the guilt of the great majority of the modern misses who deliberately seek to arouse the sexual passions of our young men? And how much greater still is the guilt of most of their mothers for allowing them to become lascivious temptresses?

As looking to lust is here forbidden, so by proportion are all other like occasions unto adultery. The reading of books which make light of immodesty and indecency, and that cater to those who relish the suggestive and questionable, are therefore prohibited. So too is the use of light and wanton talk and the jesting about loose morals, “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting” (Eph 5:3-4). Many who are given to this think it a trifling matter, but in reality they are double offenders, for not only have they a wanton eye but a lascivious tongue also. In like manner, promiscuous dancing and mixed bathing is most certainly condemned by the seventh commandment, for in both there is additional provocation unto lust.

How solemnly do these words of Christ in Matthew 5:28 condemn us, for even though (by preserving grace) our bodies have not been defiled by the outward act of adultery, yet who can say, “My *heart* is clean”? Who is free from a wanton eye, from evil desires, from impure imaginations? Who can truthfully affirm that he has never been guilty of questionable jesting and unchaste conversation? Must we not all of us lay our hands upon our mouths and condemn ourselves as offenders in the sight of God? Surely we have ample cause to humble ourselves beneath His mighty hand and acknowledge our breach of the seventh commandment. And if our repentance and confession be sincere, shall we not be doubly on our guard against a repetition of these sins, seeking to avoid temptations and taking heed of every occasion which may incite us? Surely it is evident that if our hearts be honest before God we cannot do less. Yea, shall we not with increased earnestness pray, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way” (Psa 119:37)?

Again—if the lust of the heart be adultery in the sight of God, then with what diligence and care should we respond to that injunction, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us *cleanse* ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1), that is, labour to keep our hearts and minds as pure as our bodies. Unless they do so, Christians themselves will be deprived of a comforting assurance of their personal interest in the love of God, for when they defile their minds by harbouring impure thoughts, the Spirit is grieved, and withholds His witness to our sonship. Nay, if we truly realize that the Holy one has taken up His abode within our hearts, must we not put forth every effort to keep the Guest chamber clean? As the best way to keep down weeds is to plant the garden with vegetables and flowers, so the most effective means of excluding from the mind those foul imaginations is for it to be filled with thoughts of spiritual things, to have our affections set upon things above. If we give God His proper place within, Satan will be defeated.

We feel that we cannot do better in closing this article than by quoting here the salutary counsels of another, “To temptations to impurity in some of its forms, we are commonly exposed, and it requires constant vigilance to avoid falling before some of them. There are a few suggestions which, on this subject, I would affectionately urge on the attention of the young. Be on your guard against loose and unprincipled companions. ‘Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners.’ It is impossible to associate intimately with the profligate without danger. Abstain from the perusal of books tainted with impurity. These are scarcely less mischievous—in many cases they are more so—than the company of the wicked.

“The deliberate perusal of such books is a plain proof that the mind and conscience are already in a deeply polluted state. Keep at a distance from all indelicate and even doubtful amusements—I allude chiefly to theatrical amusements—where the mind is exposed, in many instances, to all the evils at once of depraved society and licentious writing. Seek to have your mind occupied and your affections engaged with ‘things unseen and eternal.’ Habitually realize the intimate presence of that God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Never forget that His eye is on your heart, and that ‘all things are naked and opened’ to Him, and as one of the best and most effectual methods of mortifying your members which are on the earth—crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts—‘seek the things which are at God’s right hand.’ Never tamper with temptations, but flee youthful lusts” (John Brown, 1784-1858).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

91. His Wise Decision

It will be remembered that in the last two articles upon The Life of David, we chose for their title, “His Final Folly,” but here we are to be occupied with his wise decision. What a strange mingling there is in the life of the believer of these two things—clearly exemplified in the recorded history of both Old and New Testament saints. This it is which often makes the experiences of a Christian to be so perplexing to him, yet the explanation thereof is not difficult to determine. There are two opposing principles operating within him—the “flesh” and the “spirit,” and if one be essentially evil, it is the cause of all his folly. While if the other be intrinsically holy, it is the spring of all true wisdom. Hence it is that in the Scriptures (outstandingly so throughout the book of Proverbs) sin and folly are synonymous terms, while holiness and wisdom are used interchangeably.

It is only by an unsparing and ceaseless judging of ourselves and by the maintenance of close and constant fellowship with God, that indwelling sin can be suppressed and ourselves preserved from deeds of madness. When communion with the Holy one is broken, we have forsaken the Fountain of Wisdom, and then we are left to follow a course from which even the “common sense” of the worldling frequently deters him. We have seen this most solemnly illustrated in the case of David. First, he had allowed his heart to be lifted up over the strengthening and extension of his kingdom and by the great successes which had attended his arms. This led to the folly of his causing a needless military census to be taken of his subjects, without any divine authorization. Worse still, he persisted in this mad course against the express remonstrance of his officers. And worst of all, he failed to meet the requirements of Exodus 30:12 and provide the necessary ransom.

Painful as it is to dwell upon the failures of so eminent a servant of God, yet the same will prove beneficial to us if we duly take to heart such a solemn warning, and learn therefrom to walk more softly before God. The same evil tendencies lie within both the writer and reader, and it is only as we are truly humbled by such a realization and are moved to deeper self-distrust and self-loathing, and only as we are led to more earnestly and definitely seek God’s subduing and preserving grace, that we shall ourselves be kept from falling into similar evils. These Old Testament histories are not merely given for information, but for our edification, and growth is

possible only by feeding on God's Word. Feeding on the Word means that we appropriate and masticate it—taking it unto ourselves and assimilating the same.

But alas, David fell, and so have we. Who amongst us dares to say that he has never followed a course of folly since he became a Christian? That he has never been guilty of God-dishonouring acts of madness? But as we are now to see, David recovered his sanity, and once more acted wisely. It was what lay *between* these two things which we would again call attention to, for it is at this very point that most important and precious practical instruction is furnished us. Surely those Christians who have entered the paths of folly desire to tread once more the ways of wisdom. Does it not behoove us, then, to attend closely unto our present narrative and observe the several steps by which the one path is left and the other path returned unto? How gracious of the Holy Spirit in here revealing to us the way of recovery and the means of restoration.

And what, my reader, do you suppose is the *first* step which leads us back into communion with God? What is the particular exercise which recovers us from the disease of folly? If you have any acquaintance with divine things the answer will promptly be forthcoming, for the history of your own experience will prompt it. "And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people" (2Sa 24:10). We have previously commented upon this verse, so our remarks thereon must be brief. Yet once more we would point out what a mercy it is when an erring saint finds his heart reproving him for his madness and weighed down with a sense of guilt, for this is both a mark of regeneration and a sign that the Lord has not abandoned him—given him up to total hardness and blindness. But it is as intimating the first step in David's recovery that we would now particularly consider the verse.

"And David's heart smote him" (2Sa 24:10). This is basic and indispensable. There can be no real restoration to communion with a holy God *until* we unsparingly condemn ourselves for the lapse. That thing which broke the communion must be judged by us. God never forgives, either sinner or saint, where there is no repentance—and one essential ingredient in repentance is *self-judgment*. "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2Ch 7:14). The first thing, then, is the humbling of ourselves, and that is what repentance is—it is the taking of sides with God against ourselves and sorrowing over our wickedness. Thus it is the tears of contrition which cleanse the eyes of our hearts from the grit of folly and enable them once more to look on things with the vision of prudence.

And what, dear reader, do you suppose is the *next* step in the return to the ways of wisdom? And again the answer is very simple. Where there is a true and honest judging of self, there will also be an humble and contrite owning of the fault to God. Consequently we find in the passage quoted above (2Ch 7:14) that immediately after, If My people "shall humble themselves" is, "and pray and seek my face." This is exactly what we find poor David did, "And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly" (2Sa 24:10). He made an honest confession of his transgression, emphasizing the greatness of his folly. And this is what every backslider must do before he can be recovered from his madness and restored to fellowship with the Lord.

It is to be observed that coupled with David's confession of sin to the Lord was his request, "take away the iniquity of thy servant" (2Sa 24:10). By that petition at least three things were denoted. First, remit the guilt of the same, both from before Your accusing law and the weight of the same upon my conscience. Second, cleanse the defilement thereof, both from before Your holy sight and in my polluted soul. Third, cancel or annul the governmental consequences of my

crime, so that I may not be punished for it. We need to be clear upon these distinctions, for they are something more than mere technicalities. Now where the holy requirements of God have been duly met and He is pleased to bestow a pardon, the first two of these elements are always included—guilt is blotted out and defilement is cleansed. But the *third* by no means is always obtained.

God ever reserves to Himself the sovereign right to mete out the governmental consequences of our sins as best subserves His glory and the accomplishment of His eternal purpose. So far as the believer himself is concerned, those consequences are not penal but disciplinary, visited upon him not in wrath but in love. Yet it must not be forgotten that wider interests are involved than our own personal ones. Were God to remit all the consequences of sin every time a believer committed a flagrant offense and then sincerely repented of and confessed the same, what impression would be received by men in general? Would not the ungodly draw the conclusion that the Lord regarded transgressions as trifles and is indifferent to our conduct? Thus it is that as the moral Ruler of this world, God often gives solemn tokens of His disapproval of our sins by making us suffer some very painful effects of them in this life.

Yet it would be a great mistake for an afflicted saint to draw the inference from what has just been said that such tokens in his present life of God's displeasure are so many evidences that the sins he has penitently confessed are still unpardoned. A striking case in point occurs in the earlier life of David himself. After he had transgressed so grievously in the matter of Uriah's wife, the prophet was sent to charge him with his crime. Whereupon David acknowledged, "I have sinned against the LORD" (2Sa 12:13), and none who have read seriously the fifty-first Psalm can doubt either the sincerity or the depth of his repentance. Accordingly Nathan told him, "The LORD also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die." Yet he at once added, "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die" (2 Sam. 12:14).

A much more common example is met with in the case of those who in their unregenerate days lived reckless and profligate lives. Upon their conversion God graciously remits the guilt of their sins, canceling the penal consequences of the same so far as eternity is concerned, as He also cleanses them from all the defilements thereof. But it is rare indeed that a debauchee is given back again the health and strength which he had squandered in riotous living. Rather is he (in the vast majority of cases, at least) left to now reap in his body the wild oats sown in his mad youth. So it was with David in the matter of his awful crime against Uriah, the "sword" of God's displeasure was not sheathed, but was used against him and his household during the remainder of his earthly pilgrimage.

In the instance now before us, the prophet Gad was sent unto David to say unto him, "Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things: choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three day's pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me" (2Sa 24:12-13). It must be borne in mind (as we pointed out more than once in our articles on the earlier verses of this chapter) that the Lord had a grievance against *Israel*, and therefore His governmental displeasure could not be averted by David's prayer. Divine judgment must fall upon the nation which had so grievously provoked the Lord, but the form in which it was to come lay with David to choose, though within the prescribed limits.

"And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait; let us fall now into the hand of the LORD" (2Sa 24:14). David was now made to taste the bitterness of his sin, yet it is most blessed to see

that he neither hardened his heart nor murmured against God when he heard the terrifying message of the prophet. His beautiful response clearly evidenced the genuineness of his repentance and the sincerity of his confession. This is another point in our narrative which we do well to heed, for alas, our hearts frequently deceive us therein. How often have we mourned over our iniquities and acknowledged them unto the Lord, and then have fretted and fumed when made to feel the governmental consequences of the same—thereby manifesting the superficiality of our repentance and the dishonesty of our confession.

As we have said in a previous paragraph, genuine repentance is a taking sides with God against ourselves. It is not only the unsparing condemnation of ourselves and a sorrowing for having displeased the Lord, but it is also a heart-felt acknowledgment that we richly deserve to receive the due reward of our iniquities. It is the recognition and acknowledgment that God will be righteous in making us suffer severely under His chastening hand. But it is the sequel which will show how genuine or else how disingenuous is our confession. It is how we carry ourselves under the rod itself—whether meekly or rebelliously—that evidences the reality and depth of our self-judgment. Let us not forget that Pharaoh, king of Egypt, said, “I have sinned against the LORD your God” (Exo 10:16), yet as soon as the plagues of JEHOVAH returned to his land, he again hardened his heart.

His heavenly Father must correct David himself, yet He graciously permitted him to determine whether it should be a long protracted or a very brief, yet terribly severe, one. “Years of famine he and Israel had recently experienced. For three years had that scourge prevailed. What misery would seven years of it inflict on them all? During this period a Sabbatical year would fall, throughout which the land must rest, and the nation would have to pass through it without the gracious provision of the sixth year’s prolific crop. Seven years’ famine would have been a heavy infliction indeed, as the history of such a scourge in the days of Joseph had made plain. Flight before his enemies was not an unknown trial to David. He had experienced years of harassment at the hands of Saul, and had fled from Absalom. Those trials, we may be sure, were not forgotten, though they were ended, and they must have taught him of what men were capable, if allowed by God to pursue him” (Clarence E. Stuart, 1827-1903).

In the previous article, we quoted from Matthew Henry, who pointed out that the Lord had a fourfold design in presenting unto David the choice of what particular form His judgment should take—first, to humble David for his sin, which he would see to be exceedingly sinful, when he discovered what dreadful judgment it entailed. Second, to upbraid him for his pride. He had acted in self-will, deeming himself so great a monarch that he could do as he pleased—now he is bidden to exercise his choice in selecting from these dread alternatives. Third, to grant him some encouragement under the chastisement. So far from the Lord having totally deserted his servant, *he* is granted the power to decide what He should do. Fourth, that he might more patiently endure the rod, seeing it was one of his own choosing. To these we would add, fifth, to try out his heart and give opportunity for the exercise and exhibition of his *faith*.

“Let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man” (2Sa 24:14). What proof was this that David had recovered his sanity. The wise decision which he now made clearly demonstrated his recovery from the paths of folly and his return to the ways of prudence. And how this illustrates once more the blessed fact that God ever honours those who honour Him. And let it be clearly grasped by us all, that we *do* honour God when we humble ourselves before Him and penitently confess our sins. And one of the ways in which He honours us in return is to grant us a renewed power of spiritual discernment, by which our hearts are drawn out to Him in warmer love and assurance, and by which we obtain a fuller

realization of the greatness of His mercies. How much we miss, dear reader, by refusing to judge ourselves and take our place in the dust before the throne of grace!

How wondrous are the ways of JEHOVAH. He had not only dealt with David's conscience, but He now drew out unto Himself the affections of his heart! He not only brought him to repentance, but He called forth the faith of His beloved servant—the order of which is ever the same. There must be repentance before there can be faith (Mar 1:15; Mat 21:32), for it is impossible for a hard and impenitent heart to truly trust in the Lord. Thus we may learn that it is impenitency for our sins which lies at the root of our wicked unbelief. But after David *had* repented, the Lord (as we have said above), granted him the opportunity to display his faith. And what a grand exhibition of it he now gave. What acquaintance with and confidence in the divine character do these words breathe, “Let us fall now into the hand of the LORD”! (2Sa 24:14).

Ah, my reader, even when the Lord is sorely chastening us for our faults, He is infinitely more gracious, more faithful, more deserving of our trust than is any creature. “And let me not fall into the hand of man” (2Sa 24:14). Poor David had had abundant experience of what man was capable of. His own brethren had been jealous of and had cruelly slandered him (1Sa 17:28). Saul had evilly requited him for his kindness. Ahithophel had basely deceived him and betrayed his trust. His beloved son had risen up in rebellion against him and almost succeeded in dethroning him. Good reason, then, had he to say, “Let me not fall into the hand of man” (2Sa 24:14)—unstable, treacherous, cruel man. And so says this writer after thirty years of Christian experience, “Let me not fall into the hand of man” (2Sa 24:14)—least of all religious man. No, let us rather “fall now into the hand of the LORD; for HIS mercies are great.” (2Sa 24:14).

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

9. *Its Perception*

“The sole way of God's appointment whereby we may come to an apprehension of an interest in election is by the fruits of it *in our own souls*. Nor *is* it lawful for us to inquire into it or after it in any other way.” With those words of the judicious Owen (1616-1683) we are in full accord. For our part, we would not dare to place any reliance of an everlasting hope upon any dream or vision we had received or any voice we had heard. Even if a celestial being appeared before us and declared that he had seen our name written in the Lamb's Book of Life, we should place no credence in it, for we would have no means of knowing that it might not be Satan himself, “transformed into an angel of light” (2Co 11:14), come to deceive us. Our election must be certified to us by the unerring Word of God and there only do we have a sure foundation on which to rest our faith.

The obligation which the Gospel puts upon us to believe anything, respects *the order* of the things themselves and the order of our obedience. When it is declared by the Gospel that Christ died for sinners, I am not immediately required to believe that Christ died for me in particular—that were to *invert* the divine order of the Gospel. The grand and simple message of the evangel of God's grace is that Christ Jesus came into the world to procure a way of salvation for them that are lost, that He died for the ungodly, that He so perfectly satisfied the claims of divine justice that God can righteously justify every sinner who truly believes in His Son, Jesus Christ (Rom 3:26). Consequently since I find myself a member of that class, since I know myself to be a sinner, an ungodly person, lost, then I have full warrant to believe the good news of the Gospel.

Thus the Gospel requires from me faith and obedience, and I am under obligation to render them totally.

Until I believe and obey the Gospel, I am under no obligation to believe that Christ died for me in particular. But having done so, I *am* warranted to enjoy that assurance. In like manner, I am required to believe the *doctrine* of election upon my first hearing of the Gospel, because it is therein clearly declared. But as for my own *personal* election, I cannot scripturally believe it, nor am I obligated to believe it, but as God reveals it *by its effects*. No man may justly disbelieve in or deny his election until he is in a condition where it is impossible for the effects of election to be wrought in him. While he is unholy, a man can have no evidence that he is elect—nor can he have any that he is *not* elect, while it is possible for him to be made holy. Thus, whether men are elect or not, is not that which God calls any immediately to be conversant about—faith, obedience, holiness are what are first *required* from us.

Before proceeding further, let it be pointed out that the elect are usually to be found where the ministers of Christ labour much. Said Paul, “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sake, that *they* may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2Ti 2:10). That illustrates the principle—the apostle knew that in his evangelical labours he was being employed in executing God’s purpose in carrying the message of salvation to His people. To that very end was the apostle sustained by divine providence and directed by the Spirit of the Lord. Take a brief specimen of the method in which he was divinely guided. In his second journey publishing the glad tidings in heathen lands, Paul had been led through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and would have preached the Word in Asia, but was “forbidden of the Holy Ghost” (Act 16:6)—for what possible reason? but that God had none of His elect there, or if any, that the time had not yet arrived for their spiritual deliverance.

The apostle then assayed to go into Bithynia, but again we are told, “The Spirit *suffered him not*” (see Act 16:7). Very striking indeed is that, though it seems to make little or no impression upon people today. Next we read, “And they *passing by* Mysia [how solemn!] came down to Troas” (Act 16:8). There the Lord appeared unto him in a vision directing him to go to Macedonia and from this he assuredly gathered that He had called him to preach the Gospel there. He thereupon entered that country and proclaimed the Good News, and in consequence, God’s elect in Thessalonica obtained salvation. Later, he came to Corinth, where he met with much opposition and with little success. He seems to have been on the point of departing, when the Lord appeared to him, strengthened his heart, and assured him, “I have much people in this city” (Act 18:10). As the result, he remained there eighteen months and the Corinthian church was formed.

This grand principle of the Lord’s so directing His servants that His elect are caused to hear His Gospel from their lips, receives many striking illustrations in the Scriptures. The remarkable way in which Philip was conducted with the Word of salvation to the Ethiopian eunuch, and Peter with the same word to Cornelius and his company, are cases in point. Another example, perhaps more striking still, is the way in which the apostles obtained access to the Philippian jailer with the Word of Life, who, because of his calling, probably found it impossible to hear their public preaching. Most blessedly do these instances exemplify the words of the Saviour who, when referring to that company which the Father had given Him in Gentile lands, declared, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice” (Joh 10:16)—hear *His* voice through His servants and be quickened by the power of His Spirit.

The Lord Jesus never sends His servants to labour where He has not a people, which being given to Him by the Father, are by Him to be brought into the fold. And He never will so send

them. But where He has a people, He will there direct His own servants to call that people to Himself, and they like Paul of old will “endure all things for the elect’s sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.” only the day to come will fully reveal how much—by His upholding grace—they endured so that the elect might be saved. The elect, then, are to be found where the faithful ministers of Christ labour much. Now, my reader, if you are privileged to live in such a place, then in your own midst you may look for the favoured people of God. The day of golden opportunity is now yours, and it is your bounden duty to respond and yield to the call made by Christ’s servants.

Let us now pass onto something yet more specific. God not only sends His servants to those places where His providence has situated some of His elect, but He clothes His Word with power and makes their labours effective. “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance” (1Th 1:4-5). That passage is very much to the point, and each clause in it calls for our closest attention. It tells us *how* the apostle became assured that the Thessalonian saints were amongst God’s chosen people, and how, by parity of reason, they, too, might know and rejoice in their election. Those details have been placed on record for our instruction, and if the Lord is pleased to grant us a spiritual understanding of them, we shall be on safe and sure ground. But in order for this, we must prayerfully ponder these verses word by word.

“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God” (1Th 1:4). How did the apostle know their election of God? Let it be most particularly observed that this assurance of his was obtained *not* by any immediate revelation from heaven, not by a supernatural vision or angelic message, nor by the Lord Himself, directly informing him to that effect. No—rather was it by what he had witnessed in and from *them*. It was by the *visible fruits* of their election that he perceived them to be “brethren, beloved.” In other words, he traced back those effects of grace which had been wrought in them at their conversion, to the source thereof in God’s eternal purpose of mercy. Those tiny rivulets of grace in their hearts the apostle traced back to the ocean of God’s everlasting love from which they proceeded. Therein, he indicated to us the course which we must follow, the method we are to pursue in order to ascertain our predestination to glory.

“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power” (1Th 1:5). All who pretend to preach the Gospel do not actually do so. To allow that they did would be to grant that there are as many different gospels as there are sects and sentiments in Christendom, all claiming theirs to be the true Gospel to the exclusion of every other. It is, therefore, a matter of the very highest importance that each of us should know what the Gospel of Christ really is, and this must be learned from the Holy Scriptures, under the guidance of God the Spirit. There are numerous counterfeits of it in the world today and their fraud can only be discovered by weighing them in “the balances of the sanctuary.” Equally necessary and important is it that we ascertain how the Gospel should be *received* by us if the soul is to be permanently benefited by it—or according to the apostle there is a twofold reception thereof.

“For our gospel came not unto you in word only” (1Th 1:5). For the Gospel to come to us “in word only” is for God to leave it to its natural efficacy, or the force of its arguments and persuasion on the human mind. Multitudes, in many places have heard the Gospel, yet continue in idolatry and in iniquity, notwithstanding the profession which many of them make. When the Gospel comes to us “in word only” it reaches the intellect and understanding, but makes no real impression on the conscience and heart. Consequently, it produces only a feigned and presumptuous faith, a faith which is inferior even to that which the demons have, for they “believe, *and tremble*” (Jam 2:19). It is only when the Gospel comes to us “in power and in the

Holy Ghost” is it received with a true and saving faith. How necessary it is, then, to test ourselves at this point.

There are two extremes into which men fall through lack of the right receiving of God’s Word. The one supposes he is possessed of both will and power to perform works of righteousness sufficient to commend him to the favour of God, and so he becomes “zealously affected, but not well” (see Gal 4:17). He fasts, prays, gives alms, attends church, etc., and wherein he thinks he fails or comes short, he calls in the merits of Christ as a crutch for his deficiency. This is but taking a piece of new cloth (Christ’s atonement) and patching into his garment of legal righteousness, hoping thereby to appease a guilty conscience. He continues his religious performances the year round, but never attains to a vital and experimental knowledge of the Gospel. All his service is but dead works.

The other extreme is the very reverse of this, but equally dangerous. Instead of toiling to the point of weariness, these work not at all. Being conscious more or less, as all natural men are, that they are sinners, and hearing of free salvation by Jesus Christ, they readily fall in with it, receiving it in their minds but not in their consciences. A superficial and presumptuous faith is begotten and by a single leap they arrive at a supposed assurance of heaven. But says Solomon, “An inheritance may be gotten *hastily at the beginning*: but the end thereof shall not be blessed” (Pro 20:21). These people are great talkers, boast much of their freedom from the law, but are themselves the slaves of sin. They are ever learning, yet never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. They laugh at those who have doubts and fears, yet they themselves have the most cause of all to fear.

Now in marked contrast from both of these classes are they who receive the Gospel not in word only, “but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost” (1Th 1:5). This is a middle way between these two extremes, and one that is hidden from all unregenerate, for “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are *spiritually* discerned” (1Co 2:14). When God begins “the work of faith with power” (2Th 1:11), and leads that soul in this middle way, he can at first neither see nor understand it. As it was with the father of all who believe, so it is with all his children—when Abraham was effectually called, he “went out, *not knowing* whither he went” (Heb 11:8). Those born of the Spirit are led forth by “a way that they know not” (see Isa 42:16), and until darkness is made light before them and crooked things straight, they cannot understand the way of the Spirit, but when that is done, then the highway is “cast up” for them (Isa 62:10).

The all-important question, then, is, Has the Gospel come to me in word only or in saving power? If the former, then it has been received *without* anguish, trouble, or distress of conscience, for those are the common marks of divine power working in the sinner’s soul. When God’s Word comes to us “in power,” it comes as a “twoedged sword” (Heb 4:12), having the same effect on the heart as a sword does when it is thrust into the body. If the wound be deep, the pain and smart will be very acute. So when the Word of God “pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow (Heb 4:12), and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb 4:12), it produces real anguish and deep distress. Said Job, “The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit [explained in the next words]: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me” (Job 6:4). And thus, too, David exclaimed, “Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore” (Psa 38:2).

It was thus in the experience of Paul. Before the Spirit applied the law to his heart, he was alive in his own eyes, though dead in God’s, but when the commandment came home to him in divine power, sin revived and he died—in his own esteem (Rom 7:9). The fact is that he, like

every other Pharisee, supposed that the law reached no further than the external letter. But when its high demands and searching spirituality were made known to him, he found it reached the very thoughts and intents of the heart, and discovered to him the awful depths of depravity in him which were hid before. He found the law was *spiritual*, but himself carnal, sold under sin. He found—as very, very few do—that his heart was in the very state described by Christ in Mark 7:21-22. He was compelled to believe what Christ there declared, because he now saw and felt the same within himself.

The first act of faith brings a man to believe that he is in the very state Scripture declares him to be—at enmity against God (Rom 8:7), a child of wrath (Eph 2:3), under the curse of a broken law (Gal 3:10), led captive by the devil (2Ti 2:26). A heavy burden of sin lies on his conscience (Psa 38:4), an active fountain of iniquity like the troubled sea casts up its mire and dirt (Isa 57:20), which baffles all the efforts of an arm of flesh, bringing him into terrible bondage, “Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isa 64:6). He finds himself bound hand and foot with the cords of his sins, and he cries earnestly to God to take pity upon him, and out of His great mercy loose him. He now needs no set forms of prayer, but night and day he cries, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luk 18:13).

And *how* does the Lord set him at liberty? By the Gospel coming to him “in power, and in the Holy Ghost.” (1Th 1:5). God exhibits to him in a new light, the sufferings and death of His Son, by whom His justice was satisfied, His law magnified, His wrath appeased, and a way of reconciliation opened between God and sinners. It is the Spirit’s office to work faith in the heart, and to apply the atoning blood and righteousness of Christ to the conscience, by whom the burden of sin and death is removed, the love of God is made known, peace is imparted to the soul, and joy to the heart. Thus, the same instrument which wounded, brings healing. Therefore did the apostle here add, “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, *and in much assurance*” (1Th 1:5)—assurance of its divine verity and authority, of its perfect adaptability and suitability to our case, of its ineffable blessedness.

“I remember, too, when the truth came home to my heart, and made me leap for very joy, for it took all my load away. It showed me Christ’s power to save. I had known the truth before, but now I *felt* it. I went to Jesus just as I was, I touched the hem of His garment. I was made whole. I found now that the Word was not a fiction—that it was the one reality. I had listened scores of times, and he that spake was as one that played a tune upon an instrument, but now He seemed to be dealing with me, putting His hand right into my heart. He brought me first to God’s judgment seat, and there I stood and heard the thunders roll. Then he brought me to the mercy seat, and I saw the blood sprinkled on it, and I went home triumphing because sin was washed away” (Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892).

THE HOLY SABBATH

6. *Its Perpetuation*

Continuing at the point where we left off last month, let the reader ponder carefully the following questions. Does a weekly return of a day, separated from ordinary employment and consecrated to the immediate service and worship of God, seem to run contrary to the evident scope and tendency of the Gospel, or rather to harmonize with it? Does it tend to promote or hinder the end which Christianity has avowedly in view? Is it relished or disrelished by those who

have drunk most deeply into the spirit of the Gospel? And when it is allowed, more or less, from whatever cause, to fall into neglect, does the cause of Christ appear to gain or to lose in consequence? These are very important and most pertinent inquiries, and are not to be summarily dismissed by a prejudiced shrug or sneer.

It is neither fair nor fitting that such questions as the above should be disposed of by a general and unsupported objection that such an ordinance as the Sabbath is not in keeping with the spirit of the Gospel. We ask, in what respect is it not in accord? Does it beget a temper which the lessons of the Gospel are meant to subdue, or to check the growth of feelings which it calls us to cherish and manifest? If this *were* the case, it would go far to prove the unsoundness of any defense which might rather be raised for the Sabbath in this dispensation. But is it so? Wherein lies the supposed contrariety between the design and spirit of Christianity and the strict observance of a weekly Sabbath? To reply that the one promotes freedom while the other makes for bondage, is to confound liberty and license and is to mistake necessary restraint for serfdom.

It is almost universally acknowledged in Christendom that the Gospel, considered in its lowest aspect, is pre-eminently a scheme of benevolence, and that it looks with a kindly and friendly countenance on the condition of those who most stand in need of sympathy and care. But we ask, is not a weekly Sabbath, withdrawn from worldly employments, bringing to the very busiest the liberty, at least, of relaxing their bodies and refreshing their spirits, one of the highest boons that can possibly be conferred on the poor? Certainly God Himself claimed it as one of His special acts of kindness toward Israel that He gave to them the privilege of knowing and keeping such a day. Are, then, the artisans of this materialistic, strenuous, and avaricious age, in less need of such a merciful furlough from their weekly toil? Then has the Gospel less concern for man's temporal well-being than had the law?

But the Gospel has another, a higher, a far more prominent and peculiar characteristic than this, namely, its *spiritual* and *holy* tendency being pre-eminently designed to beget those who embrace it to a pure and heavenly life. In this respect it not only equals, but far surpasses Judaism. True it is, blessedly true, that the Gospel is not so much a revelation of law as of grace, nevertheless, grace abounds only that believers may proceed to higher exercises of faith and godliness. Every doctrine it reveals, every privilege it confers, is avowedly designed to have its present fruit unto holiness, as well as its final end unto everlasting life. To be conformed unto the pure image of the Son of God, to have our affections set upon things above and not on things of the earth, to glorify God and not gratify self, is the character at which the Gospel aims—which all its truths and ordinances are calculated to produce, and without which its great end is practically annulled. Hence the covetous, the lovers of pleasure, the earthly-minded, no less than the grossly impure, are expressly declared to be unfit for a place in the kingdom of God as now constituted.

Now as real Christianity is thus identified with a spiritual and heavenly character on the part of its professors, it is pertinent to ask, What relation has the institution of a weekly Sabbath, dedicated throughout to the worship and service of God, to such an object? Does it tend to promote, or rather to hinder and retard, this high design? The question is not whether men may not strictly adhere to the observance of a proper Sabbath, and yet resort to unhallowed practices on other days of the week, for hypocrisy can counterfeit a regard to this as to any other ordinance of God. No, it is, Is the Sabbath calculated to be a handmaid to the Gospel in producing the purifying effects at which it aims? Does a weekly returning day, divorced from all ordinary labour and devoted to religious exercises, tend to help forward true piety, or to mar and kill so desirable a fruit.

The question when thus directed to its proper object, admits of a speedy answer—not only is a day of holy rest greatly conducive to the end in view, but it is scarcely possible to conceive how, without such a day, the end could, among the bulk of mankind, be accomplished at all. Even under the Mosaic economy, when the standard of spirituality was confessedly lower than it ought to be now, the Sabbath was found necessary for the same purpose, and on this account especially did God set it to be “a sign between him and his people throughout their generations; that they might know that he was the Lord that sanctified them” (see Exo 31:13). How much more, then, is it required now, when His people are called to live so much by the faith of what is spiritual and divine, and to cultivate that elevated frame of mind and course of life which is indispensable to a close communion with God.

While it is true that the Gospel requires this heavenly-mindedness and holy living to be common to every day of the week, and does not allow it to be confined only to one, yet take away the wholesome and hallowing influences of that one, constantly coming round with its sacred exercises, and what is likely to become of the rest? How soon will the bulwarks of piety give way, and the whole spirit and character of Christianity become secularized, if the Sabbath were practically abolished and every day of the week were alike devoted to worldly pastime or business. If the cause of Christ on earth is to prosper, and the great end of the Gospel to be promoted in the souls of men, then assuredly this day of holy rest to the Lord cannot be dispensed with, nor can it be too jealously guarded against the encroachments of worldly occupation, for it is through the sacred leisure and holy exercises of that day men are especially to familiarize themselves with the things of God.

Another way of ascertaining the relation which the Sabbath holds to practical Christianity is to inquire how they who have drunk most deeply into the spirit of the Gospel usually feel toward such a day. If we might entertain any doubt as to the proper connection between a Sabbath and the great ends of the dispensation of grace, we ought surely to have that doubt removed, if we find the general pulse of the saints beating, as it were, in unison on the subject. We would seldom fail to gather aright the bearing of any particular measure on the constitution of a country, if we heard one and the same sentiment expressed regarding it by those who were most conversant about and imbued with the spirit of that constitution. So with the Sabbath. Can any such testimony be produced in its favour? Yes—in every generation of this era, the most pious have espoused and promoted its observance, and that not only in one country, but in every land where the Gospel obtains a footing. Pages might be filled with testimonies from one and another, but we will content ourselves with one only, who lived in the palmy days of Puritanism.

“For my part, I must not only say, but plead whilst I live in this world, and leave this testimony to the present and future ages, that if ever I have seen anything in the ways and worship of God, wherein the power of godliness hath been expressed—anything that hath represented the holiness of the Gospel, and the Author of it; anything that hath looked like it prelude to the everlasting Sabbath and rest with God, which we all through grace to come unto, it hath been there and with them where and amongst whom the Lord’s day hath been had in highest esteem, and a strict observation of it attended unto, as an ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ. The remembrance of their ministry, their walking and conversation, their faith and love, who in this nation have most zealously pleaded for, and have been in their persons, families, and churches, the most rigid observers of this day, will be precious with them that fear the Lord, whilst the sun and moon endure” (John Owen).

We bring these arguments to a close by pointing out that it adds much to the force and conclusiveness of all that has been advanced above for the necessity of a Sabbath to the life and

prosperity of Christianity, that whenever the observance of such a day falls into practical neglect the consequence to the cause of Christ are most disastrous. Ministers of the Gospel, and teachers, and guardians of youth have often proclaimed the melancholy result of what they have witnessed in many lands, that neglected or ill-spent Sabbaths infallibly carry in their train declining spirituality and decreasing morality. Chaplains of prisons have in like manner borne witness that the vast majority of offenders brought under their notice have been notorious Sabbath-breakers, and that many of them acknowledge their downward course began with neglecting its holy duties and privileges.

Thus far have we sought to show that the presumption in favour of the Sabbath being perpetuated during this Christian era amounts virtually to a demonstration. We now proceed to prove this presumption grows into *certainly* when we contemplate the personal conduct of the Lord Jesus Christ in connection with it and ponder some of His declarations. Take first the former, “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day” (Luk 4:16). Thus it is clear that the Saviour honoured this divine institution. During the quiet years which preceded His public ministry, He had regularly attended the synagogue’s services on that day specially set apart for sacred solemnities. It is striking to note that this statement occurs not in Matthew (the most Jewish of the synoptists), but in Luke, where He is portrayed as the Son of man.

At the beginning of His public ministry, one of Christ’s first announcements was, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Mat 5:17). Here the Lord asserted in most unequivocal language, that His mission in this world was not designed in any respect to abolish or relax, but to verify and confirm what had previously been declared by God. The Redeemer accomplished what was required by the law and the prophets, first, by personally fulfilling in Himself that righteousness which they demanded, and second, by imposing the same upon His people as the measure of that obedience to which through His grace they were to be ever growing. To have ignored the demands of the law or the prophets in either of those respects, would manifestly have been to destroy and not to fulfil them.

Now the force of Christ’s solemn assertion in Matthew 5:17 and its pertinence to our present inquiry is at once apparent if we pause to ask this specific question—was the ordinance of the Sabbath equally recognized and enforced in the law and the prophets? Surely the question answers itself. In that solemn and comprehensive revelation of law which was promulgated from Mount Sinai and which in Scripture is usually denominated “*the law*,” it had a definite, an honourable place, occupying the very center of the Ten Commandments. So, too, in the prophets—not only when they spoke of Jewish, but also when they referred to Gentile times, there is (as we have shown) a testimony both explicit and authoritative in favour of the Sabbath. Thus, when Christ declared He came to fulfil the law and the prophets, He can only be fairly understood to mean that He definitely adopted the testimony they delivered concerning the day of Sacred Rest.

“And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath” (Mar 2:27-28). The Sabbath was designed for man’s blessing. It was given because he needed it, both in his body and in his soul. It was appointed that he might be *man* in the highest sense of the word—something better than a beast of burden, something nobler than a cash register. Observe the force of, “*Therefore* the Son of man is Lord *also* of the sabbath”—because the Sabbath is made not merely for Israel, but for man, and because in becoming incarnate the Son of God touched all humanity, as “Son of man” He is

“Lord also of the Sabbath.” And mark well His relation thereto—He is not the Destroyer of the Sabbath, but its “Lord”—not the Repealer of it, but its Sovereign.

There are a number of passages in the Gospels (like Mat 12:1-2, 10) which record the criticisms that the Saviour met with from His enemies regarding His conduct on the Sabbath, and it is most instructive and important to note the different answers He gave in self-vindication. That which is of chief moment for us to observe is that His utterances on these occasions made it unmistakably clear that both works of real necessity and works of mercy on the Sacred Day are permissible and lawful. Thus we discover that the words, “In it thou shalt not do any work” (Exo 20:10) are *not* to be understood *absolutely*, but are to be interpreted in the light of these modifications of Christ. All Sabbath labour which is not imperative for the well-being of man and beast is divinely forbidden, but whatever be essential for their true good is sanctioned by the Lord’s own example.

Though Christ ignored all the rabbinical regulations which had been superimposed upon the divine law, He never did one thing or uttered one word which to the slightest degree undermined or relaxed the requirements of the fourth commandment. There is evidence that the Sabbath law had been encumbered and perverted by Jewish interpretations and traditions. They permitted a man to fill a trough with water for beasts to come and drink, but forbade him carrying water to them. According to one school it was not allowable to minister unto the sick on the Sabbath. Consequently we find our Lord going to considerable pains to expound the fourth commandment and rescue it from these accretions. It was *not* that Christ modified the exactions of the divine law or granted man an indulgence for secularizing the Sacred Day, but that He freed it from the arbitrary injunctions of the Jewish teachers.

In what has just been pointed out, we discover another proof for the continuance of the Sabbath in this dispensation. If the Sabbath had been on the brink of being repealed, why should Christ have been so careful to explain its requirements, and make clear that works of mercy and of necessity were allowable on that day? Read carefully the various vindications which He gave them when attacked on that point and where is there the slightest hint that He was about to abrogate the Sabbath? So far from it, His defenses, one and all, were simply to the effect that He was delivering it from the errors of the Pharisees, and thereby He settled a point which would afterwards be of great service to His church. “Suppose you saw a man taking pains to restore a defaced inscription on a pillar, to remove from it the rubbish which had been heaped around its base, and to tear away the ivy that surrounded its summit, would you not infer it was his intention that its inscription should remain for the information of future ages? Such was the conduct of our Lord in reference to the Sabbath law” (“The Sabbath Not a Mere Judaical Appointment” by Andrew Thomson, 1779-1831).

“But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day” (Mat 24:20). These words were uttered by Christ at the close of His public ministry. “The earliest possible period to which this direction can refer, is the siege of Jerusalem—a period at least forty years after the ascension of Christ, that is, after the full establishment of the Gospel dispensation, and after the ‘gospel of the kingdom had been preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations’ (see Mat 24:14 and cf. Col 1:6). At such an advanced period in the Gospel age, and in a season, too, of unparalleled distress, the disciples were, by the direction of their Lord, to make it a matter of special prayer that they might not need to take their flight on the Sabbath day....It is impossible to entertain due respect to Christ as an infallible teacher, without admitting it to be His clear intention in this passage that the weekly Sabbath should continue after the Gospel

dispensation was fully set up” (Patrick Fairbairn, [1805-1874] from which much in this article is taken almost *verbatim*).

WELCOME TIDINGS

“Serve the LORD *with gladness*” (Psa 100:2). What a *blessed thing* it is to serve the Lord! His yoke is easy and His burden is light. The service of the Lord is freedom, the only true freedom there is. The service of Satan is “captivity” (2Ti 2:26)—the service of sin is drudgery, cruel tyranny. The service of man is often unreasonable, unmerciful, unwelcome. But the service of the Lord is true liberty, spiritual, delightful. The Lord is no harsh taskmaster, commanding us to make bricks and providing no straw with which to do so. When He calls, He also equips. He sends not forth His servants at their own charges (1Co 9:7), but freely provides for them. They are not left to act in their own strength, but are held in His right hand (Rev 1:20). Such a Master is to be served “with gladness.”

What a *holy privilege* it is to serve the Lord! It is infinite condescension on His part that He deigns to notice us at all. If the great God, who has the heaven of heavens for His throne and the earth as a footstool, “humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven” (Psa 113:6), how much more so to occupy Himself with worms of the dust. It is an amazing thing that the Lord, who is so ineffably holy, should save such vile wretches as we are, for as unregenerate creatures we appreciated not the kindly ministrations of our faithful Creator, but perverted His mercies. But how wonderful beyond words that He not only saves but also calls us into His service, that the remainder of our days may be spent in seeking to further His interests. Such a gracious Master is to be served “with gladness.”

What a *high honour* it is to serve the Lord! He is the one whom sun and moon and all the planets obey. He is the one whom the cherubim and seraphim and all the holy angels delight to submit unto. How grand, then, that we who belong to a lower order of beings should be called to His service. How eagerly politicians aspire after the high offices of an earthly state! What dignity pertains unto one whose vocation is to be a gentleman-in-waiting to a human monarch! But what comparison is there between such things and being made the courtiers of the Celestial Sovereign, to becoming servants of the King of kings? It was the realization of this which caused the apostle to exclaim, “Whose I am, and whom I serve.” Such a glorious Master is to be served “with gladness.”

No matter what be the particular sphere which He has allotted you, my reader, the Lord is to be served with *gladness*. Whether it be in the kitchen or in the workshop, it is to be performed “in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ” (Eph 6:5). No matter how menial or unpleasant the task, “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Col 3:23). And should He have called you to engage in the ministry of His Word, complain not at the difficulties of the way, but “serve the LORD with gladness.” And why? The Psalm from which our text is taken supplies sufficient answer. First, because the Lord Himself has made us (Psa 100:3). We should rejoice in the fact that we are His creatures. Second, because, “We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture” (Psa 100:3). As the good Shepherd, He gave His life for us—how the apprehension of this sets our hearts a-singing. Third, because, “The LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting” (Psa 100:5). Then we have no ground for repining—instead we must “make a joyful noise unto the LORD” (Psa 100:1). Finally, because, “His truth endureth to all generations” (Psa 100:5). Yes,

despite all the ragings of the enemy, His Word is still intact in our hands, and by it we may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

These lines are being written by us (late in March), when men's hearts are again failing them for fear, when they tell us the political outlook is exceedingly dark, and that another "crisis" is at hand. But the believer should look *above* the restless sea of the nations and the continual clashing and inter-turmoil of selfish interests, and beholding the Lord as one who has complete control of the situation, "serve him with gladness" (Psa 100:2). Suppose the predictions of alarmists *are* fulfilled and the fears of pessimists be actualized, and widespread war burst forth in all its horrors—then what? Why, the exhortation before us still obtains—no change in circumstances can alter the Lord or our blessed relationship to Him. It is in the midst of much that tends to distress and depress that we once more send forth "Welcome Tidings," with the design of contributing to the joy of our readers. As is our custom, we give now some extracts from the many letters received testifying to the gladness of not a few that we are still enabled to send forth this monthly messenger.

"I want to express to you as best I can the pleasure, the edification, the sweetness, the depth, and the spiritual beauty of the articles which have appeared in the 'Studies.' There is such a wholesome refreshment in reading them and they are new when re-read" (Preacher). "I am still getting much out of 'Studies.' When I get hungry for something I can hardly explain, feel that I need searchings of heart and something to lift up my drooped spirit, something to help me see my sin and weakness, and then something to help me out—well, I just sit down and get quiet with 'Studies' and am always well-repaid. I thank our dear Lord for the work He has given you to do and pray that it may not cease" (Preacher).

"We found the articles on 'A fourfold salvation' most instructive and helpful, and trust that we, with others, will profit by them. We rejoice you are taking up the subject of the Holy Sabbath, which we feel is very necessary to the present time" (Australia). "I must write and thank you very much for sending me the 'Studies.' I cannot tell you how much they have helped me in my daily life. We hear so little of the true Gospel and have so little food for our poor souls to feed on. What a mercy no one can take the precious Bible from us, but often a word from the Lord's servants sends us on our way rejoicing" (Australia). "The Studies have removed a mass of ignorant sentiment concerning the nature and character of God Himself, and given me to see Him more clearly as revealed in His Word as a holy God who demands holiness from us, and who cannot tolerate sin in any respect" (Australia).

"I have been wanting to write to you for some time a word of encouragement in the work you are undertaking in sending forth the monthly paper. I can truly say they come each time with fresh light and blessing—not only do I enjoy reading every message, but the different lines of truth expounded have inspired me to search the Scriptures as I have never done before" (Canada). "I thank God for His grace in enabling you to write the articles which the people of God need in these days. The 'Studies' are a table furnished in the wilderness. It would be impossible to say which of your articles I enjoy the most—those on election are very helpful" (Canada).

"Thank you for so regularly sending me the 'Studies.' I continue to find them most profitable, and am deeply thankful they were ever brought to my notice. The dearth of spiritual Scriptural teaching seems to be increasing apace and alas, the lack of desire for such teaching—but where there is the desire, one cannot but value highly these Studies. I trust that you may still be divinely strengthened to continue this good work" (Preacher). "The work to which you are committed is no easy one—we can see that by reading the contents—so different from the husks of modern literature. May the Lord preserve you both in your labour of love for many years to come is our

desire;. We hope it is likewise the will of the Lord” (Babe in Christ). “Many times during the past year I have thanked God for the messages contained in ‘Studies,’ and have prayed that the Holy Spirit would apply them in effectual power to my own heart (O how I need them!) and to the hearts of those to whom it has been my privilege to pass on a copy” (Babe in Christ).

“How much we enjoy the ‘Studies’ and how we look forward to their arrival every two months. Our evening worship is not complete unless we read an article, or at least part of one, with our Bible reading and prayer. We never forget to remember you both in our devotions” (U.S.A.). “Each day as I think of you and remember you at the throne of grace I thank our Lord and God for your ministry. I have never found any other so satisfying. I have tried to interest friends in the Magazine, but have often been disappointed” (U.S.A.). “Yesterday my new copies of the ‘Studies’ arrived. I trust that I received them with gratitude and thanksgiving to God for His blessing upon this ministry and because He has kept you faithful in the service to which He has called you. Again and again they have revived and strengthened me when so cast down that there seemed no way out. May our blessed Lord direct you to so minister to many others of the ‘little flock’ which He has purchased with His own blood” (U.S.A.).

“Thank you for the many times your ‘Studies’ have been a great blessing to me. I trust you may increase in the knowledge of God’s Word, that you may continue to feed others” (Preacher). “I have been blessed by reading and studying your articles on ‘The Doctrine of Election, and I have been ministering same in the meeting, where some have been roused and others have opposed. I could never have thought it possible that real believers could turn on one so fiercely when speaking on such a God-honouring subject.” (Those with longer experience fully *expect* the hottest opposition to this truth from those making the loudest profession). “For many years now we have had no need to ‘go to church,’ such a rich repast having been spread for us in our own home, and I am sure it has not harmed us to sit quietly under a written ministry as the Lord Himself has come forth and served us, and many times have we been conscious of His satisfying presence, saying, ‘Eat O friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved.’ The Lord no doubt has many others hidden away, who are being refreshed by your written ministry. It is good for the Lord’s people that they have been compelled to be in retirement from the strife of tongues—compelled for the truth’s sake. There is much scope for fleshly activity in attending meetings. I do not know which of the articles in the ‘Studies’ we like best—all seem so necessary and useful in their season” (Brother and Sister). “Serve the Lord with gladness.”—A.W.P. and V.E.P.



August

SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT

“Nourished up in the words of faith” (1Ti 4:6). We are living in a day when more and more attention is being paid to dietetics—foods are scientifically analyzed, the various grades of vitamins classified, and a serious effort made to obtain a well-balanced menu. With many the feeding of the body has become a regular fad. Alas that so few evidence any concern about the feeding of their souls—that which returns to the dust is pampered, whereas that which returns to God is utterly neglected. Multitudes are filling their minds with trash, while their spirits are being starved. However, it is not to those who ignore their eternal interests that we now address ourselves, rather is it to the professing people of God we desire to offer a few words of instruction.

“Nourished up in the words of faith” (1Ti 4:6). The taking of nourishment does not necessarily produce nutrition. Nor is the fault always in what has been eaten—sometimes the most wholesome food yields no good effect because of the condition of the one who consumes it. Various factors enter into real benefit being received from what is eaten. In developing our present theme let us point out, then, four of the things which are essential to nourishment—true alike both in the natural and the spiritual. First there must be a hearty appetite. Second, there must be suitable and wholesome food. Third, there must be proper mastication. Fourth, there must be the blessing of God thereon. No doubt other things are contributing agents, but these four are the primary ones.

First, there must be *a healthy appetite*. one cannot eat to profit when he is sick. Nay, at such times, food is usually repulsive. A good appetite is a mark of good health. Now it is true that we cannot bestow upon ourselves a hearty appetite, but we can do much to injure and destroy it. A child who is surfeited with candy has little relish for more wholesome diet—and a child of God who absorbs newspapers and novels, no longer finds the Word sweet to his taste. A person who gives way to strong drink loses his desire for solid food, and the believer who drinks into the spirit of this world will disdain the Heavenly Manna. Many a millionaire, through using up his nervous energy in his hectic quest for wealth, is quite unable to enjoy his meals or even partake of solids. And many a Christian has become so occupied with “service” that his own soul goes unnourished. What a tragedy when we lose our appetite for *spiritual* food.

Second, there must be *suitable food*, “Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1Pe 2:2). That is why the Holy Scriptures are given to us—that we may grow in love and reverence for them, increase in the knowledge of them, be more and more regulated by them. It is only by feeding on this Heavenly Manna that strength is obtained for our pilgrim walk, for our warfare with sin and Satan, and for our service unto God and our fellows. To deprive ourselves of food issues in unfitness, weakness, sickness—true alike in the natural and the

spiritual. How diligent most of us are in seeing to it that our bodies do not go without their needed food—are we as careful about the nourishment of our souls? Is it not at this very point we discover the explanation as to why so many believers fail to “grow in grace”? and why so many are feeble and useless?

Not only are we diligent in the feeding of our bodies, but most of us are very particular in *what* we eat. We know that poisons are dangerous, that tainted food is harmful, and that many of the patented specialties are but catch-pennies. Alas that so few are equally particular about their mental and spiritual food. Error has the same effect on the soul as poison does on the body, yet thousands of professing Christians will hear and read heretical men and suppose it will not harm them. And how many substitute the writings of good men for the Word itself? The very best writings of men are but the milk of the Word diluted. Milk direct from the cow is rich and pure—milk from the retailer is often skimmed and sometimes watered down.

Third, there must be *proper mastication*. Meals which are hurriedly consumed and swallowed almost whole do us little good and often much harm. A little food well-chewed will prove far more beneficial than a larger quantity that is bolted. Our teeth are given us to use. The same is true spiritually. A few verses that are thoughtfully and prayerfully pondered will advantage us far more than two or three whole chapters skimmed through. Meditation stands to reading as mastication (chewing) does to eating. *Regularity* is also essential. We have too much common sense to try and eat enough on the Sabbath to suffice our bodies for the remainder of the week. Then why be so foolish in adopting this device to the soul? Time must be found for communion with God even though it means an hour less in bed each night.

In proper mastication the food is duly mixed with our saliva, which is a provision of nature for aiding digestion, and it is the hurried gulping down of our food which prevents this. Now the counterpart of this in connection with spiritual nourishment is, that in order for the Word of God to do us good it must be mixed with *faith*. It was to this fact the apostle referred when he pointed out how the Gospel was sent unto the Jews of old, “but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Heb 4:2). It is for this reason that in our text the Scriptures are termed “the word of faith,” for faith is their chief requirement.

Fourth, there must be *the divine blessing*. No matter how healthy be our appetite, how wholesome the food we take, how carefully it be masticated—without the smile of God thereon it will profit us nothing. Food does not automatically nourish, any more than seed planted in the ground automatically grows of itself—the one as much as the other is entirely dependent on the Creator’s blessing. If we are in the habit of asking God’s blessing on the material food we eat (and a meal ought never to be taken without so doing), equally essential is it that we beg Him to sanctify unto us our *spiritual* food. What an example the Saviour has left us—“And looking up to heaven, he *blessed*, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples” (Mat 14:19). Then let us fail not to definitely ask God to bless unto us the Bread of Life—the reading of and meditation upon the Scriptures should ever be preceded by and followed with prayer for God to apply them in power to our hearts.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

11. *The Law and Adultery—Matthew 5:27-33*

From what has been before us in Matthew 5:21-26, and still more so from the searching and pride-withering declaration of Christ in verse 28, we may perceive again how deeply important is a right understanding of the divine law, and what fatal consequences must inevitably follow from inadequate and erroneous views thereof. It is at this point, more than anywhere else, that the orthodoxy and helpfulness of the preacher must be tested, for if he fails here—in his interpretation and enforcement of the strictness and spirituality of the Decalogue—the whole of his teaching must necessarily be fundamentally faulty and injuriously misleading. This is evident from the method followed by Christ in His first public sermon. No matter how deplorable and general be the failure of the modern pulpit, let it be said emphatically that all of us are bound and must yet be judged by the holy law of God, and no repudiation thereof, no modifying of its high demands by unfaithful preachers, can in any way justify our disobedience to God's commands.

“Whilst we therefore view the strictness, spirituality, and reasonableness of the precepts which we have been reading, as expounded by our divine Teacher, let us impartially compare our past and present lives, our tempers, affections, thoughts, words, and actions, with this perfect rule. Then we shall find every self-confident hope expire and plainly perceive that by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified in the sight of God. Then will Christ and His salvation become precious to our souls. Whether we look to our conduct towards those who have injured us, or those whom we have offended; towards our superiors or inferiors, relatives, friends, or servants; the state of our heart or the government of our passions; to what we have, or what we have not done; we shall see cause for humiliation and need of forgiveness. And when we consider that we must be made holy according to this standard, in order to the enjoyment of God and heaven, we shall as evidently perceive our need of the powerful influences of the Holy Spirit, and learn to value the ordinances of God, through which that sacred assistance is obtained” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

“And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell” (Mat 5:29). In this and the following verse, our Saviour furnishes heavenly instruction for the avoiding of those offenses against which He had just spoken. It is supplied by Him in the way of answer to a secret objection to the exposition He had given of the seventh commandment, wherein He had condemned adultery of heart. Corrupt human nature would be ready to at once murmur, It is impossible to be governed by so exacting a law, it is a hard saying, who can bear it? Flesh and blood cannot but look with pleasure on a beautiful woman, and it is inevitable that there should be lusting after so attractive an object. What, then, shall we do with our eyes, if an unchaste look be so evil and fatal? It was to just such risings up of the depraved heart against the spiritual requirements of a holy God that Christ here made reply.

“And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee” (Mat 5:29). Here again the language of Christ is not to be taken at its proper sense—that is, it is not to be understood literally. one of the rules in expounding Scripture is that where the literal sense of a verse is against any of the commandments of the law, then its words must be regarded figuratively, for obviously one part of the Word must not be made to contradict another. Now just as the seventh commandment not only prohibited the physical act of adultery, but also all mental impurity, so the sixth commandment not only forbade the taking of life, but also reprehended any deliberate maiming of either our own body or that of our neighbour's. Therefore, no man can without sin pluck out his eye or cut off his hand.

By the “eye” we are to understand, first, the eye of the body, yet not that only but any other thing that is dear to us—the “eye” being one of the most precious of our members. The word

“offend” does not here signify to displease, but to hinder—the reference is to anything which occasions us to commit this sin, whatever would cause us to stumble. Thus the figure is easily interpreted—whatever in our walk or ways exposes the soul to the danger of unholy desires, must, at all costs, be abandoned. There must be the uncompromising excision of everything hurtful to the soul. To pluck out the right eye means that we are to rigidly restrain and strictly govern our senses and members, deny ourselves, even though it involve present hindrance, financial loss, and personal pain. No matter how pleasant and dear the presence and use of certain things be to us, yet if they are occasions of sin they must be relinquished and avoided.

Since the Lord Jesus so pointedly condemned unlawful desires and the exercise of impure imaginations, then it is our bounden duty to suppress and disallow them, to strive earnestly against the same, to subdue the lusts from which they spring. Though the senses and members of our bodies be the instruments of evil, yet the sin itself proceeds from the lusts of our hearts, and if *they* be subdued, if every idolized object be renounced within, then there will be no need to either flagellate or mutilate our bodies. on the other hand, if we crucify not the flesh with its affections and lusts, the mere plucking out of an eye or the cutting off a hand will profit the soul nothing. The root of sin lies much deeper than the physical, “Cleanse first that which is *within* the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also” (Mat 23:26). Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good (see Mat 12:33).

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence,” etc. (Col 3:5), not the mortification of our physical “members,” but the appetites and passions of the soul. This expresses the same idea as our Lord was propounding. But the subjugation of sexual appetites, the obtaining of victory over such strong desires of the heart, is no easy matter—especially in cases where both constitution and habit have united to enslave in these sins. No, the mortification of such lusts cannot but be attended with most painful exercises and the sacrifice of what has been delighted in and held dear. Nevertheless, though it be as painful as the plucking out of a right eye, it must be done. We are obliged to choose between mortification and damnation, and therefore the strongest corruptions are to be mastered and all that is within us brought into subjection to God and subordinated to the eternal good of our souls.

It is to be observed that this is one of many passages in the Gospels in which we find the Son of God making definite reference to a future state. How often did He refer to the resurrection of the body and of a hell into which the wicked shall be cast! He was continually bringing these things to the attention of men and pressing them upon their serious and solemn consideration. No flesh-pleasing sycophant was He—the glory of God and not the praise of men was ever the object before Him. And herein He has left an example to be followed by all whom He has called to be officers in His kingdom, not to lull to sleep by “smooth speaking,” but to declare “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, of men” (Rom 1:18). If men and women could be persuaded to weigh with due deliberation the vast importance and endlessness of eternity, and the brevity and uncertainty of this life, they would cease trifling away so many of their swiftly passing hours, and prepare to meet their God.

“For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell” (Mat 5:29). Christ here emphasizes the fact that lustful looks and wanton dalliances are so disastrous and destructive to the soul that it is better to lose an eye than to yield to this evil and perish eternally in it. This, as we have pointed out, is in reply to the objection that heart-adultery is something no man can prevent, that it is beyond his power to resist temptations to gaze with longing eyes upon an attractive woman. Rightly did Matthew Henry (16

62-1714) point out, “Such pretences as these will scarcely be overcome by reason, and therefore must be argued against with the terrors of the Lord, and so they are here argued against.” Alas, that this powerful deterrent to evil and incitement to holiness is so rarely made use of in our degenerate times, when little else than honey and soothing syrup is being handed out from the pulpit.

Far different was the course followed by the chief of the apostles. When he stood before Felix, he “reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,” and we are told that the governor “trembled” (Act 24:25). But what is there in modern preaching—even that known as “Calvinistic”—which is calculated to make sin-hardened souls to tremble? Little wonder that the rising generation defy their parents with such impudence, when their elders are unrestrained by fear of the hereafter. “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord [in the previous verse he had spoken of the judgment seat of Christ], we persuade men,” (2Co 5:11) said the apostle, and so will every faithful servant of God today. Ministers of the Gospel are required to conduct their hearers to Sinai before they lead them to Calvary, to make known the “severity of God” (Rom 11:22) as well as His goodness, to declare the reality and awfulness of hell, as well as the blessedness of heaven, and if they do not so, then they are unfaithful to their trust, and God will require at their hands the blood of their hearers (Eze 33:6; Act 20:26).

“And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell” (Mat 5:30). This is the same exhortation as was before us in the preceding verse, the same stern and startling argument to restrain us from the sin of heart adultery. Nor is this to be regarded as a needless multiplying of words, for such repetitions in the Scripture have a particular use, namely, to signify that the things thus delivered are of special importance and worthy of our most careful observation and obedience. There is indeed a slight variation, and what strikes us (though the commentators seem to have missed it) is a designed gradation. As the “eye” was a figure of what is dearest and most cherished by us, so the “hand” is to be understood of what is most useful and profitable. Many have wondered why our Lord did not mention the plucking out of an eye last, as being the severer loss of the two, but it must not be overlooked that He was not here addressing a company of the rich and learned but the common people, and to a *labouring man* the loss of the right hand would be a far more grievous deprivation than an eye!

Nor is it to be overlooked that Christ was here more immediately speaking to His own disciples—this well may startle some today, yet as Andrew Fuller rightly pointed out, “It is necessary for those whom the Lord may know to be heirs of salvation, in certain circumstances, to be threatened with damnation, as a means of preserving them from it.” Such passages as Romans 11:18-20; Galatians 6:7-8; Hebrews 10:26-30, are addressed to believers! Mature reflection of our situation in this world, will reconcile us to that self-denying and painful mortification of our sins to which we are indispensably called. We shall see tender mercy couched under the apparent harshness of the requirement—our safety, advantage, and felicity consulted—and the grace and consolations of the Spirit will render it practicable and even comfortable. And would we be preserved from gross iniquities, our hearts must be kept with all diligence, and our eyes and all our senses and faculties forbidden to rove after those things which lead to transgression. The strictest rules of purity and self-denial will be found, by experience, the most conducive to true and solid comfort while in this world” (Thomas Scott).

By these exhortations, then, the Lord Jesus teaches us that we must keep a strict watch over the senses and members of our body, especially the eye and the hand, that they become not the occasions of sinning against God. “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of

unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom 6:13). We must use our sight in obedience to God, “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee” (Pro 4:25), that is, we are to order our sight according to the rule of the Word, for that is the way wherein we are to walk. The necessity of heeding this rule appears from many solemn examples. Eve’s looking on the forbidden fruit, contrary to the divine commandment, was the door of that sin into her heart. Ham was cursed for looking upon his father’s nakedness (Gen 9). Lot’s wife was turned into a pillar of salt for looking back toward Sodom (Gen 19:26). Over fifty thousand men of Bethshemesh were slain for looking into the ark of the Lord against His revealed will (1Sa 6). Do not these cases tell us clearly that before we look at anything we should pause and ask whether the same will be for God’s glory and our good?

Again—these exhortations of Christ teach us plainly that we must seek diligently to avoid all the occasions of every sin, though it be most painful to ourselves and attended with great temporal loss. As one old writer expressed it, The fallen nature of man is like unto dry wood, which will quickly burn as soon as fire touches it. As mariners at sea set a constant watch to avoid rocks and sand, so should we most warily avoid every occasion to sin. Self must be denied at all costs, constant watch kept over the heart, the first risings of corruption therein suppressed, temptations to sin shunned, the company of those who would be a snare unto us avoided. So there must be a constant seeking unto God for His grace, that we may be enabled to so walk in the Spirit that we will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, by His grace.

The task unto which the Lord Jesus here calls us is that of *mortification*, the putting to *death* of our evil lusts. That this is a most unwelcome and painful work, He warns us by the figures He employed. Unto those who object that the keeping of their hearts free from unlawful desires and lustful imaginations is a task utterly beyond their powers, Christ replies, If, as you say, it is impossible, if there be no other way for governing your appetites (which, blessed be God, through His grace, there is), then pluck out and cut off your offending members, rather than use them to the eternal undoing of your souls. Who is there among us who would not consent to the amputation of a gangrened limb, no matter how painful the operation and heavy the loss, if persuaded that this was imperative in order for life itself to be preserved? Then why refuse painful mortification which is essential to the saving of the *soul*? When tempted to shrink therefrom, seriously consider the only other alternative—in hell both body and soul will be tormented forever and ever.

Not only must there be the uncompromising avoidance and refusal of all that is evil, but we must abridge ourselves in or totally abstain from things lawful in themselves, if we find they are occasions of temptation to us. “Take a familiar illustration. A person is fond of wine—it is agreeable to his taste—it is useful in refreshing him after severe exertion. But he finds that this taste has seduced him into intemperance. He finds that there is constant danger of its doing so. He has fallen before the temptation again and again. What is such a person’s duty? According to our Lord, it is obviously to abstain from it entirely—on this plain principle, that the evil he incurs by abstaining, however keenly felt, is as nothing to the evil to which the intemperate use of wine subjects him—even everlasting punishment in hell. And to make this abstinence his duty, it is not necessary that he should know that he will fall before his temptation. It is enough that he knows that, as he has repeatedly fallen before it, he may fall before it again” (John Brown, 1784-1858).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

92. His Prevailing Intercession

It is both interesting and instructive to note in how many different characters David is brought before us in 2 Samuel 24. First, as the proud and haughty one, which may be inferred from the opening, “And,” of the chapter (following upon his remarkable victories and the extension of his kingdom) and confirmed in Psalm 30:6, which refers to this very time, and will (D.V.) be considered by us in a later article. Second, the tempted one, as 1 Chronicles 21:1 more definitely shows. Third, as the foolish one, deciding upon a military census when there was no need or divine commission for it. Fourth, the intractable one, when he stubbornly refused to yield unto the counsel of his officers or listen to their remonstrance (2Sa 24:3-4), determining to have his own way. The logical order in these downward steps is apparent on the surface.

Now on the other side, we behold him, fifth, as the penitent one, mourning over his sins and confessing the same to God (2Sa 24:10). Sixth, as the submissive one—not murmuring against the severity of God as he heard the terrible pronouncement of the prophet, but meekly bowing to the divine verdict. Seventh, the prudent one—preferring to fall into the hand of the Lord rather than into the hand of man. Eighth, as the believing and confident one—recognizing and owning the greatness of the divine mercies (2Sa 24:14). Ninth, as the chastened one—the judgment of God falling upon his beloved subjects (2Sa 24:15), which he felt more keenly than had the rod descended upon himself and his own house. Tenth, as the intercessor before God—stepping into the breach and making supplication for his afflicted kingdom. Here, too, we may perceive clearly the logical sequence of these things.

It is, however, in this last character, as *the intercessor* before God, that we are now to specially consider David. But we shall miss one of the most striking points in connection therewith, and one of the most instructive and valuable lessons for our own hearts therein, if we fail to observe very particularly the *order* before us. It is not every believer who has power with God in prayer. Far from it—rather are there, alas, very few who can prevail with the Lord in their supplications on the behalf of others. Nor is the reason for this far to seek—they possess not the requisite qualifications. They do not have those marks which fitted David on this occasion. If we are walking contrary to the divine commandments (1Jo 3:22), or there be unmourned and unconfessed sin in our lives, then the Lord will not hear us (Psa 66:18).

We sincerely trust the reader does not weary of our so often calling attention to the order of events in a narrative, for very often lessons of fundamental importance are thereby inculcated. It is so in the case before us. It is by duly noting *what preceded* David’s prevailing intercession, that we learn how we may become successful supplicants on behalf of others. First, there must be a putting right of what in our own lives is displeasing to a holy God—by a genuine contrition for and humble acknowledgement to Him of our offenses. Second, there must be entire submission beneath His chastening hand, meekly bowing to His righteous rod. Third, an implicit confidence in His wisdom, faithfulness, and goodness, so that we freely yield ourselves into His hands. Fourth, a real persuasion of the greatness of His mercies, laying hold thereof by faith and pleading the same before Him.

“So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men” (2Sa 24:15). First of all, let us note how exactly the punishment answered to the crime! Penitent though he was, yet David must be corrected, and as his offense had been a public one, so is the retribution. But it is indeed striking to see that the rod of God fell in the very place of His servant’s transgression.

David had doted upon his thousands and his thousands must be drastically reduced! God now numbered to the sword, those whom David had numbered to his self-complacency—one twentieth (cf. v. 9) being slain. Clearly, then, it was *the pride* of David against which this divine judgment was directed. “Whatever we idolize or grow proud of, God will generally take from us, or else convert it into a cross” (Thomas Scott).

Yet it is also to be noted that God’s scourge fell immediately upon the people themselves, for it was against *them* JEHOVAH had a controversy (2Sa 24:1). “A solemn time it must have been. Pestilence was walking in darkness and destruction was wasting at noonday. The destroying angel was actively at work and no man was able to withstand him. Throughout the length and breadth of the land death was claiming its victims. Who would next be struck no one could tell. No remedy availed to cure the sick. No intercession, however urgent, succeeded in preserving the life of a beloved one. All joy must have fled—all energy for ordinary pursuits must have been paralyzed. God was working, and in power. of old He had laid bare His arm, and worked in power on behalf of Israel. Now His hand was outstretched, but in this deadly way *against* them. Could any charge Him with injustice? No. They deserved the chastisement, though David’s act in numbering them was the proximate cause for this visitation. Helpless, how helpless were they all. Their only hope was in the mercy of God” (Clarence E. Stuart, 1827-1903).

Let us see in this solemn incident a demonstration of how easily God can reduce the haughtiest of sinners. The “day of the LORD” (His acting in judgment) is ever upon those who are proud and lifted up (Isa 2:12). Then how greatly are we indebted daily to His longsufferance! Stout-hearted rebels, who carry themselves with such effrontery against the Most High, little realize how much they owe to His wondrous patience, but they shall yet discover there are limits even to that. Someone has pertinently pointed out that, “If the power of angels be so terrible—a single one smiting with death seventy thousand Israelites in a single day—what is that of the all-mighty Creator!?” Rightly then does He ask, “Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the day that I shall deal with thee?” (Eze 22:14).

“So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed” (2Sa 24:15). This expression “the time appointed” can mean either the close of the third day or as many think, the season of the evening sacrifice of the first day. The Hebrew may be literally rendered, “Till the time of appointed assembly,” that is, the hour set apart for the meeting together of Israel for the evening worship. The renowned scholar Hengstenberg (1802-1869) remarks as follows, “The calamity, according to 2 Samuel 24:16, lasted from morning till the time of meeting, by which we are to understand ‘the evening religious assembly’—compare 1 Kings 18:29, 36; 2 Kings 16:15.” But altogether apart from the meaning of the Hebrew, there are two considerations which seem to require this rendering. First, because the phrase, “till the time appointed,” stands in opposition to, “from the *morning*.” Second, from the statement in the next verse, “The LORD repented him of the evil” (2Sa 24:16).

The last-quoted clause appears to us to plainly denote that He did not go to the full length of the judgment announced. Yet even in that brief period there fell of Israel seventy thousand, in as many hours as Joab had taken months in numbering the people. But by the mercy of God the duration of the awful pestilence was shortened. Judgment is God’s “strange work,” for He delights in mercy, yet His mercy never ignores the requirements of His holiness nor sets aside the demands of His justice. And most blessedly may we perceive here the meeting-place of these two grand sides of the divine character. It was the sweet savour of the evening sacrifice which stayed the desolating plague! What a wondrous foreshadowing was this—brought out still more plainly

in what follows—of that which is set forth without veil or symbol in the New Testament. The cross of Christ is where the varied attributes of God all shine forth in blended harmony.

“And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil” (2Sa 24:16). Let us first remove a misapprehension at this point. Enemies of the truth have not been slow to seize upon this reference to the Lord’s repenting (and similar passages, such as Gen 6:6; 1Sa 15:11, etc.), and have drawn the wicked inference that God is fickle, subject to changes of mind like the creature is. Arminians misuse such verses in their vain efforts to overthrow the doctrine of foreordination. But nothing is more clearly revealed in Holy Writ than the *immutability* of God. “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it?” (Num 23:19). “But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth” (Job 23:13). “For I am the LORD, I change not” (Mal 3:6). “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam 1:17). It is impossible for language to be more explicit, emphatic, and unequivocal. If such definite declarations do not mean what they say and are not to be understood at their face value, then it is a waste of time to read the Bible.

Now it is quite obvious to any spiritual mind that the Scriptures cannot contradict themselves, and that there is perfect harmony (whether we can perceive it or not) between those verses which appear to conflict with each other. When we are unable to discern their complete accord, then it is the part of wisdom to acknowledge our ignorance and wait upon God for fuller light. And while so doing, those passages which perplex us must be subordinated to others which are plain to us. Thus we may rest assured that those declarations which so positively affirm God’s immutability or unchangeableness are to be regarded absolutely without any qualification, whereas those which seem to speak of His changing His mind are to be taken relatively and figuratively. If Arminians deem this a begging of the question, then we ask them, Does not the express declaration of 1 Samuel 15:29 *oblige us* to interpret 1 Sam. 15:11 in a non-natural sense? Certainly the Holy Spirit would not contradict Himself within the scope of two verses in the same chapter!

The fact of the matter is that God often condescends to employ anthropomorphisms in His Word, that is, He graciously accommodates Himself to *our* limited capacities and *speaks after the manner of men*. Thus we read of Him being “wearied” (Isa 43:24; Mal 2:17), yet in another place we are told, “The Creator...fainteth not, neither is weary” (Isa 40:28). In Deuteronomy 32:27, JEHOVAH speaks as fearing “the wrath of the enemy,” which is manifestly a figure of speech. Again, in Psalm 78:65, we read, “The LORD awaked as one out of sleep,” yet we know full well that He never slumbers. In Isaiah 59:16, it is said that He “wondered,” yet nothing can take Him by surprise. Jeremiah 7:13 pictures Him as “rising up early,” to denote His earnestness. And so we might go on. The “repenting” of the Lord in 2 Samuel 24:16 signifies no change of mind, but intimates an alteration in His *outward* course—the cessation of His judgment.

“And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil.” Scripture is many-sided and it is only by carefully comparing one passage with another that we are enabled to obtain the full light upon any given incident. Such is the case before us here. Above, we have called attention to the significant and blessed fact that the destructive plague upon Israel was stayed at the hour of the evening sacrifice. Now we would point out another and supplementary angle. of old the Lord had declared concerning Israel, “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 will I remember; and I will remember the land” (Lev 26:40-42). This was exactly what David had, in principle, done. He not only confessed his iniquity and humbled his heart (2Sa 24:10), but also bowed to God’s rod “accepting the punishment” (see 2Sa 24:14). So that it was now in *covenant faithfulness* JEHOVAH acted in causing the plague to cease!

“And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil” (2Sa 24:16). In the supplementary account supplied us in 1 Chronicles 21:16, we are told, “And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem.” That “drawn sword” was the emblem of divine justice. How it reminds us of those solemn words of JEHOVAH, “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). And how striking the contrast between the two passages. There in Zechariah the sword was, as it were, slumbering, and was called to “Awake.” Why? because it was against the Holy one—there was nothing in Him personally the “sword” could find fault with! But different far was it here with guilty Israel—the sword needed no awaking, but was drawn in the angel’s hand.

“And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand” (2Sa 24:16). How blessedly this presents to us once more the precious truth, which is the sure ground of all our hopes, that with our God “mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (Jam 2:13). The whole system of Israel had exposed itself to the wrath of the Lord. He might have broken it at once as a vessel wherein was no pleasure. He might have taken away His vineyard from His unthankful and wicked husbandmen, but “mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (Jam 2:13) in the heart of their God, and therefore He commanded the destroying angel to stay his hand. And why? God’s holiness had been satisfied, His justice had been appeased. “It is enough”—“stay now thine hand” (2Sa 24:16)—how these words remind us of that blessed utterance of our Saviour, “It is finished”—proclaiming the glorious truth that all the claims of God are now fully met.

“And David spake unto the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father’s house” (2Sa 24:17). The exact point at which this intercession occurred is made much plainer in 1 Chronicles 21. There we learn there were two distinct parts or stages to the divine judgment. First, we are told, “So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men” (1Ch 21:14). This was accomplished by angelic agency as is clear from 2 Samuel 24, and it was terminated at the time of the evening sacrifice, and that, by the covenant faithfulness of JEHOVAH. Second, “And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it” (1Ch 21:15)—a separate thing from the preceding. “And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD....Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. And David said unto the God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed” (1Ch 21:16-17). It was at that critical moment he stepped into the breach and made successful intercession.

First, let us notice that David did not here make the fatal mistake of supplicating the angel—no, he was better instructed than are the poor deluded papists of our day. Second, observe that David did not throw the blame upon the nation, but incriminated himself. “Most people, when God’s judgements are abroad, charge others with being the cause of them, and care not who falls

by them, so *they* can escape, but David's penitent and public spirit was otherwise affected" (Matthew Henry). This is most beautiful and striking. David took the blame entirely upon himself, "Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed"—it was as though he could not paint his own faults in sufficiently dark colours. "As for these sheep, what have they done?" How dear were they to his heart! No charge would he prefer against them. "Let thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued" (1Ch 21:17)—smite their shepherd, but spare the flock, O Lord.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

9. *Its Perception*

"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God" (1Th 1:4). How did the apostle know that those Thessalonians were among God's elect? The next verses tell us—by *the visible fruits* thereof which he perceived in them. Discerning in their lives those effects of grace which had been wrought in them at their conversion, he traced back the same unto God's eternal purpose of mercy concerning them. And my reader, the way in which Paul knew the Thessalonian believers were "from the beginning chosen you to salvation" (2Th 2:13) must be the method by which every Christian today is to ascertain his or her election of God.

"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost" (1Th 1:5). Everything turns upon *how* the (true) Gospel is received by us—whether it is merely apprehended by the intellect, or whether it really reaches the conscience and heart, for only then is it received with a saving faith. When God's Word comes to us "in power" (1Th 1:5), it comes as "a two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12)—cutting, wounding, causing pain and deep distress. When the Word comes to us in power it is not due to any learning or eloquence of the preacher, nor to any pathos which he may employ. The fact that his hearers' emotions are deeply stirred so that they are moved to tears is no proof whatever that the Gospel is come to them in divine efficacy. Creature passions are often stirred by the actings of the stage and thousands are moved to weep in the theater. Such superficial emotionalism is but evanescent, having no lasting and spiritual effects. The test is whether we are broken and bowed before God.

The same thought is expressed again in the next verse, as though this is the particular detail by which we most need to test ourselves, "Having received the word in *much affliction*, with joy of the Holy Ghost" (1Th 1:6). How that exposes the worthlessness of the light and frothy "evangelism" (?) of the day! How solemn it is to remember that Christ described the stony-ground hearer as, "He that heareth the word, and anon with *joy* receiveth it: yet he hath not root in himself" (Mat 13:20-21). Very different was it with those who were converted on the day of Pentecost, for the first thing recorded of them is, that they were "pricked in their heart" (Act 2:37). Travail precedes birth and then comes the rejoicing (see John 16:21). These are the questions to be considered—and answered before God—has the Word rebuked and condemned me? has it stripped me of my self-complacency and self-righteousness? has it cut down my hopes and brought me to lie as self-condemned felon before the mercy seat?

“People come and hear sermons in this place, and then they go out and say, ‘How did you like it?’—as if *that* signified anything. ‘How did you like it?’ and one says, ‘Oh, very well,’ and another says, ‘Oh, not at all.’ Do you think we live on the breath of your nostrils? Do you believe that God’s servants, if they are really His, care for what you think of them? Nay, verily, but if you should reply, ‘I enjoyed the sermon,’ they are inclined to say, ‘Then we must have been unfaithful or else you would have been angry. We must surely have slurred over something or else the Word would have cut your conscience as with the jagged edges of a knife. You would have said, ‘I did not think how I liked it. I was thinking how I liked myself and about my own state before God—that *that* was the matter that exercised me, not whether he preached well, but whether I stood accepted in Christ or whether I was a castaway.’ My dear hearers, are you learning to hear like that? If you are not—if going to church and to chapel be to you like going to an oratorio, or like listening to some orator who speaks upon temporal matters, then you lack the evidence of election—the Word has not come to your souls with power” (Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892).

In between the portions quoted above from 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6 are two other details. First, “and in much assurance.” When the Word comes home in converting power to a man’s soul, all his doubts concerning its authenticity and authority are removed, and he needs no human arguments to convince him that its Author is *God*. All the skepticism of the rationalists and higher critics would be dispelled like mist before the rising sun, if the Spirit were pleased to effectually apply the Word to their hearts. Those who have been made to feel their dire need of Christ and have perceived His perfect suitability to their desperate condition, have “much assurance” of what the Gospel affirms of His person and work. Whatever may have been the case with them formerly, they have no doubt now about His absolute deity, His virgin birth, His vicarious death, His pre-eminent dignity, as Prophet, Priest, and King. These all-important things are settled for him, settled forever, and he will declare himself positively and with a dogmatism which will shock the sensibilities of the supercilious.

Again it is said, “Ye became followers of us and of the Lord” (1Th 1:6). Here is another mark of election. Those who are chosen by the Lord *desire to be like Him*. “Ye became followers of us” does not mean that they said, “I am of Paul, I am of Silas, I am of Timothy,” but that they imitated those eminent evangelists so far as they followed the example which Christ has left us. Ah, *that* is the test, my readers. Are we Christlike? or do we honestly wish to be so? Then that is a sure evidence of our election. Do we live by every word of God (Mat 4:4)?—Christ did. Do we take everything to God in prayer?—Christ did. Do we pray God to bless those who curse us? It is not are we sinless, perfect. But are we, though often “afar off,” really following Christ? If we are, it is not proud boastfulness to acknowledge it, nor is it self-righteousness to derive comfort therefrom, providing we also grieve over our many shortcomings and mourn over our sins.

“With joy of the Holy Ghost” (1Th 1:16). Mark the qualifying language—it is not carnal mirth, but spiritual gladness. And observe too, that this concludes the list, for it is ever the Lord’s way to reserve the best wine for the last. Alas, how few professors know anything, experimentally, about this deep spiritual joy. The religion of the vast majority consists of a slavish attendance upon forms that they delight not in. How many go to some place of worship simply because it is not respectable to stay away, though they often wish it were? Not so with the Christian—when he is in his right mind. He goes to worship the Lord, to hear the voice of his Beloved, seeking a fresh love-token from Him, desiring to bask in the sunshine of His presence. And when he is favoured with a visit from Christ, he exclaims with Jacob, “This is the house of God” (see Gen 28:17), a foretaste of heaven.

And now in drawing to a conclusion our remarks upon this fascinating aspect of the subject, there remains one other verse we must ponder, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (2Pe 1:10). Those words have been fearfully wrested by errorists. Enemies of the truth have perverted them to signify that the divine decree concerning salvation is but provisional, conditional on the sinner’s own efforts. They deny that any man’s predestination to eternal life is absolute and irrevocable, insisting that it is contingent upon our own personal diligence. In other words, man himself must decide and determine whether God’s desire for him is to be realized. Not only is such a concept entirely foreign to the teaching of Holy Writ, but to say that the ratification and realization of God’s eternal purpose is left dependent on something from the creature, is sheer blasphemy—and were it true, would not only render our election uncertain, but utterly hopeless.

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (1Pe 1:10). These words have also presented a real problem to not a few of God’s people. They have been sorely perplexed to understand how any diligence on their part could possibly make God’s calling and election sure. And even when that difficulty is cleared up, they are quite at a loss to know what form their diligence is to take. Ah, my friends, God has often expressed Himself in the Scriptures in such a way as to test our faith, humble our hearts, and drive us to our knees. Perhaps it may afford most help if we concentrate on the following points. First, the particular people here addressed. Second, the unusual order of “calling and election.” Third, what is the “diligence” here required? Fourth, in what sense can we make our calling and election “sure”?

First, the people addressed. If this simple but essential principle were duly heeded, what a mass of erroneous expositions would be avoided! It is the mis-application of Scripture which is responsible for so much faulty interpretation. When the children’s bread be cast unto the dogs, the former are robbed and the latter given that which they cannot digest. To take all exhortation which is addressed to believers and appropriate it, or rather misappropriate it, to unbelievers, is an excuseless offense—yet such has often been done with the verse before us. There is no difficulty whatever in ascertaining the addressees of this divine injunction. The opening verse of the epistle tells us that the apostle is here writing to those who had “obtained like precious faith,” so that they were *believers*, while in the verse itself they are styled “brethren” and exhorted as such.

This exhortation, then, is addressed to living saints and not to dead sinners. To teach that the unregenerate can do anything at all toward securing their calling and election, is not only colossal ignorance, but it gives the lie to God’s Word. When they are delivering a divine message, the first duty of God’s ministers is to draw very definitely the line of demarcation between the church and the world. It is failure at this point which causes so many children of the devil to claim relationship with the people of God. Attention to the *context* will almost always make it clear *to whom* a passage pertains—whether to the children of men in general or to the children of God in particular. The simplest and most effective way of making this plain to their hearers is for them to carefully delineate the *characters* (the identifying marks) of the one and of the other—note how the apostle followed this very course in the first four verses of the epistle.

Second, the unusual order that is found here, “your calling and election” (1Pe 1:10). Though at first sight this presents a difficulty, yet further study will show it really supplies an important key to the opening of this exhortation. That which puzzles the thoughtful reader is, why “calling” comes *before* “election,” for as we have sought to show at length in previous articles, effectual calling is the *consequence* of election, as it is also the manifestation thereof. As Romans 8:28 declares, believers are, “the called according to his purpose”—that is, the calling is in pursuance of God’s purpose. So, too, in Romans 8:30 it is said, “Whom he did predestinate, them he also

called.” Likewise, “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose” (2Ti 1:9). Why, then, are these two things inverted in the passage we are now considering?

It is to be carefully noted that Romans 8:28, 30 and 2 Timothy 1:9 are treating of *God’s* acts, whereas 2 Peter 1:10 mentions calling and election in connection with *our* diligence. It is only by duly noting such distinctions that we can hope to arrive at a right understanding of many of the details of Holy Writ. In Romans 8, the apostle is propounding doctrine, whereas in 2 Peter 1:10, he is pressing an exhortation, and there is a marked difference between those things. When the ways of God are being expounded, they are presented in their natural or logical order (as in Rom 8:30), but when Christian *experience* is being dealt with, the order in which we apprehend the truth is the one followed. Thus it is here—we are first to make sure that we have been the recipients of an effectual call, for that in turn will furnish proof of our election. The order of God’s thoughts toward us was, election and then calling, but in our experience we apprehend calling before election.

Third, what is the “diligence” here required? There are multitudes who fancy they have received an effectual call from God, but it is merely fancy. Instead of prayerfully and diligently devoting themselves to the duty here enjoined, they give themselves the benefit of the doubt. Probably many are quite sincere in their supposition, but they are sincerely mistaken, being led astray by their deceitful hearts. It is far from being sufficient to adopt the doctrine of election as an article of our creed. As one tersely put it,

“Though God’s election is a truth,
Small comfort there I see,
Till I am told by God’s own mouth,
That He hath chosen me.”

And I have no right or warrant to expect that He will ever do any such thing, till I have complied with His requirements in the verse now before us.

That to which I am here exhorted is to first make sure my “calling” of God. This is to be done by accumulating and strengthening my evidence that I am His born-again child, and that, in turn, is accomplished by cultivating the character and conduct of a saint. And how is that to be achieved? By using the means of grace which God has provided, such as the daily reading of the Scriptures with spiritual meditation thereon, by secret and fervent prayer for divine succour and grace, by cultivating fellowship with God’s people, so far as His providence permits this, by keeping faithful watch over our hearts, disallowing all that is unholy, by the strict denial of self and mortification of our members. But we shall receive most help at this point if we attend unto something yet more specific in the context.

In 2 Peter 1:5-7, we are exhorted, “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.” Now verse 10 expresses the same duty, but in different words. There is a striking parallelism in this chapter, and it is by noting the repetition (in variation of thought) that we find the chief key to our verse. In verses 5-7, we have an exhortation, and in verse 8 we are shown the result of heeding it. In verse 10, we also have a similar exhortation, and then in verse 11, the result of compliance therewith is shown. Thus our text is to be interpreted in the light of its context. What is the “diligence” here required? of what does it consist? Verses 5 to 7 tell us. It is by carefully cultivating the spiritual graces therein mentioned that I may ascertain my calling and election.

Fourth, in what sense do we make our calling and election “sure” (2Pe 1:10)? First, observe it is *not* “make secure”—they are already secured to every saint by the immutability of the divine purpose, for “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Rom 11:29). It is not the making of our calling and election sure Godwards, but *manwards*. Nor is it something future which is here in view. It is the present *enjoyment* to ourselves of our calling and election, and of *evidencing* the same to our brethren. By heeding the exhortation of 2 Peter 1:5-7, I am to prove my calling and election, and demonstrate the same to the church. A man may tell me he believes in election and is sure that he has been called of God, but unless I can see in his character and conduct the spiritual graces of verses 5-7, then I have to say of him (as Paul did of the Galatians), “I stand in doubt of you” (Gal 4:20). Here, then, is the meaning—make steadfast in your own conscience your calling and election, and make good to others your profession, by walking as a child of God.

Finally, two *consequences* of complying with those exhortations are pointed out. First, “For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall” (2Pe 1:10.) Those who give all diligence to cultivate the spiritual graces mentioned in verses 5-7, (thereby making their calling and election sure, both to themselves and to their brethren), shall never fall from the place of communion with God; shall never fall from the truth into false doctrine and error; shall never fall into grievous sins, and so disgrace their Christian profession; shall never fall into a state of backsliding, so that they lose their relish for spiritual things; shall never fall under sore discipline from God; shall never fall into despondency so as to lose all assurance; shall never fall into a condition of spiritual uselessness. But, second, “For *so* an entrance shall be ministered unto you *abundantly*, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 1:10): experimentally so here, fully and honourably so in the future. This is the result and reward of “diligence”: the Greek word for “ministered” in verse 11 is the same as “added” in verse 5!

And now to summarize. How may a real believer ascertain that he is one of God’s elect? Why, the very fact he *is* a genuine Christian evidences it, for a believing unto Christ is the sure consequence of God’s having ordained him to eternal life (Act 13:48). But to be more specific. *How* may I know my election? First, by the Word of God, having come in divine power to the soul, so that my self-complacency is shattered and my self-righteousness renounced. Second, by the Spirit’s having convicted me of my woeful, guilty, and lost condition. Third, by having had revealed to me the suitability and sufficiency of Christ to meet my desperate case, and by a divinely-given faith causing me to lay hold of and rest upon Him as my only hope.

Fourth, by the marks of the new nature within me—a love for God, an appetite for spiritual things, a longing for holiness, a seeking after conformity to Christ. Fifth, by the resistance which the new nature makes to the old, causing me to hate sin and loath myself for it. Sixth, by sedulously avoiding everything which is condemned by God’s Word, and by sincerely repenting of and humbly confessing every transgression thereof. Failure at this point will most surely and quickly bring a dark cloud over our assurance, causing the Spirit to withhold His witness. Seventh, by giving all diligence to cultivate the Christian graces and using all legitimate means to this end. Thus, knowledge of election is cumulative.

THE HOLY SABBATH

7. Its Christianization

That the Judaical Sabbath, as such, has been abolished, we unhesitatingly affirm—but to conclude from this that there is now no “Sabbath” in the strict and proper sense of that term, we emphatically deny. Serious errors have been committed at either extreme. on the one hand, there has been an insignificant company who have vigorously contended that God has given no command for any change to be made in the weekly day of rest, and therefore that we, in this dispensation, are required to observe the *seventh* day. on the other hand, another class has insisted that the “Sabbath” has been completely abolished, though they allow that it is the privilege of Christians (any *law* requiring the same, they deny) to honour Christ in a special manner on the *first* day of the week. The truth lies between these two extremes—the Sabbath remains, though it has undergone some noticeable changes in its Christianization.

A thorough inquiry into the precise differences between the Judaical Sabbath and the Christian Sabbath (deeply important as such an inquiry is)—differences as to its significance, its penal sanction, its day of observance, etc.—would require a full exposition of the Siniatic covenant, but as we recently went into that subject at length, it is not necessary for us to traverse the same ground again. But a brief summary of its salient and distinctive features seems unavoidable. Originally, the Sabbath was “made for man” (Mar 2:27). It being required of him naturally, the light and law of nature suggesting that some time be set apart and dedicated to God for the observance of His solemn worship in the world. Man in his creation, with respect to the ends of God therein, was constituted under a covenant—the law of his obedience being attended by promise and threatening, reward and punishment.

During the interval which elapsed between the fall of Adam and the Lord’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the nations had completely apostatised from God and had been given up by Him to a spirit of blindness (Rom 1:21-28). The dealings of God with the Hebrews marked a fresh and distinctive departure in the divine ways with mankind. At Sinai, the descendants of Jacob were taken into special covenant relationship with JEHOVAH. As the Sabbath had been originally annexed to the covenant between God and man (Adam, and the race in him), the renovation of the covenant (at Sinai) necessarily required an especial renewal of the Sabbath, and the change of the covenant as to the nature of it, necessarily introduced a change of the Sabbath. In what respects, we shall endeavour to point out.

When God erected His church in the wilderness (Act 7:38), renewing the knowledge of Himself and of man’s duty toward Him, in the posterity of Abraham, He gave unto them afresh the precepts of the law and the covenant of works, for the rule of their obedience, reducing the same to Ten Commandments written on tables of stone. As thus delivered by Him, it was the same for the substance of it with the law of our creation or the original rule of our covenant obedience unto God. Yet as thus inscribed, there was an innovation in it, both as to its form and the principle of obligation. In form it was now made objective and external, and the immediate obligation unto its observance was prefaced by motives peculiar to their state and condition (Exo 20:2). Later, its observance was continually pressed upon them by reasons taken from their peculiar relation to God, with His love and benefits unto them. It was now no more a moral command only, equally regarding all mankind, but had a *temporary* regard given to it, which was afterwards to be abolished.

The law was renewed as an ingredient in that economy under which God placed His church at Sinai, though He did not bring His people under the covenant of works, in all the rigour of it—relief being found, for those betaking themselves to it, in the promise of grace in Christ. Nevertheless, there was begotten in the minds of the people such a sense of the demands of the law and their obedience thereto, that it “gendereth to bondage” (Gal 4:24). Annexed to the law

was the promise of, “Do this, and live” (Luk 10:28), and the threat, “Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal 3:10). Consequently, the covenant form given to the law at Sinai rendered the obedience of the people to it in a great measure servile. The death sentence was pronounced upon those who desecrated the Sabbath (Exo 35:2-3).

The moral law, to which was attached many statutes of both a civic and ceremonial nature, was made the rule of the government of Israel, as a holy nation under the dominion of God Himself as their King. Thus the whole Decalogue as given at Sinai had a *political* use, that is, it was made the principal instrument of the polity or government of the nation as peculiarly under the rule of God. Their polity, as to the kind of it, was a theocracy, over which God in a special manner presided as their Governor, and this was peculiar to that people. Hence the Sabbath amongst them came to have an absolute necessity accompanying it, of an outward carnal ordinance, under pain of death if they neglected the same.

Again—the Sabbath was made a part of their law for religious worship in their temporal church state, in which and whereby the whole dispensation of the covenant which Israel was under, was directed to other ends. Thus it had the nature of a shadow, representing good things to come, whereby the people were to be relieved from the rigour and curse of the whole law as a covenant. Hence, new commands were given for the observance of the Sabbath, new motives advanced, new ends and uses formulated, so as to accommodate it to the dispensation of the covenant then in force, but which was afterwards to be removed and taken away, and with it the Sabbath itself so far as it had relation thereto. Therefore we have no hesitation in subscribing to the following words of Owen (John, 1616-1683),

“All these things in the law of the Sabbath are Mosaic: namely, the obligation that arose to its observance, from the promulgation of the law unto that people at Sinai; the limitation of the day to the seventh or last of the week, which was necessary to that administration of the covenant which God then made use of, and had a respect to a previous institution; the manner of its observance, suited to that servile and bondage frame of mind, which the giving of the law on Mount Sinai did generate in them, as being designed of God so to do; the engrafting of it into the system and series of religious worship then in force, by the double sacrifice annexed to it; with the various uses in, and accommodation it had to the rule of government in the commonwealth of Israel; in all which respects it is abolished, taken away.”

If, then, noticeable changes were made in connection with the Sabbath when God took the people of Israel into covenant relationship with Himself, need we wonder that other changes were made when the Siniatic covenant and constitution were abolished? In order to distinguish the Christian Sabbath from what had obtained for fifteen centuries, was it not expedient, might we say, *essential*, that under the era of the new covenant, it should be observed on a new and different day? But alas, the perversity of men has led not a few of them to argue from that very change of the day from the last to the first of the week, that the Sabbath itself is completely done away with under the Christian dispensation. They insist that an entirely new institution has displaced it, an institution which consists in a certain pre-eminence of the first day

Once again we avail ourselves freely of the writings of Patrick Fairbairn (1805-1874), and point out, first, even if we could assign no adequate reason for the seventh day being dropped and the first substituted in its place, a mere change of that kind would certainly not outweigh, with any serious-minded believer, the arguments we have produced in support of a Sabbath reaching from the creation of the world to the destruction of Jerusalem. This is a chain which links together Moses and Christ, the patriarchal, Levitical, and Christian times. We should certainly be the less

disposed to set aside the large amount of evidence, and to view the change in question as in itself conclusive against the existence of a proper Sabbath, when we know that the *first* day, on being appropriated to acts of worship, received the name of “the Lord’s day” (Rev 1:10). Why called emphatically *His*, but to intimate that He now claimed the same propriety in it that he had hitherto done in the seventh?

If the first day, as a day—that is, as a whole, and not some particular portion of it—is *the Lord’s*, in a sense in which other days of the week are not, how can it possibly be so, except in being set apart for employments and services peculiar to itself, and more immediately connected with His own glory? Was not this very feature the distinctive characteristic of the seventh day—that it was *God’s* day, because specially separated by Him for sacred purposes? And does not this very character appear plainly in the appellation, “the Lord’s day,” as transferring to the first day of the week that which had, essentially, marked the seventh day from Adam until Christ?

The principal feature which had distinguished the Sabbath from the very first, as designed for all classes and generations of men, is that a *seventh portion* of our time should be specially devoted to the worship of God, rather than the precise day of the week being the thing on which attention was to be fixed. It is the remembrance of a seventh day, as distinguished from the other six constantly going before and coming after it, which formed the substance of the fourth commandment, and that the seventh day was to be regarded as the last, rather than the first day of the week, appears only in what is assigned to the original ground of the appointment. We have no reason, but rather the contrary, to think that the Lord intended it to be always and solely connected with His own procedure in the work of creation.

At the giving of manna in the wilderness, when the Sabbath was restored after a period of oblivion, caused by the hard bondage of Egypt, the seventh day was counted from the time of God’s beginning to bestow the manna. And instead of bidding them to keep it as a mere memorial of creation, He more frequently enforced it on their regard as a sign of the covenant which He had with them, and a memorial of His goodness in delivering them from the land of bondage. After all this, is it not preposterous to suppose that the mere change of the day from the last to the first of the week, so as more distinctly to connect it with another and better covenant and render it the fitting memorial of a higher and more glorious work, should utterly destroy its obligation or alter its character?

Again—let it be duly considered that the change was not made capriciously, but for weighty and important reasons connected with the new work and covenant of God as distinguished both from that to which it stood immediately opposed in Judaism, and from that to which more remotely, but still more essentially, it stood opposed in creation. The observance of the last day of the week, as peculiarly set apart for God’s service, though belonging like circumcision to an earlier state of things, had yet come, in great measure, to be connected with the covenant made at Sinai. It was appointed to be a sign of that covenant, and the reason for the day as a memorial of creation ceasing in course of time to be maintained among the Gentiles, the observance of it came ultimately to be regarded as a public testimony on the part of the Israelites of their adherence to the covenant made with their fathers.

The need for a *change of* day in connection with the Sabbath under Christianity should now be the more apparent. The worship of God on the *seventh* day had been so blended with and merged into Judaism, that it could not serve as a proper sign and testimony to the world of the faith of the Gospel, and therefore without such a change as was actually made, one important end of this divine institution and ordinance must otherwise have been lost. For the same reason that God abolished circumcision as the outward mark of His covenant people, He set aside the Judaical

Sabbath as such—and for the same reason that He appointed baptism as the distinctive uniform of the Christian (Gal 3:27) has He signalized the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath.

But if we go beyond Sinai right back to the divine work of creation, a yet stronger reason will be found for this change in the day of rest. As a memorial of that work, the Sabbath cannot be now what it originally was, for sin has entered with its destroying power, and laid creation, as it were, in ruins. The once beautiful and glorious inheritance is now given up a prey to the spoiler. And a memorial of it, while it tells us indeed of God's first designs of goodness toward His creatures, tells us at the same time how those designs have been opposed, and nature's life and glory have been brought down within the gulf of death. We need then, for our peace and welfare, another work and covenant of God to repair the ruin of the first, and lay the foundation of a higher—even an imperishable glory.

A grander and more blessed production than the making of this material world has been achieved, even the bringing forth of a new creation, which cannot be marred by sin or Satan. The work of redemption immeasurably transcends in importance and value the work of the first creation, and hence it is most fitting that it should be signalized by a change in the day of rest to commemorate the rest of the Saviour from all His arduous and costly labours in the putting away of the sins of His people and His bringing in an everlasting righteousness for them. The transcendent work of Christ is therefore memorialized in the Sabbath by transferring it from the last to the first day of the week, for it was on *that* day the Redeemer rose triumphant from the grave as the Head of the new creation, the firstfruits of them that sleep, the prototype and pledge of a glorified humanity.

By the very act of His glorious exodus from the tomb, the Lord Jesus begets all who believe on His name unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away (1Pe 1:3-4). How appropriate, how delightful, then, the change made in connection with the Holy Day! Instead of seeking to take occasion from that change to impair or destroy the Sabbath, it should endear to us that blessed institution all the more. For it tells now, not so much of a paradise that has been lost, as of a better paradise that has been won; not so much of a covenant broken and a heritage spoiled, as of a covenant forever ratified by the blood of Christ and a kingdom that cannot be moved. If the corruptible work and covenant of nature had by divine appointment its Sabbatical sign and memorial, must not this higher work and covenant much rather have it?

“If we refuse now to enter into the fellowship of Christ's rest by hallowing the day which He has set apart in His church for spiritual rest and blessing, what is it in effect but to cut ourselves off from the hope of His redemption and declare our light esteem of His finished work? We conclude, therefore, that it is now, as it ever has been, the will of God that one whole day in seven should be kept holy to Himself; that since the resurrection of Christ, this has been divinely appointed to be the first day of the week; and that this change, while it could do nothing to weaken the obligation of a proper Sabbath, was both necessary to make the observance of a Sabbath conducive to some of the ends for which it was appointed, and also gives to it the character which cannot fail greatly to enhance and endear its sacredness to every child of God” (Patrick Fairbairn, from whom much in the second part of this article is taken *verbatim*).

ENJOYING CREATION

Psalm 104 is all through a song of nature, the adoration of God in the great outward temple of the universe. Some in these modern times have thought it to be a mark of high spirituality never to observe nature, and I remember sorrowfully reading the expressions of a godly person, who, in sailing down one of the most famous rivers in the world closed his eyes, lest the picturesque beauties of the scene should divert his mind from scriptural topics. This may be regarded by some as profound spirituality—to me it seems to savor of absurdity. There may be persons who think they have grown in grace when they have attained to this—it seems to me that they are growing out of their senses. To despise the creating work of God—what is it but, in a measure, to despise God Himself? “Whoso mocketh the poor despiseth his Maker.”

To despise the Maker, then, is evidently a sin—to think little of God under the aspect of the Creator is a crime. We should none of us think it a great honour if our friends considered our productions to be unworthy of admiration, and more injurious to their minds than improving. If when they passed our workmanship they turned their eyes away, lest they should suffer injury by looking at it, we should not regard them as very respectful to ourselves. Surely the despising of that which is made is akin to the despising of the Maker Himself. David tells us that, “The LORD shall rejoice in his works” (Psa 104:31). If He rejoices in what He has made, shall not those who have communion with Him rejoice in His works also? “The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein” (Psa 111:2). Despise not the work, lest thou despise the Worker.

The prejudice against the beauties of the universe reminds me of the lingering love to Judaism, which acted like a spell upon Peter of old. When the sheet knit at the four corners descended before him, and the voice said, “Rise, Peter; kill, and eat,” he replied that he had not eaten anything that was common or unclean. He needed that the voice should speak to him from heaven again and again before he would fully learn the lesson, “What God hath cleansed that call not thou unclean.” The Jew thinks this and that unclean, though Christ has cleansed it, and certain Christians appear to regard nature as unclean. The birds of the air, the fish of the sea, the glorious sunrise and sunset, the snow-clad Alps, the ancient forests, the boundless ocean, God hath cleansed them. Call them not common. Here on this earth at Calvary where the Saviour died, and by His sacrifice offered not within walls and roofs, He made this outer world a temple wherein everything doth speak of God’s glory. If thou be unclean, all things will be unclean to thee, but if thou hast washed thy robe and made it white in the blood of the Lamb, and if the Holy Spirit hath overshadowed thee, then this world is but a nether heaven. It is but the lower chamber of which the upper story glows with the full splendour of God, where angels see Him face to face, and this lower story is not without glory, for in the person of Christ Jesus we have seen God, and have fellowship with Him even now.

It appears to me that those who would forbear the study of nature, or shun the observation of its beauties, are conscious of the weakness of their own spirituality. When the hermits and monks shut themselves out from the temptations of life, foolish persons said, “These are strong in grace.” Not so, they were so weak in grace that they were afraid to have their graces tried. They ran away from the battle like the cowards they were, and shut themselves up because they knew their swords were not of the true Jerusalem metal, and they were not men who could resist valiantly. Monasticism was the confession of a weakness, which they endeavoured to cover with the vain show of humility and the pretence of superior sanctity. If my graces are strong, I can look upon the outward world, and draw forth its good without feeling its evil, if evil there be. But if my religion is mainly fictitious, then hypocrisy dictates to me the affectation of unusual spirituality, or at any rate I have not grace enough to rise from a contemplation of the works of God to a

nearer communion with God Himself. It cannot be that nature of itself debases me or diverts me from God, I ought to suspect a deficiency in myself when I find that the Creator's handiwork has not a good effect upon my soul.

Moreover, rest assured, brethren, that He who wrote the Bible, the second and clearest revelation of His divine mind, wrote also the first Book, the book of nature—and who are we that we should derogate from the worth of the first because we esteem the second? Milton's "Paradise Regained" is certainly inferior to his "Paradise Lost," but the eternal God has no inferior productions, all His works are masterpieces. There is no quarrel between nature and revelation, fools only think so—to wise men the one illustrates and establishes the other. Walking in the fields at eventide, as Isaac did, I see in the ripening harvest the same God of whom I read in the Word that He covenanted that seed-time and harvest should not cease. Surveying the midnight skies, I remember Him who, while He calls the stars by their names, also bindeth up the broken in heart. Who will may neglect the volume of creation or the volume of revelation. I shall delight in them both as long as I live. Charles H. Spurgeon.

DIVINE WISDOM

So extremely desperate was the fall of man, that it required the infinite and unsearchable wisdom of God Himself to find out a remedy against it. If the Lord should have proceeded thus far in mercy towards man and no farther—Thou art a wretched creature, and I am a righteous God. Yea, so heavy is My wrath and so woeful thy condition, that I cannot choose but take compassion upon thee, and therefore I will put the matter into thine own hands. Requisite it is that My pity towards thee should not swallow up the respects to Mine own justice and honour, that My mercy should be a righteous and a wise mercy. Consult therefore together all ye children of men, and invent a way to reconcile My justice to one and another—set Me in a course to show you mercy without parting from Mine own right and denying the righteous demands of Mine offended justice, and I will promise you to observe it. I say, if the mercy of the Lord should have confined itself within these bounds, and referred the method of our redemption unto human discovery, we should forever have continued in a desperate state, everlastingly unable to conceive or so much as in fancy to frame unto ourselves a way of escape.

As the creatures before their being could have no thought or notion of their being educed out of nothing which they were before, so man fallen could not have the smallest conjecture or suspicion of any feasible way to deliver himself out of that misery into which he fell. If all the learning in the world were gathered into one man, and that man should employ all his time and study to frame unto himself the notions of a sixth or seventh sense, he would be as totally ignorant of the conclusion he sought at last as he was at first. For all human knowledge of natural things is wrought by a reflection upon those ideas which are impressions made from those senses we already use, and are indeed nothing else but a kind of notional existence of things in the memory of man wrought by an external and sensible perception of that real existence which they have in themselves.

And yet in this case a sixth or seventh sense would agree *in genere proximo*, and so have some kind of cognition with those we already enjoy. But a new covenant, a new life, a new faith, a new salvation, are things *toto genere* beyond the strain and sphere of nature. That two should become one, and yet remain two still, as God and man do in one Christ; that He who maketh should be

one with the thing which Himself hath made; that He who is above all should humble Himself; that He who filleth all should empty Himself; that He who blesseth all should be Himself a curse; that He who ruleth all should be Himself a servant; that He who was the Prince of Life, by whom are all things and all things subsist, should Himself be dissolved and die; that mercy and justice should meet together, and kiss each other; that the debt should be paid, and yet pardoned; that the fault should be punished and yet remitted; that death like Samson's lion should have life and sweetness in it, and be used as an instrument to destroy itself; these and the like evangelical truths are mysteries which surpass the reach of all the princes of learning in the world. They are to be believed by a spiritual light, which was not so much as possible to a human reason.—Edward Reynolds, 1648.

“Lord when we bend before Thy throne
And our confessions pour,
Teach us to feel the sins we own
And hate what we deplore.
Our broken spirits pitying see,
True penitence impart,
Then let a kindly flame from Thee
Beam hope on every heart.
When we disclose our wants in prayer
May we our will resign
And not a thought our bosoms share
That is not wholly Thine.
May faith each weak petition fill
And raise it to the skies,
And teach our hearts ‘tis goodness still
That grants it, or denies.”
—Edward Bickersteth (1825-1906)



September

SUFFERING SAINTS

“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1Pe 4:19). As the nature of fallen man is very backward to do good, so likewise to suffer evil, and hence it is there are so many exhortations in the Word both to the one and to the other. There is not a little in this epistle on the subject of “suffering” (which has prime reference to opposition from the world), and many are the inducements advanced for the bearing of it in a God-honouring way. Varied indeed are the grounds for patience mentioned and the streams of comfort therein opened to the persecuted people of God—read through the epistle with that particular thought in mind. Limiting ourselves to the more immediate context—the Christian is not to be unduly perplexed at his troublous lot (1Pe 4:12), rather is he to rejoice because it brings him into fellowship with Christ (1Pe 4:13-14). Yet we must carefully see to it that our afflictions are not incurred through our own wickedness or folly (1Pe 4:15-16). Vastly different is the *end* of a Christian from that of the wicked (1Pe 4:17-18).

“Wherefore—in view of all the reasons and encouragements given in the context—let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1Pe 4:19). In different ways and in various degrees the Christian is bound to meet with trying opposition, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2Ti 3:12). No matter where they reside, the saints live among those who cannot but cause them suffering, and as Scripture makes abundantly clear, our worst afflictions are to be expected from those who profess to be our brethren and sisters in Christ. Moreover, there is much within the saint himself which cannot but be the cause and occasion of suffering—indwelling corruptions which ever resist the actings of grace, lusts which have to be mortified, a conscience which accuses us when we displease God.

But the grand thing in which we are here to take to heart is the fact that the suffering of saints is “according to the will of God.” Those oppositions he encounters, the injuries done to him are not fortuitous. They are not the result of blind chance or fickle fortune, but are according to divine ordination and ordering. How inexpressibly blessed to be assured of that! Does it not at once remove the bitterest ingredient from our cup of trouble? The saint never suffers except by the will of God. He who is too wise to err and too loving to be unkind is the one who mixes the medicine and hands it to us. If only we could always realize this, how many rebellious repinings would be silenced and the rod meekly borne. True, we do not suffer all the time, for God tempers the wind according as our case requires and graciously grants us brief respites.

Now in view of the fact that suffering is inevitable as long as we are on earth, and particularly because it is “according to the will of God” (1Pe 4:19), our gracious Father, what is the

Christian's duty in connection therewith? To commit the keeping of his soul to Him in well doing. The *manner* of this committal is "in well doing" (1Pe 4:19). And this, first, *before* suffering comes upon us. When some worker of iniquity afflicts a child of God, what a comfort it is if he has the testimony of a good conscience that he is suffering for "well doing" and not because he has wronged his persecutor. How watchful we should be in seeing to it that none can justly speak evil of us and that we do nothing to warrant our enemies hurting us. Then let us follow a course of "well doing" continually. Second, in the suffering itself. No matter how unprovoked the opposition, we must carry ourselves rightly under persecution—so far from harbouring a spirit of retaliation, we are required to do good unto those who do us evil.

Not only are we to be active in "well doing" unto those who cause us suffering, but our carriage is also to be good with respect to *God*. There must be a meek behaviour under His afflicting hand, with no murmuring against Him. This is of vast importance in connection with the cause of God on earth—that we betray it not through fear or cowardice, and dishonour it not by base retaliation against our oppressors. When we display a Christ-like spirit under afflictions, conducting ourselves in the fear of God and make conscience of our duty, it will exert a strong influence on those who wrong us—touching the hearts of the indifferent and closing the mouths of the obstinate. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual. Far more will be accomplished by prayer, than by taking things into our own hands and seeking to avenge ourselves.

We are not only to commit our souls unto God as to a faithful Creator, but this duty is to be performed "in well doing" (1Pe 4:19). In the suffering itself we should have an eye to God, an eye on ourselves, and an eye to the cause in hand. We must not commit our souls to God in idleness. It is not sufficient that we abstain from evil doing, we are to be active in well doing. Nor may we resort to ungodly compromises in order to escape suffering, for that would be evil, and sin is far, far worse than to have suffering inflicted upon us. Whatever may be the present gain of pleasing men at the expense of displeasing God, the future loss will be immeasurably greater. Prayerfully ponder Mark 8:38.

And *what is it* we are to "commit to God in well doing"? Our name, our estate, our bodies, our friends. But chiefly and above all, the keeping of our souls. The soul is our most excellent part. Though the body be burned at the stake, that is a trifle if our soul be preserved unto everlasting glory. Though all our earthly goods be taken from us, what is that if the inestimably precious jewel of our soul is safe in the hands of God? The value of our souls is to be gauged by the price which Christ paid for their redemption. Therefore, whatever trouble or peril we be in at the hands of the wicked, let our first concern be our souls, that it may be well with them. When a man's house is on fire, he naturally seeks to rescue first that on which he sets the most store. Let it be so with the Christian when fiery trials are his portion.

And what is it that we should desire our souls to be kept from? Why, from sin, from doing evil, from not only failing to be profited from the suffering but to be spiritually injured thereby. It is when we are slandered, ill-treated, wronged, unjustly persecuted, that we most need God's preserving grace, for it is natural for us to want to "get our own back." But when we truly comply with the injunction of Christ's "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), then has grace triumphed over the flesh and God is greatly glorified. Nor is it a difficult matter to commit our souls unto God when our hearts are impressed with His *faithfulness*. If He unfailingly supplies the temporal needs of all His creatures, will He fail to minister to the spiritual wants of His children? No indeed.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

11. *The Law and Adultery—Matthew 5:27-33*

Most writers regard Matthew 5:31-33 as forming a separate subdivision of our Lord's sermon, but really it belongs to the same section as verses 27-30, treating of the same subject and reprehending the same sin, though a different aspect thereof. Under the general head of adultery occurred another evil, namely the use and misuse of divorce, concerning which the law of Moses had been grossly corrupted. Having shown the strictness and spirituality of the seventh commandment, Christ here took occasion to condemn the lax views and practices which then obtained in connection with the annulment of marriages. The Jews had fearfully perverted one of the political statutes of the law, so that divorces were granted on the most frivolous pretences, and it was this our Lord here condemned. Thus, in reality, He was continuing to restore the seventh commandment to its proper place and perfections.

In the passage which is to be before us, we are supplied with a further illustration of the vast superiority of the righteousness of Christ's kingdom over the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. There is an invariable outworking of the principle that where spirituality wanes morality also deteriorates. All history bears witness to the fact that when vital godliness is at a low ebb the sacred institution of marriage is held in light esteem. It is both solemn and sad to behold an exemplification of the same in our own times, as the claims of God are less and less regarded by those of high and low estate alike, the holy obligations of wedlock are gradually whittled down and then increasingly disregarded. When a country, avowedly Christian, begins to tamper with the institution of marriage and make more elastic its divorce laws, it is a certain proof of its ethical decadence.

Even those with only a smattering of ancient history are aware of the fact that in the last few decades before the fall of both the Grecian and Roman empires, marriage was held in such low esteem that it was a common thing for the women to keep tab on their divorces by the number of rings worn on their fingers. It may be replied, They were *heathen* peoples. True, but of what our moderns would term "highly civilized." Moreover, human nature is the same the world over, and when the fear of God is lost, moral corruptions quickly abound. It was not otherwise with the favoured nation of Israel, as a glance at the prophets will show. The case of the woman in John 4, to whom our Lord said, "Thou hast had *five* husbands: and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband" (Joh 4:18), is not to be regarded as an exception, but rather as symptomatic of a disease which had spread widely through the nation.

"It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorce" (Mat 5:31). The original statute on this matter is found in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. But so perversely had that injunction been interpreted, that one of the leading schools of theology (that of Hillel) taught that a man might put away his wife for any cause. In the Apocryphal writings we read, "The son of Sirach saith, If she go not as thou wouldest have her, cut her off from thy flesh, give her a bill of divorce, and let her go" (Ecc 25:26), which is one of many definite indications that the Apocrypha was not inspired by the Holy Spirit. Josephus also wrote, "The law runs thus: He that would be divorced from his wife, for any cause whatever, as many such causes there are, let him give her a bill of divorce." He also confessed that he himself put away his wife, after she had borne him three children, because he was not pleased with her behaviour.

Moses had indeed been divinely directed to allow divorce in case of adultery, for the prevention of yet worse crimes. But that which had been no more than a temporary concession was changed by the Pharisees into a precept, and that so interpreted as to give license to the

indulging of their evil and selfish desires. And yet, hypocrites as they were, they made a great parade of obeying Moses with regard to the “bill of divorce.” The Talmudic writings, though they took little trouble to describe the justice of divorce, were rigidly definite with regard to the *form of the bill*, insisting that it must be written in twelve lines, neither more nor less. Such is ever the folly of those who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.

Let us now consider a few details in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. The first thing we notice is the *kind* of statute there given. It was not a moral but a political or civil one, for the good ordering of the state. Among such laws were those of tolerance or permission, which *did not approve* of the evil things concerned, but only suffered it for the prevention of greater evil—as when the sea makes a breach into the land, if it cannot possibly be stopped, the best course is to make it as narrow as possible. Such was the law concerning usury (Deu 23:20), permitting the Jews to exact it of a stranger, but not to exercise it towards a brother. Similar, too, was the law regulating polygamy (Deu 21:15). These laws tolerated what God condemned and that for the purpose of preventing greater evils.

Such was the Mosaic law for divorce—not approving of the giving of a bill of divorce for every trifling cause, but permitting it for the sake of preventing greater misery and crime. For instance, if a man took a strong and rooted dislike to his wife and wished to be rid of her, he would be likely to ill-treat her, until she was in danger of her very life. This law of divorce, then, was granted so as to remove the temptation for a hard-hearted husband to commit murder. Divorce is always a deviation from the original marriage institution consequent upon human depravity. In this instance, if a man found that in his wife—something short of adultery, for that was to be punished by death—which made her repulsive to him, he was permitted to divorce her. But this was not to be done verbally and hurriedly, in a fit of temper, but after due deliberation. A “bill of divorce” had to be legally drawn up and witnessed, making the transaction a solemn and final one.

Second, we may note the *strictness* of this law. The man only was permitted to give this bill of divorce—neither here nor anywhere else in the Old Testament was this liberty granted unto the wife. If this strikes us as being unjust or unduly severe, two things are to be taken into consideration. First, in the case of a husband being guilty of immorality, the wife could bring it to the notice of the magistrate, and relief was then afforded her by her guilty partner suffering the death penalty. Second, this statute was expressly designed for the prevention of violence and bloodshed, to protect the weaker vessel, it being taken for granted that the man could protect himself if his wife should attack him.

Third, a brief word now upon the *force* and effect of this law. It made the bill of divorce, given for the stipulated cause, to be regular before men, and marriage thereafter lawful in human courts (Deu 24:4). Nevertheless, in the court of conscience *before God*, the divorce itself and second marriages thereon were unlawful, for God hated such separations (Mal 2:16). And whichever guilty party under such a divorce married again, committed adultery (Mat 19:9). Now this law the Pharisees had grossly perverted. They taught that it was a “commandment” (Mat 19:7), whereas Moses only gave a permission—as the language of Deuteronomy 24:1 plainly denotes. So, too, they taught that for *any* cause (Mat 19:3) a man could divorce his wife and thereby be free from her before God, and therefore at liberty to marry another.

“But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery” (Mat 5:32). Here Christ refutes the corrupt interpretation of the scribes and Pharisees, and positively affirms that divorce is permissible only in the case of that sin which in

God's sight annuls the marriage covenant, and even then it is only allowed, and not commanded. Many have understood (being misled by the meaning of the English word) the "saving for the cause of fornication" to refer to this sin being committed *before* marriage and concealed by her till afterwards, arguing that only a married person can be guilty of "adultery." This leads us to raise the point, Do the Scriptures make any real and definite distinction between fornication and adultery? And we answer, No. True, in Matthew 15:19 and Galatians 5:19, they are mentioned separately, yet in Revelation 2:20 and 22, they are clearly used interchangeably, while in Ezekiel 16:25-28 the wife of JEHOVAH is said to commit *both* sins.

"But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Mat 5:32). These words of our Lord are too plain to be misunderstood. "According to this law, adultery is the only sufficient reason of divorce. He who for any other cause puts away his wife, is to be held an adulterer if he marry another woman, and she, by marrying him, commits adultery. While, at the same time, he becomes the guilty occasion of adultery, if the woman, who is still his wife, marry another man, for in this case she commits adultery as he also who marries her" (John Brown, 1784-1858). No matter how unscriptural be the laws of the land in which we live, or lax the sentiments and practices of the public today, nothing can possibly excuse anyone from flying in the face of this express declaration of the Son of God repeated by Him in Matthew 19:9.

Something higher than the laws of man must govern and regulate those who fear God. The laws of all "civilized" countries sanction the practice of usury, but the Word of God condemns the same. The laws of our land are open for men to go to court at the first, upon every light occasion, without seeking for some means of agreement. But those who do so, are guilty before God, notwithstanding the liberty given them by our political statutes. In like manner, human laws permit divorce for "incompatibility" of disposition, "mental cruelty," and various other things, but the law of God condemns such licentiousness. Papists allow divorce for religious reasons, appealing to "every one that hath forsaken...father, or mother, or wife...for my name's sake" (Mat 19:29), but in that place Christ refers not to divorce at all, but to a separation caused by imprisonment, banishment, or death.

Marriage is not a mere civil thing, but is partly spiritual and divine, and therefore God alone has the power to appoint the beginning, the continuance, and the end thereof. Here the question is likely to be asked, What of *the innocent party* where a divorce has taken place—may such a one marry again with divine sanction? To the writer it seems strange that, though there is a decided consensus of agreement, all Christians are not one on this matter. In seeking the Scriptural answer to the question, let it first be borne in mind that infidelity on the part of either husband or wife annuls the marriage covenant, the man and woman being no longer "one flesh," one of them having been adulterously united to some other. Divorce goes yet further, for it legally dissolves and removes the marriage relation. We are therefore in hearty accord with the Westminster Catechism of Faith which declares, "In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce, and after the divorce to marry another, as if the offending party were dead" (Chap. 24, sect. 5).

In his excellent piece on "of Marriage after divorce in Case of Adultery," John Owen (1616-1683) pointed out that to insist that divorce simply secures a legal separation but does not dissolve the marriage relation, would bring in a state harmful to men. God has appointed marriage to be a remedy against incontinence (1Co 7:2), but if innocent parties lawfully divorced may not marry again, then they are deprived of this remedy and debarred from this benefit. If the divorced

person has not the gift of continence, it is the express will of God that he should marry for his relief. Yet on the supposition of the objector he sins if he marries again, yea, is guilty of the horrible crime of adultery. Is not this quite sufficient to expose the untenability of such an anomaly?

Again—can we suppose for a moment that it is the will of a righteous God for an innocent person to be penalized *the remainder* of his or her earthly life because of the infidelity of another? Surely the very idea is repugnant to all who are really acquainted with the divine goodness and mercy. Why, if an innocent man upon a divorce is not then at liberty to marry again, he is deprived of his right by the sin of another, which is against the very law of nature. And on such a supposition it lies within the power of every wicked woman to deprive her husband of his natural right. The right of divorce in case of adultery, specified by Christ, for the innocent party to make use of, is evidently designed for his liberty and relief—but on the supposition that he may not again marry, it would prove a snare and a yoke to him, for if thereon he has not the gift of continence, he is exposed to sin and judgment.

But apart from these convincing considerations, the Word of God is plain and decisive upon the matter. In Matthew 5:32, Christ lays down a general rule, and then puts in an exception thereto, the nature of which exception necessarily implies and affirms *the contrary* to the general rule. The general rule is that, Whosoever divorces his wife causes her to commit adultery, and he who marries her becomes guilty of the same crime. The “exception” there must be contrary, namely, that the innocent party in the divorce may lawfully marry again, and the one marrying him or her is not guilty of adultery. But *that* is the *only* exception. 1 Corinthians 7:15 has been appealed to by some as warranting re-marriage in the case of total desertion, but that passage is quite irrelevant, teaching no such thing. The verse refers to an unbelieving husband deserting a believing wife. In such case (says the apostle), she is not “bound” to pursue her husband and demand support, nor go to law on the matter, rather is she to follow a course of “peace.” The verse says nothing whatever about her being free to marry again, nay, verse 39 of the same chapter, says, “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth.”

In Matthew 19:9, Christ declared, “Whosoever shall put away his wife, *except* it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” Here again it is evident the plain sense of these words is, that he who divorces his wife for fornication, and then marries another is not guilty of adultery. In such a case the bond of marriage has already been broken, and the one so putting away his guilty wife is free to marry again. When our Lord condemned the putting away and marrying again for every cause, the *exception* He made of “fornication” clearly allows both divorce and re-marriage, for an exception always affirms the contrary unto what is denied in the rule, or denies what is affirmed in it. [(Condensed from Owen, who closes his piece by saying, “This is the constant practice of all Protestant churches in the world”)].

Prevention is better than cure. Even a temporary separation should be the last resource and every possible effort made to avoid such a tragedy. Marriage itself is not to be entered into lightly and hurriedly, but once the knot is tied, each party should most earnestly consider the relationship which has been entered into and the serious importance of its duties. If love rules, all will be well—unselfishness and forbearance are to be mutually exercised. If the husband gives honour to his partner as unto “the weaker vessel” (1Pe 3:7), and the wife sees to it that she render unto her husband “due benevolence” (1Co 7:3), much needless friction will be avoided. Let them bear with each other’s infirmities, study each other’s dispositions, and seek to correct each other’s faults. Above all, let them often together draw near unto the throne of grace and seek God’s blessing on

their married life. The holier their lives, the happier they will be. Nothing is more honouring to God than a home which bears witness to the sufficiency of His grace and shadows forth the union which exists between Christ and His church.

N.B. Our purpose in adverting (above) to the writings of John Owen was not because we felt our case needed the support of any human authority, but in order that our readers might know what was taught and practiced by the godly Puritans.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

93. His Grand Reward

We were obliged to omit several points of importance at the close of our article last month, so we will commence here at the stage where we then left off. There we called attention to an essential detail—one which, so far as we can discover, has escaped the notice of all the commentators—namely, that God’s judgment upon Israel was twofold, or in two distinct stages—and we would also observe that this corresponded exactly with David’s sin. First we are told, “The LORD sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men” (1Ch 21:14). In Samuel’s account it reads, “There died of the plague from Dan *even to Beersheba* seventy thousand men” (2Sa 24:15). How remarkably did the punishment fit the crime, for David had commanded Joab, “Go now through all the tribes of Israel, *from Dan even to Beersheba*, and number ye the people” (2Sa 24:2). It will be remembered that the account of the census-taking closed by saying, “So when they had gone through all the land, they came to *Jerusalem* at the end of nine months and twenty days” (2Sa 24:8).

Second, “And God sent an angel unto *Jerusalem* to destroy it” (1Ch 21:15). Samuel tells us, “And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil” (2Sa 24:16), and follows with David’s prayer. But the account in Chronicles evidently observes a closer chronological order, for there we read, “And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered?” (1Ch 21:16-17). The dreadful spectacle of the avenging angel, about to fall upon the holy city, deeply affected David. He had previously repented of and confessed his sin, but the calamity which now threatened the capital itself, caused him to pour out his heart afresh unto the Lord, both in humble contrition and earnest supplication.

“And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed.” What blessed self-abnegation was this. David takes the entire blame unto himself, adding, “but as for these sheep, what have they done?” (1Ch 21:17). Rightly did Matthew Henry (1642-1714) answer the question by saying, “Why, they had done much amiss: it was *their* sin which had provoked JEHOVAH to leave David to himself, as He did.” “Let thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father’s house” (1Ch 21:17). How nobly did David here stand in the breach, and that, at his own cost. He not only shouldered the guilt, but was willing to bear the retribution.

As we pointed out last month, it was as though David said, Smite me, the shepherd, but let the flock be spared. Ah, but *that* could not be—God would not allow David to suffer in the stead of all Israel. No, none could fill that awful and honourable place of substitution but David's Son and Lord. Nevertheless, we see how grandly he, in spirit, foreshadowed the good Shepherd, who, that they might be rich, Himself became poor, and actually took upon Himself the sins of His sheep and died in their place. "But not on thy people, that they should be plagued" (1Ch 21:17). Is it not lovely to behold David here referring to Israel not as "the people," but as "thy people"? In his folly he had regarded them as *his* people, but in his wisdom he now saw them as the *Lord's*.

Let us point out here that the confession and prayer of David on this occasion should be taken to heart by every minister of the Gospel. In his comments, Thomas Scott (1747-1821) applied the principle of David's heart-exercises to preachers thus, "While ministers mourn over the state of their congregations, they may sometimes profitably inquire whether their own pride, want of zeal and simplicity, their self-indulgence or conformity to the world, do not bring a secret blight upon their labours, although more open evils do not bring a blot upon their profession? And whether the people's souls are not suffering for their correction, and to bring them to deeper humiliation, greater fervency in prayer, and a more spiritual frame of mind and devotedness to God. And surely we should choose to be chastened in our own persons, rather than that the blessing should be withheld from our congregations. For though the Lord is righteous in these dispensations, yet the people have not deserved *at our hands*, that we should occasion this evil to them. Grace teaches men to condemn themselves rather than others, and to seek the interests of their fellows in many respects before their own. And earnest prayers offered in this temper of mind, by those who unreservedly cast themselves on the mercies of the Lord are very prevalent."

Returning now to the crime of David, we may observe that his supplication prevailed with God. Such deep humiliation, such unsparing acknowledgment of his faults, such utter self-abnegation and such tender pleading for the people, touched the heart of Him who is filled with compassion. If the unselfishness of Moses prevailed at another grave crisis in their history, when he asked God to blot him out of His book (Exo 32:32) rather than that the nation should be destroyed, equally so did the readiness of David for God's judgment to fall upon himself and his house instead of his subjects, turn the tide—for it was in direct answer to his pleading that God said to the angel, "Stay now thine hand" (2Sa 24:16). This gives beautiful completeness to our type, portraying as it does the efficacy of our great High Priest's intercession on behalf of His people.

There is one other point of deep practical importance to be noted here. "God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it, and as he was destroying (or as 2 Samuel 24:16 puts it, "When the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it"), the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil" (1Ch 21:15). And *what was it* that He now "beheld"? Why, David and his servants, "clothed in sackcloth," fallen "upon their faces" (1Ch 21:16)! It was not simply that He "saw," but "*beheld*"—with concentrated attention. And then follows immediately David's supplication. Here, then, is the final lesson—it is the one clothed with sackcloth, on his face in the dust, whose intercession prevails with God! In other words, it is the one who is thoroughly humbled, who is brought to the place of self-loathing, and who takes upon his own spirit the afflictions of others, who alone is qualified to plead on their behalf.

Were we asked whose prayers we would rather have on our behalf, we should unhesitatingly reply, Not those who are in raptures on the mountain top, but those who are mourning before God over their own sins and the sufferings of others. Personally, we appreciate far more highly the supplications of those who are (spiritually speaking) clothed in sackcloth, than those arrayed in

their wedding garments. It is the absence of the “sackcloth” which renders ineffectual the prayers of so many today. Here, then, is holy encouragement for those of God’s people who are bowed in the dust before Him. If we have repented of and confessed our sins, and are truly humbled before Him, then is the very time to intercede for other tried souls. Finally, observe the prompt compliance of the angel to the Lord’s order, “Stay thine hand.” If celestial creatures are so obedient to their Maker’s word, how promptly should we respond to His revealed will.

“And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite “ (2Sa 24:18). If we compare at this point the supplementary account we learn that, “Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD” (1Ch 21:18). The relief, then, for David in this dark hour was announced (through Gad) by the avenging angel, and thus we may say once more that the eater himself yielded meat, the strong one sweetness (Jdg 14:14). Most blessed indeed was this, for an “altar” calls for an accepted worshipper, and the Lord would not have given directions for the one, if He had not provided the other. Thus it was with the very first worshipper, “And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering” (Gen 4:4)—his person was first accepted and then his sacrifice. And here the Lord’s readiness to accept an offering at the hands of David was proof that David himself had been received.

This divine direction for David to now erect an altar, denoted, first, that God was thoroughly reconciled to him, and therefore might he infer with Manoa’s wife, “If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meal offering at our hands” (Jdg 13:23). Second, that peace between God and guilty sinners is effected by sacrifice, and not otherwise than by Christ, the great Propitiation. Thus, while God’s mercy rejoiced against judgment on this solemn occasion, yet He made it abundantly clear that His grace reigns through righteousness (Rom 5:21) and not at the expense of it. It is the blood which makes an atonement for the soul (Lev 17:11), because it is the blood which placates the retributive justice of God. Third, that when God’s judgments are graciously stayed, we ought to acknowledge it with thankfulness to His praise, “I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me” (Isa 12:1).

It will be remembered 2 Samuel 24:16 informed us that when the angel of the Lord stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, he was “by the threshingplace of Araunah.” The peaceful occupation of this Gentile (for he was a Jebusite), quietly continuing to thresh his wheat on the floor of his own isolated garner (1Ch 21:20) *without* the walls of Jerusalem, stands out in marked contrast from the troubled scene *within* the city, where David and the elders of Israel clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces. Nevertheless, Araunah, too, was threatened, for the avenging angel drew nigh to and stood over the peaceful threshing floor itself, and as 1 Chronicles 21 tells us, “Ornan [Araunah] turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves” (1Ch 21:20). But the angel smote them not—telling us most blessedly, in figure, that Gentiles as well as Jews are delivered from judgment on the ground of the antitypical sacrifice.

The tranquil plot of ground of Araunah was not to be the scene of judgment, but was ordained to be the place of grace, forgiveness, and peace. And *where* was that threshing floor situated? Most significantly, on Mount Moriah. We are not left in any doubt upon this point, though the information is supplied neither in 2 Samuel 24 nor 1 Chronicles 21—not for lazy people is the Bible written! “Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite” (2Ch 3:1). And Moriah, as its name intimates, was the very place where JEHOVAH appeared as “JEHOVAH-Jireh” to Abraham, and where—true to

His covenant name—He appeared to meet and provide for the need of David. How very remarkable and inexpressibly blessed. Moriah was and continued to be the place of sovereign *grace*!

Moriah was the mount to which Abraham went when commanded to offer up Isaac. In Genesis 22:14, we read, “And Abraham called the name of that place JEHOVAH-Jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.” That is, seen as the Provider, or as Heinrich Gesenius (1786-1842), the celebrated Hebraist, renders it, “In the mount of JEHOVAH it shall be provided.” Benjamin W. Newton (1807-1899) tells us that Moriah is “a name derived from the same root, and signifies the place of appearing, i.e., of the appearance of JEHOVAH as the Provider. It should be observed that all the thoughts connected with Moriah and the provision there made, are to be traced back to the words of Abraham, “My son, God will provide [Hebrew “for”] himself a lamb for a burnt offering” (Gen 22:8).

But now observe the contrast. Confiding implicitly in God, even when he understood not the reason of His commands, Abraham went to Moriah to give full proof of his faith and obedience. Far otherwise was it with poor David. He went there as one whose disobedience had encompassed him with sorrow, judgment, and death. He came clothed with sackcloth, bowed down by anguish. He came because he saw the sword of the avenging angel drawn against him and his people. He came as the “troubled one,” as one who needed to be delivered from “going down to the pit” (see Psa 30:3). True, Abraham was afflicted, yet how different was the sorrow of the consciously-obedient Abraham from the consciously-disobedient David! Nevertheless, David found on Moriah the same God that there met Abraham. In the very place where Abraham by a countermand from heaven was stayed from slaying his son, the angel by a like countermand was stayed from destroying Jerusalem!

“And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite” (2Sa 24:18). It is to be duly noted that the “altar” was *God’s* thought and not David’s. This is very blessed, telling us that the initiative is ever with God in all salvation matters. God is the great Provider—our privilege is to accept His gracious provision. Christ—to whom the altar pointed—was the gift of God and *not* the product of man. We love Him because *He* first loved us. And how gracious He was not to keep David in suspense a whole day, nor even an hour. No sooner had he sought unto God and He immediately responded. The ark was then at mount Zion and the tabernacle at Gibeon (2Ch 1), but David was bidden to go neither to the one nor the other.

“And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded” (2Sa 24:19). What beautiful completeness this gives to all that has been before us. The penitent, prudent, submissive, and supplicating one, is now seen as the *obedient* one. How could it be otherwise? He who is, spiritually speaking, clothed with sackcloth, does not follow a course of self-will and self-pleasing. David made no demur against being told to seek unto this Gentile and ask a favour at his hands. A truly meek heart neither reasons about nor objects to the divine demands, but complies promptly. Here, then, is the final mark of the prevailing intercessor—he who has power with God in prayer (after his recovery from folly), is one that now treads the path of obedience. If God is to respond to our petitions, we must respond to His precepts.

In closing, let us call attention to one other point of analogy between the experiences of Abraham and David on this memorable mount, the one which is most pertinent of all to our present subject—David’s grand reward. God called the patriarch to Moriah not only that he might there give proof of his faith and obedience, but more especially that this trial of Abraham might be the occasion of unfolding to him (and through him, to us) a fuller revelation of His own ways

in *grace*. For as we now know, the touching drama there enacted provided a striking adumbration of the Father Himself not sparing His own beloved Son, but freely delivering Him up for all His people. In like manner, God not only provided a substitute for David on Moriah, but He there vouchsafed him a revelation of the counsels of His grace. Moriah was not only the place where David obtained forgiveness for his sins, but it was also made to him the place of *honour and blessing*.

Upon the altar he there erected, David, “offered burnt offerings and peace offerings” (1Ch 21:26). Nor did he do so in vain. The Lord “answered him from heaven by fire”—in token of His approval and acceptance. But more—this was the time when and the place where he received commission to prepare for the building of God’s house. “Then David said, This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel” (1Ch 22:1). Now it was that David learned where was the sacred spot which JEHOVAH had chosen for the site of *the temple*. This, then, was David’s grand reward—unto *him*, and not to any of the prophets, nor even to the high priest, was given the holy privilege of entering into God’s mind concerning His house and to make provision for the same! How true it is, dear reader, that God ever honours those that honour Him—even though it be by appearing before Him in sackcloth—though He does not always make His approbation so evident to our senses as He did here to David’s.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

10. Its Blessedness

The doctrine of election *magnifies the character of God*. It exemplifies His *grace*. Election makes known the fact that salvation is God’s free gift, gratuitously bestowed upon whom He pleases. This must be so, for those who receive it are themselves no different from and no better than those who do *not* receive it. Election allows some to go to hell, to show that all deserved to perish. But grace comes in like a dragnet and draws out from a ruined humanity a little flock, to be throughout eternity the monument of God’s sovereign mercy. It exhibits His omnipotency. Election makes known the fact that God is all powerful, ruling and reigning over the earth, and declares that none can successfully resist His will or thwart His secret purposes. Election reveals God breaking down the opposition of the human heart, subduing the enmity of the carnal mind, and with irresistible power drawing His chosen ones to Christ. Election confesses that, “We love him, because he first loved us” (1Jo 4:19), and that we believe because He made us willing in the day of His power (see Psa 110:3).

The doctrine of election ascribes all the glory to God. It disallows any credit to the creature. It denies that the unregenerate are capable of predicating a right thought, generating a right affection, or originating a right volition. It insists that God must work in us both to will and to do. It declares that repentance and faith are themselves God’s gifts, and not something which the sinner contributes towards the price of his salvation. His language is, “Not unto us, not unto us,” but, “Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” These paragraphs were written by us almost a quarter of a century ago, and today we neither rescind nor modify them.

“The Lord makes distinctions among guilty men according to the sovereignty of His grace. ‘I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel: but I will have mercy upon the house of Judah.’ Had not Judah sinned too? Might not the Lord have given up Judah also? Indeed He

might justly have done so, but He delights in mercy. Many sin, and righteously bring upon themselves the punishment due to sin—they believe not in Christ and die in their sins. But God has mercy, according to the greatness of His heart upon many, who could not be saved upon any other footing but that of undeserved mercy. Claiming His royal right, He says, ‘I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.’ The prerogative of mercy is vested in the sovereignty of God—that prerogative He exercises. He gives where He pleases, and He has a right to do so, since none have any claim upon Him” (Charles H. Spurgeon [1834-1892], “The Lord’s Own Salvation”—Hosea 1:7).

The above makes it sufficiently plain that it is no light thing to reject this blessed part of eternal truth. Nay, it is a most solemn and serious matter so to do. God’s Word is not given us to pick and choose from—to single out those portions which appeal to us, and to disdain whatever commends itself not to our reason and sentiments. It is given to us as a whole and by it each of us must yet be judged. To reject the grand truth we are here treating of is the height of impiety, for to repudiate the election of God is to repudiate the God of election. It is a refusal to bow before His high sovereignty. It is the corrupt preacher opposing himself against the holy Creator. It is presumptuous pride which insists upon being the determiner of its own destiny. It is the spirit of Lucifer, who said, “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the most High” (Isa 14:13-14).

The blessedness of this doctrine appears in that *it is all important in the plan of salvation*. Consider this first from the divine side. A Scriptural presentation of this grand truth is indispensable if the distinctive acts of the Triune God in salvation matters are to be recognised, honoured, and owned. Salvation proceeds not from one divine person only, but equally from the Everlasting Three. JEHOVAH has so ordered things that each one in the Godhead should be magnified and glorified alike. The Father is as really and truly the Christian’s Saviour as is the Lord Jesus, and so, too, is the Holy Spirit—note how the Father is expressly designated, “God our Saviour” in Titus 3:4, as distinct from “Jesus Christ our Saviour” in verse 6. But this is ignored and lost sight of if this precious doctrine be omitted. Predestination pertains to the Father, propitiation to the Son, regeneration to the Spirit. The Father originated, the Son effectuated our salvation, and by the Spirit it is consummated. To repudiate the former is to take away the very foundation.

Consider it now from the human side. Election lies at the very base of a sinner’s hope. By nature all are the children of wrath. In practice, all have gone astray. The whole world has become guilty before God. All are exposed to wrath, and if left to themselves would be involved in one common ruin. They are “clay of the same lump,” and continuing under nature’s forming hand would be all “vessels to dishonour” (see Rom 9:21). That any are saved is of the grace of God (Rom 11:4-7). Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of sinners, is Himself the Elect one, as described by the prophet (Isa 42:1). And all who shall ever be saved are elected in Him, given to Him of the Father, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. It was to accomplish their salvation that God gave His only begotten Son, and that Jesus Christ assumed our nature and gave His life as a ransom.

It is to call the elect that the Scriptures are given, that ministers are sent, that the Gospel is preached, and the Holy Spirit is here. It is to accomplish election that men are taught of God, drawn of the Father, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, made partakers of precious faith, endued with the spirit of adoption, the spirit of prayer, and the spirit of holiness. It is in consequence of their election that men are made obedient to the Gospel, are sanctified by the Spirit, and become holy and without blame before God. Had there been no divine election, there had been no divine

salvation. Nor is this a mere arbitrary assertion of ours, “Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrah” (Rom 9:29). Lost sinners cannot save themselves. God was under no obligation to save them. If He is pleased *to* save, He saves whom He will.

Election not only lies at the foundation of a sinner’s hope, but also accompanies every step of the Christian’s progress to heaven. It carries to him the glad tidings of salvation. It opens his heart to receive the Saviour. It is seen in every act of faith, in every holy duty, and in every effectual prayer. It calls him. It quickens him in Christ. It beautifies his soul. It crowns him with righteousness and life and glory. It contains within it the precious assurance that, “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phi 1:6). There was nothing in them which moved God to choose His people, and He so deals with them as not to permit anything in or from them as to cause Him to reverse that choice. As Romans 8:30 so definitely intimates, predestination involves glorification and therefore guarantees the supply of the elect’s every need in between the two.

The blessedness of this doctrine appears in *its essential elements*. We will single out three or four of the principal of these. First, the superlative honour of being chosen by God. In all choices, the person choosing puts a value on the chosen. To be selected by a king unto an office, or to be called to some employment by the state, how it will dignify a man. Thus it is in spiritual affairs. It was a special commendation of Titus that he had been “chosen of the churches” (2Co 8:19). But that the great God, the blessed and only Potentate, should choose such poor, contemptible, worthless, and vile creatures as we are, passes knowledge. Ponder 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, and see how this is there dwelt upon. How it should amaze us! How it should humble us. Note how this honourable emphasis is put upon the Lord Jesus, “Behold my servant, *whom I have chosen*” (Mat 12:18)—so upon His members too, “The elect’s sake, *whom he hath chosen*” (Mar 13:20).

Again—the consequent excellence of this. They are *the elect*—the ones which God has chosen, and does not high worth, honour, excellence, necessarily follow from this? The chosen of God must needs be choice—the act of God makes them so. Observe the order in 1 Peter 2:6—“chief corner stone, elect, precious”—precious because elect. Take the most eminent of God’s saints, and what is their highest title and honour? This, “For David my servant’s sake, *whom I chose*” (1Ki 11:34). “Aaron whom he had chosen” (Psa 105:26). Paul, “he is a chosen vessel unto me” (Act 9:15). “Ye are a chosen generation...a peculiar people” (1Pe 2:9), that is, elect. That expression is taken from, “Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people” (Exo 19:5). It imports that which is dear to God, “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable” (Isa 43:4).

Again—mark the fullness of such high privilege. “Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts” (Psa 65:4). Yea, he is “most blessed for ever” (Psa 21:6), or as the Hebrew has it (see margin) “set for blessings,” that is, set apart or appointed for naught but blessings. As the New Testament expresses it, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with *all spiritual blessings* in the heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in Him” (Eph 1:3-4). Election, then, is the treasure-fountain of all blessedness. The elect are chosen unto the nearest approach and union unto God that is possible for creatures, to the highest communion with Himself. Consider, too, the *time* when He chose us. Paul dates it from “the beginning” (2Th 2:13). God has loved us ever since He was God and while He *is* God He will continue to do so. God is from everlasting and He continues to be God to everlasting (Psa 90:2), and His love to us is as old, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love” (Jer 31:3). And His love is like Himself—causeless, changeless, endless.

The blessedness of election appears again in the comparative *fewness* of the elect. The paucity of men enjoying any privilege magnifies it the more, as in the case of the preservation of Noah and his family, “The ark...wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved” (1Pe 3:20). What a contrast was that from the whole world “of the ungodly,” which all perished! The same fact and contrast was emphasised by Christ in Luke 12. “For all these things do the nations of the world seek after” (Luk 12:30), that is, the things of time and sense, and God gives such to them. But in opposition thereto, the Lord says, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you *the kingdom*” (Luk 12:32). His design was to show the greater mercy of God that so few are reserved unto spiritual and eternal favours, while all others have only material and temporal things as their portion.

How this solemn fact should affect our hearts. Turn your eyes, dear reader, upon the world today, and look where you will, what do you behold? Are you not compelled to say of the present generation, in all nations alike, that God has left them to walk “in their own ways”? Must we not mournfully conclude of the men and women of this age that “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1Jo 5:19)? The sparse number that are of God are indeed thinly sown—a small handful of gleanings in comparison with the whole great crop of mankind. And let it not be forgotten that what appears now before our eyes is but the actualization of that which was foreordained in eternity. There is no disappointed and defeated God on the throne of the universe. He has *His* way “in the whirlwind and in the storm” (Nah 1:3).

And again we say how deeply should this startling contrast affect our hearts. “For a few to be singled forth and saved, when a multitude, yea, a generality of others are suffered to perish, how doth it heighten the mercy and grace of salvation to us; for God in His providence to order many outward means to deliver a few, which He denies to others who perish: how doth this affect the persons that are preserved? How much more when it is ‘so great a salvation’ ” (Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680). This appears from what were types and mere shadows of it in Old Testament times, as in the case of the one small family of Noah alone being spared from the universal deluge. So too by the example of Lot, pulled out of Sodom by the hand of angels. And why? “The Lord being merciful unto him,” says Genesis 19:16. Mark what a deep sense of and valuation upon Lot had of the same, “Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life” (Gen 19:19).

But there is this further to be considered—our being delivered from a condition of like wretchedness and wrath as pertains to the non-elect, which held not in the cases mentioned above. Noah was, “A just man and perfect in his generations” (Gen 6:9), and Lot was “righteous” and “vexed his soul with the filthy conversation of the wicked” (see 2Pe 2:7). They were not guilty of those awful sins because of which God sent the flood and fire upon their fellows. But when *we* were ordained to salvation, we lay before God in a *like condition* of corruption and guilt as all mankind are in. It was only the sovereign decree of a sovereign God which purposed our being brought out of a state of sin and wrath into a state of grace and righteousness. How stupendous, then, was the mercy of God unto *us*, in making this difference (1Co 4:7) between those in whom there was “no difference” (Rom 3:22)! O what love, what whole-hearted obedience, what praise are due unto Him!

The blessedness of this doctrine appears in that a true apprehension thereof is *a great promoter of holiness*. According to the divine purpose the elect are destined to a holy calling (2Ti 1:9). In the accomplishment of that purpose, they are actually and effectually brought to holiness. God separates them from an ungodly world. He writes upon their hearts His law and affixes to them His seal. They are made partakers of the divine nature, being renewed in the image of Him

who created them. They are an habitation of God, their bodies becoming the temple of the Holy Spirit, and they are led by Him. A glorious change is thus wrought in them, transforming their character and conduct. They wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. To them, old things are passed away and all things are become new. Forgetting the things which are behind, they press forward to the things which are before. They are kings and priests unto God, and shall yet be adorned with crowns of glory.

There are those who, in their ignorance, say that the doctrine of election is a licentious one—that a belief of it is calculated to produce carelessness and a sense of security in sin. Such a charge is a blasphemous reflection upon the divine Author of it. This truth, as we have shown at length, occupies a prominent place in the Word of God, and that Word is holy, and the whole of it profitable for instruction in *righteousness* (2Ti 3:16). The apostles one and all believed and taught this doctrine, and they were promoters of piety and not encouragers of loose living. It is true that this doctrine, like every other in Scripture, may be *perverted* by wicked men and put to an evil use, but so far from that militating against the truth, it only serves to demonstrate the fearful extent of human depravity. We also grant that unregenerate men may intellectually espouse this doctrine and then settle down into a fatalistic inertia. But we emphatically deny that a *heart* reception thereof will produce any such effect.

That faith, obedience, and holiness are the inseparable consequences and fruits of election is unmistakably clear from the Scriptures (Act 13:48; Eph 1:4; 1Th 1:4-7; Ti 1:1), and has been fully set forth by us in previous articles. How can it be otherwise? Election always involves regeneration and sanctification, and when a regenerated and sanctified soul discovers that he owes his spiritual renewal solely to the sovereign predestination of God, how can he but be truly grateful and deeply thankful? And in what other way can he express his gratitude than in a holy course of fruitful obedience? An apprehension of the everlasting love of God for him will of necessity awaken in him a responsive love to God, and wherever *that* exists, there will be a sincere effort to please Him in all things. The fact is that a spiritual sense of the distinguishing grace of God is the most powerful constraining motive unto genuine godliness.

Were we to enter into detail upon the principal elements of holiness, our article would be extended indefinitely. A due consideration of the fact that there was nothing in us which moved God to fix His heart upon us, and that He foresaw us as ruined and hell-deserving creatures, will *humble* our souls as nothing else will. A spiritual realization that all our concerns are entirely at the disposal of God, will work in us a *submission* to His sovereign will as nothing else can. A believing perception that God set His heart upon us from everlasting, choosing us to be His peculiar treasure, will work in us a *contempt of the world*. The knowledge that fellow-Christians are the elect and beloved of God will evoke love and *kindness* unto them. The assurance that God's eternal purpose is immutable and guarantees the supply of our every need will impart solid *comfort* in every trial.

THE HOLY SABBATH

7. Its Christianization

In the first section of our remarks upon the Christianization of the Sabbath (in the August issue), we confined our attention mainly to two things. First, in pointing out that the many arguments advanced for the perpetuation of the Sabbath in this dispensation (June and July

articles) cannot possibly be rendered invalid by the mere fact of a change in the day of rest—that it most certainly does not follow from the first day of the week now being the one specially hallowed for divine worship, a proper Sabbath as such no longer obtains. Second, we sought to show that a change of economy required a change in the day of Sabbath observance—if the New Covenant was to stand out with clear distinctness from the Old, then a new day of rest best accorded with and testified to the establishment of the same.

We are now to dwell more particularly on the fact that the first day of the week is the one ordained of God for the Christian Sabbath. We must ask our friends to kindly remember that these pages are read by people of varied shades of thought, some of them having been brought up under quite different teaching from what others have received, and as we desire (under God) to help one and all, we often feel obliged to take up an aspect of a subject which will not appeal to the majority, yea which may seem to them quite needless. Some of our readers have been influenced by “Seventh Day Adventism,” and we must confess that in our wide reading we have come across very little indeed which was calculated to solve their difficulties. And therefore we deem it well to enter carefully and with some detail into this point.

The old creation comprised in it the law of obedience of man unto God, this being implanted in his moral nature, which gave inclination unto the observance of it. The law of creation had a covenant inseparably annexed to it, as had also the Siniatic constitution. The immediate end of those covenants was to bring men by due obedience unto the rest of God, and as a pledge thereof and also a means of attaining it, the day of rest was instituted. All these things therefore must have a place also in the New Covenant belonging unto the new creation, the immediate end of which is our entrance into the rest of God, as the apostle proves at length in Hebrews 4. But therein we are not absolutely to enter into God’s rest as a Creator and Rewarder, but to God in Christ as *Redeemer*, the foundation of which is the work of God in the new creation, and the complete satisfaction or complacency which He finds in Christ’s atonement.

Thus it should be apparent that the particular day of the week on which the Sabbath is to be observed, resolves itself into *what covenant* we walk under before God. If the Siniatic covenant has been annulled, then of necessity the day of rest has been changed. on the other hand, to insist that the Sabbath as given to the Jews is not abolished requires us to perpetuate the whole system of Mosaic ordinances which stood on the same bottom with it. That this is not simply an inference or dogmatic assertion of ours, that it is actually a Scriptural proposition is clear from the whole argument of Hebrews 7-10. “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Heb 7:12). “The covenant being changed, the rest which was the end of it being changed, and the way of entering into God’s rest being changed, a change of the day of rest must of necessity thereon ensue” (John Owen). With these introductory remarks we now proceed to offer further proofs for the *first* day of the week being the Christian Sabbath.

First, it was *plainly adumbrated in Old Testament times*. This change in the weekly day of rest from the last to the first day of the week, that is, from the seventh to the eighth, as everything pertaining to the Christian era, was intimated under various types and shadows. The work of creation was finished in six days, and on the seventh God rested from His work, which completed a week, or the first series of time. The eighth day, then, was the first of a new series, and on that day Christ rose as the Head of the new creation. The eighth day is accordingly signaled in the Old Testament, pointing in a manner the most express to the day when Christ entered into His rest, and when in commemoration thereof His people are to rest.

Circumcision was to be administered unto children on the *eighth* day (Gen 17:12). on the *eighth* day, but not before, animals were accepted in sacrifice (Lev 22:27). on the *eighth* day the

consecration of Aaron as high priest, and his sons, after various ceremonies, was completed (Lev 9:1). on the *eighth* day was the cleansing from issues, emblematic also of sin (Lev 15:29). on the *eighth* day atonement was made for the Nazarite who was defiled (Num 6:10). When the sheaf of the firstfruits was brought to the priest, it was to be accepted on the *eighth* day (Lev 23:11)—a distinctive type of the resurrection of Christ. The *eighth* day was sanctified at the dedication of the temple (2Ch 7:9), and in its sanctification at the time of Hezekiah (2Ch 29:17).

Now, can any spiritual mind suppose for a moment that this repeated use of the eighth day, in connection with the most solemn services of God's ancient people and in a manner so conspicuous, was without a special purpose? Did not the wisdom of God single out that day for some very important end? intimating thereby an antitypical new beginning? The *eighth* day corresponds with the first day of the week, on which according to all those appointments, Christ was received as the Firstborn from the dead, His sacrifice accepted, and on which, as the great High Priest He was "consecrated for evermore," having made atonement for His people, by which they are cleansed from all sin. That purpose of God is fully developed in the New Testament, where He who is Lord of the Sabbath, without in the slightest degree changing the obligation to observe a seventh day, appropriated to Himself the first instead of the last day of the week.

Second, this change is clearly *intimated by what is recorded of the first day in the New Testament*. The alteration in the day of Sabbath rest and worship was emphasized by Christ's personal visitations to His assembled disciples on the first of the week. After His appearing to the travelers to Emmaus, the Saviour was seen no more until His mysterious and blessed manifestation in the upper room. "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you" (Joh 20:19). What is the Holy Spirit's object here in mentioning the particular day of the week? Was it not to inform us that this was now a *particular* day? Jews would understand at once what was signified by the notice that a religious "assembly" occurred on the *seventh* day, and Christians are to equally understand what is denoted by such an allusion to the *first* day.

The next detail to be noticed in the above passage is, "The doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for *fear of the Jews*." What is indicated by those words? Let it be remembered that the Lord had already "opened their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures" (see Luk 24:45), which must mean that, in a measure at least, they now knew the types had given place to the reality. We also know that, "He through the Holy Ghost had given *commandments* unto the apostles whom he had chosen: to whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs" (Act 1:2-3). What other conclusion, then, can be drawn, but that the disciples now observed the Sabbath on the first day of the week, and that they therefore took the precaution of fastening the doors because they knew how incensed the Jews would be for their departure from the ancient observance of the Sabbath on the seventh day?

Thomas was absent on the above occasion, and when he learned of its marvels, expressed strong unbelief. Throughout that week the Lord Jesus did not reappear. But when the disciples assembled again on the *first day* of the next week, Thomas being present with them, He once more stood in their midst and said, "Peace be unto you" (Joh 20:26). Is there nothing marked by that interval of time? His other interviews with them are not thus dated! Surely the fact that Christ was not seen by His disciples for a whole week, and that He then appeared to them again on the first day when they met for special worship, clearly signifies His definite sanction *of this* as the appointed day of meeting with His disciples? And is not this most expressly confirmed by the

Holy Spirit's advent at Pentecost? Most assuredly the Spirit's descent on the first day of the week crowned this ordinance and ratified the newly instituted Christian Sabbath.

Third, the first day of the week was *celebrated by the early church*. That this was how the apostles understood the matter appears from their custom, for they assembled together for the breaking of bread and the preaching of the Word "upon the first day of the week" (Act 20:7). Are we not compelled to conclude that what the apostles did, and what the churches did under their supervision, must have been done in accord with the revealed will of their divine Master? But it will be objected, if God requires the Sabbath to be duly observed on the first day of the week during this Christian dispensation, why has He not given a definite command through His apostles to that effect in the epistles? To this question we make three replies. In the first place, it savors strongly of impiety—a taking it upon ourselves to say *how* God is to make known His pleasure to us—He has other ways of declaring His will besides through express precepts.

In the second place, such a question loses sight altogether of the situation in which many of the early Christians found themselves—a situation very different from that which generally obtains today. In the first generation of the Christian era, it was quite impossible for the Sabbath to be kept with the same sacred strictness with which the Jewish Sabbath had been observed. So long as the Christian church was confined to the boundaries of Palestine, and its members were made up of Jewish believers and proselytes, as it was for some time, it was required of all the converts to continue in an exact observance of the Jewish Sabbath in compliance with the law of the land. They did, in addition, observe the Lord's day, so far as that was possible privately, but they had it not in their power to render the first day one of holy rest for all their fellows.

When the Christian church enlarged her borders and converts from the Gentiles added thereto, the Christian Sabbath had to encounter most formidable obstacles and was met by almost constant opposition. Let it also be carefully borne in mind that many of the early Gentile converts were the slaves of heathen masters, and it will at once appear how impossible it was for the church to secure anything approaching Sabbath observance, so far as that implies the setting apart of the first day from all secular interests and the devoting of it solely unto divine worship. It was therefore most merciful on God's part to lay not upon them a burden which they could not have borne. Nevertheless there is clear evidence that those early Christians devoted at least a part of the first day to special worship so far as their distressed and persecuted state rendered possible.

But in the third place, we ask, Is it true that no divine command for the sanctification of the first day is to be found in the epistles? And we reply, No, it is not. "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1Co 16:1-2). "I have given order," is certainly the language of authority and cannot be regarded as anything less than an apostolic command. It is to be duly noted that Paul "gave order" concerning not only the principle of systematic Christian giving (for the relief of indigent saints), but also stipulated the time when such collections were to be made, that being appointed for "the first day of the week." Nor was such a regulation peculiar to the church at Corinth, as is intimated by his, so "I teach every where in every church" (1Co 4:17), "so ordain I in all churches" (1Co 7:17). Moreover, he expressly tells us, "The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1Co 14:37).

"In view of this important verse, we may remark—there is here clear proof that the *first* day of the week was observed by the church at Corinth as holy time. If it were not, there can have been no propriety in selecting that day in preference to any other in which to make the collection. It was the day which was set apart to the duties of religion, and therefore an appropriate day for the

exercise of charity and the bestowment of alms. There can have been no reason why this day should have been designated except that it was a day set apart to religion, and therefore deemed a proper day for the exercise of benevolence towards others. This order extended also to the churches in Galatia, proving also that the first day of the week was observed by them, and was regarded as a day proper for the exercise of charity towards the poor and afflicted. And if the first day of the week was observed, by apostolic authority in those churches, it is morally certain that it was observed by others. This consideration, therefore, demonstrates that it was the custom to observe this day, and that it was observed by the authority of the early founders of Christianity” (Albert Barnes, 1798-1870).

It is abundantly clear, then, from this passage that the *first* day of the week was by divine authority appointed for divine worship—for this “collection” was an act of Christian fellowship. Ere passing on, it should be pointed out that the Greek which is here rendered “the first [day] of the week” is the very same expression that is employed by the four evangelists in connection with the resurrection of Christ (Mat 28:1; Mar 16:1; Luk 24:1; Joh 20:1), also in John 20:19, when He appeared to the disciples in the upper room. The word used is “sabbaton,” which means both “week” and “sabbaths.” Literally, then, it reads, “the first of *the sabbaths*,” the Holy Spirit using this particular term to denote the beginning of a new series. Thus we need not have the slightest hesitation in speaking of “The Christian Sabbath.”

The Christian Sabbath was most strikingly honoured by Christ Himself in His glorious appearing on the isle of Patmos and the prophetic revelation which He there made to His servant John. In narrating the wondrous visions which he there received, the apostle describes the time when they were given to him as, “on the Lord’s day” (Rev 1:10). Now all the days of the week are the Lord’s, but that one of them should be singled out and thus designated to distinguish it from the others, shows that *this* day is His in a *peculiar sense*, as specially devoted to His honour. It is called “the Lord’s day” for precisely the same reason that the holy feast is called “the Lord’s supper” (1Co 11:20)—the one as a memorial of His death, the other of His resurrection. This particular designation supplies further proof that He is “Lord of the sabbath” (Mar 2:28).

A number of testimonies are still extant that the Christians in the first three centuries observed the Sabbath on the first day of the week. “on the day which is called Sunday, all, whether dwelling in the towns or in the villages, hold meetings, and the memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as the time will permit. Then the reader closing, the president in a speech exhorts and incites to an imitation of those excellent examples. Then we all rise and pour forth united prayers” (Justin Martyr, in his Apology, A.D. 150). Another witness of the same era is Eusebius, “All things whatever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord’s Day, as more appropriately belonging to it, because it has a precedence, and is first in rank, and more honourable than the Jewish Sabbath. It is delivered to us that we should meet together on this day,” (Comments on Psalm 92).

A TENDER HEART

“Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place...I also have heard thee, saith the LORD” (2Ki 22:19). This was part of the message which God sent in response to an inquiry made by the godly king Josiah. It occurred at a time when the earthly people of God had sunken very low—so low that

“the book of the law” had been lost and was only then recovered (2Ki 22:8). The sacred Book was read in the hearing of the king, and so deeply was he affected by its solemn message, “He rent his clothes” (2Ki 22:11). As he learned of the greatness of JEHOVAH’s wrath, which was kindled against his subjects, Josiah sent messengers to inquire of the Lord. The answer was that sore judgment would certainly fall upon Jerusalem, but that the king would be removed from this world before the storm of divine wrath should burst.

That the above is recorded for our instruction scarcely needs to be pointed out, and deeply important and valuable are the lessons illustrated thereby. It tells us that the one with whom we have to do takes cognizance of the state of our hearts. It reveals to us the fact that God’s dealings with us in providence are regulated—in part, at least—by the state of our hearts. It announces to us that a *tender heart* is of great price in the sight of the Lord. It makes evident that the tenderness of Josiah’s heart was the reason why divine judgment did not fall upon his kingdom in his own lifetime. It presents to us the startling and blessed spectacle of a man with a tender heart at a time when spirituality was at its lowest ebb in Israel. It makes clear to us what are the marks or characteristics of a tender heart.

What an excellent thing, then, is a “tender heart.” What delight it gives unto the Lord. Why certainly, for it is the product of His own handiwork. By nature the heart of fallen man is very far from being “tender” *Godwards*, for *that* is what was denoted in the case of Josiah. No, sad to say, it is the very opposite—so far as the Lord is concerned, the heart of every descendant of Adam is hard, callous, stubborn, and defiant. Before it can become tender, a miracle of *grace* needs to be wrought upon it. It is to this the words of the prophet refer, “I will put a new spirit within you[them]; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh” (Eze 11:19). Whatever be the future application of these words to the nation of Israel, the substance of them is most assuredly made good every time a soul is truly born again.

A “tender heart,” then, stands in direct antithesis from a hard one. It is the opposite of a heart of *stone*, which is cold, lifeless, not responsive. It is a spiritual, a supernatural thing. We stress this because some confuse with it the workings of natural conscience. There are not a few who mistake the fluctuations of natural conscience for a heart made tender in the fear of the Lord, and in this age of superficiality this is scarcely to be wondered at. There are plenty of unregenerate people who have consciences that are—in certain directions—very alert and active—witness the deluded Roman Catholics who would not dream of eating any animal meat during “lent,” yet these very people have no compunction in worshipping images of wood and stone. Verily such religionists “strain at a gnat and swallow a camel” (Mat 23:24). Such is man the world over until and unless sovereign grace is pleased to bestow upon him a tender heart.

Natural conscience is intensely superstitious. It is most punctilious over self-inflicted austerities, and most watchful against violating self-imposed rules—yet it will commit sins which one who has the fear of God in his heart would not be willingly guilty of for gold or rubies. On the other hand, the very same conscience will stumble over the veriest trifles, regarding which, one who is enlightened by God and regulated by His Word would not feel the least scruple about. Natural conscience will “pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin,” while it omits “the weightier matters of the law” (Mat 23:23). It will refuse to enter Pilate’s judgment hall, “lest it should be defiled” (see Joh 18:28), and that, at the very time when its possessors were venting their hatred against the Christ of God. Thus the distinction between the superstitious workings of conscience in the natural man and the activities of a “tender heart” in the child of God is clear-cut, and there is no excuse for confusing the one with the other.

A heart which has been made tender in the fear of God is one which moves as the Holy Spirit works upon it—moves not away from but toward the one whom the Spirit is here to glorify, for the divine will is its orbit. “It is like the mariner’s compass, which having been once touched by the magnet, always turns toward the North. It may indeed oscillate and tremble backwards and forwards, but still it will return to the pole, and ultimately remain fixed at the point whence it was temporarily disturbed. So when the heart has been touched by the Spirit, and has been made tender in God’s fear, it may for a time waver to the right hand or to the left, but it is always trembling and fluctuating till it points toward God, as the eternal center of its happiness and holiness” (The Gospel Pulpit, 1843).

Let us now be a little more specific. A “tender heart” is not only one of divine production and is the opposite of a hard and unregenerate heart, but it is a *sensitive* one—just as a tender plant is exceedingly sensitive to chilly winds and biting frosts. A heart that is tender in the fear of God shrinks from all sin and makes conscience of the same. So long as it retains its tenderness, it firmly refuses to trifle with that which the wicked make a sport of. It shuns the very appearance of evil and hates the garment spotted by the flesh. Its earnest and constant prayer is, “Lead me not unto temptation, but deliver me from evil.” Because it is so sensitive, it trembles at the Word of God (Isa 66:2), for His holy awe is upon that soul. Consequently, it deems the contents of that Word far too sacred to be made the subject of carnal jangling and argument.

A tender heart is one which has a deep concern for the glory of God and the welfare of His kingdom. Superlatively was this exemplified by the Lord Jesus Christ, who so thoroughly absorbed with the honour of His Father and the furtherance of His cause on earth, His own interests and aggrandizement were completely swallowed up in magnifying the one who had sent Him. And the same principle is found in each of His followers, though with vastly different degrees of manifestation. The tender heart is one in which the love of God is shed abroad, and just so far as that is allowed to dominate and regulate do we seek to please Him. Consequently, a tender heart is one which is deeply grieved, touched to the quick, by everything which dishonours his best Friend—whether it be seen in others or discovered in himself. What more tender than the eye and what so sensitive to a foreign substance!

A “tender heart” is pliant. The heart of the unregenerate is likened unto “the nether millstone” (Job 41:24), but that which is wrought upon by the Holy Spirit resembles wax—receptive to His impressions upon it. The stony heart is impervious to pleadings and threatenings alike, but the tender heart is amenable and responsive to the divine call. Man in his natural state says with Pharaoh, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?” (Exo 5:2), but one which has been supernaturally quickened asks, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Act 9:6). The more tender the plant, the more readily it lends itself to being trained or twined around an upright stake. So it is with the child of God. In his “first love” he freely yields himself unto God as one that is alive from the dead and his members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom 6:13). This tenderness and pliability of heart is evidenced by its possessor humbling himself before God—as was clearly the case with Josiah (2Ki 22:19).

A tender heart is *conscientious*. It makes its possessor diligent in the performance of duty. If an employer, he will not oppress and be a hard taskmaster, but be just, and considerate, knowing that he also has a Master in heaven. If an employee, he will not shirk his work, but will do it with all his might whatsoever his hand findeth to do, with good will, “as to the Lord” (Eph 6:7). It makes its possessor careful in heeding the divine exhortations and warnings. He lays to heart such a word as, “Take us the foxes, the *little* foxes, that spoil the vines” (Song 2:15). How tender we are of our eye—no matter how tiny the particle of grit which enters and irritates, we quickly and

diligently seek to extract it—equally zealous is a tender heart to remove whatever endangers spiritual fruitfulness.

It makes its possessor considerate of the rights and needs of his fellows. He will not take advantage of kindness nor disregard the welfare of those about him. He will deny himself rather than callously ignore the comfort of his neighbours. When he sees one in dire distress he will not pass by on the other side, but go and endeavour to relieve him. A heart which is tender Godwards is never hard and cruel manwards.



October

SPIRITUAL NURSES

“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children” (1Th 2:7). What a delightful figure did the apostle here employ, and how blessedly it depicts the duties of the minister’s office in connection with one section of those who are committed to his charge. Unto those who are but babes in Christ he sustains the relationship of a nurse. What wisdom, what tenderness, what patience this calls for. His infantile charges are to be fed with the pure milk of the Word. Care has to be taken that they get plenty of *rest*, and not pressed into “service” for which they are utterly unfit. How beautifully this is brought out in Isaiah 40:11, where we behold the Good Shepherd carrying the “lambs” in His arms. What a lesson is there pointed for all His undershepherds to deal with the little ones as such, nourishing and tending to them.

But there comes a time when we *outgrow* the need for nurses, and it is just as harmful for those reaching the age of adolescence to be treated as though they were still in the nursery, as it would be if infants were forced to attempt tasks suited only to adults. We never tire of calling attention to some of the many ways in which the natural adumbrates the spiritual, for simple and obvious though this is, yet it is surprising how often the lessons to be learned therefrom are overlooked. During the first few months of our earthly existence, we were entirely dependent upon the ministrations of others, being quite incapable of doing anything for ourselves. Even when learning to walk, other hands had to support us. But would it not be pathetic if such were the case with us *now*?

It is lamentable when a boy in his teens is still tied to his mother’s apron strings. Yet is it not equally deplorable for those who have been Christians many years to be tied to their minister’s apron strings? Yet how often we witness this very thing. There is a certain class who seem to be afraid, or at any rate unwilling, to think for themselves—to search the Scriptures for themselves, and act accordingly—and we suspect that in many cases the preacher is as much to be blamed as they are. It is true that he is their teacher, and as such he should possess a wider and deeper knowledge of spiritual things than they have. Yet is it not his duty to instruct them—to familiarize themselves with God’s Word, and thus become qualified to, “*Prove* all things; hold fast that which is good” (1Th 5:21)? In other words, the preacher is not to be a nurse unto them all their lives.

It has long been our conviction that the preacher who is really of greatest service to his people is the one who makes them most independent of creature help and casts them back directly upon God Himself. For souls to run to their pastor every time they are in trouble, or look to him to solve all their spiritual problems, is virtually to give him the same place in their lives as the deluded Papists accord their “priests.” This is not only to rob God of His glory, but also retards their spiritual progress. It is with God Himself I most need to deal, and any man who comes

between me and the Lord is really a hindrance, no matter how good his intentions may be. Moreover, the preacher is human, and therefore liable to err—but God is omniscient and never misdirects. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask *of God*” (Jam 1:5).

Some time ago we had a letter from one of our readers to say she was much perturbed over the matter of baptism and asking us to communicate our own views thereon. We answered by saying that while we rejoiced to learn she was exercised upon this important ordinance, yet we were disappointed that *our* opinion had been asked for. We stated that if we gave it, it could not be of any real value to her—that she had the same Bible to consult that we had, and urged her to prayerfully study the New Testament and act thereon—taking no man’s word or advice. We knew that what we had said would be a real test, and that if she belonged to that hyper-sensitive class which is so numerous today, she would be offended. But committing the matter to the Lord, we counted upon Him to be so overruling that He would be glorified and she satisfied.

Our inquirer thanked us for our letter, saying, “I absolutely concur with you that it would not help me for you to answer my question regarding immersion. I must search the Word prayerfully, and be entirely obedient to that light God gives me...You must agree it is hard for a young Christian to know *what* the Word teaches (humanly speaking) when one spiritual man of God teaches that it says one thing, and another apparently equally spiritually-minded man teaches from the Word the opposite.” To which we replied, “Yes, my dear friend, I freely grant that it is far from easy to ascertain what God’s Word teaches while we practically shut ourselves up to hearing or reading what is now being given out by those claiming to be ‘Bible Teachers.’ Yea, I go so far as to say that it is impossible—nothing but confusion can be the result.”

Sooner or later there comes a time in the lives of most real Christians when those words, “Cease ye from man” (Isa 2:22) are applied to their hearts in divine power. This will not mean that they now refuse to hear God’s servants or read their writings, but that they will no longer place the same blind confidence in their teachers as the Papists do in their priests. Instead, they will emulate the Bereans, who did not mechanically accept what they heard even from the lips of the apostles, but “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Act 17:11). This is what our young friend did, and in her last letter she was able to tell us that the Lord had made clear her duty and she had been Scripturally baptized. How happy she was that her faith stood not “in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1Co 2:5). She added, “I can perceive well how the man who throws me back upon the Lord Himself helps me the most.” Spiritual nurses have their place, but they become a snare when we fail to outgrow their need.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

12. The Law and Oaths—Matthew 5:33-37

The subject which is now to engage our attention is hardly one that is likely to appeal very strongly to the average reader, probably because it treats of matters which rarely engage his mind. Yet the very fact that the Lord Jesus gave the same something more than a passing notice in His first formal sermon should indicate to us that it is one which we cannot afford to ignore. The Son of God did not waste time on trivialities nor make public deliverances on technicalities devoid of practical value. No, rather did He concern Himself with vital matters that directly affected the glory of God and concerned the eternal welfare of immortal souls. It is therefore a slighting of His honour and impugning of His wisdom if we refuse to attentively weigh and prayerfully consider

His teaching on the subject of oaths. Nor is this the only occasion on which He brought it to the notice of His congregations. As we shall see, in Matthew 23, He returned to the theme and spoke at greater length thereon.

Some one has said, "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise," but such a silly statement savors more of insanity than perspicuity and prudence. Blissful ignorance is often highly dangerous, and in connection with the things of God, fatal. "My people are *destroyed* for lack of knowledge" (Hos 4:6) said the Lord of old. True, knowledge itself will not always deter from sin, but often it serves as a salutary restraint. It is much to be feared that millions of the present generation, who are guilty of the crimes which Christ here condemned, are totally ignorant of their great wickedness in this matter. Nothing is more prevalent today, among all classes, than cursing and swearing, and it is high time that both the pulpit and the press sound a loud and solemn warning thereon.

The deep importance of our subject may further be intimated by pointing out that it is essentially bound up with a right understanding and observance of the third of the Ten Commandments. It is therefore basic and vital, for the curse of God rests upon all transgressors of His law. If the reader will take the trouble to examine a good concordance on the words "oaths," "swear," and "vow," he may be surprised to find how many scores of passages there are speaking thereof. Finally, when it is seen that the rightful taking of an oath is an act of *worship*, we may then more clearly perceive the momentousness and value of our present inquiry, for it deeply concerns us all to be Scripturally regulated on anything which has to do with the worship of God, and it behooves us to spare no effort in seeing to it that our worship be performed in a manner which will meet with divine approval and acceptance.

"Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication, be Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Mat 5:33-37). At this time we propose to make only a few expository and explanatory remarks on our passage, and then devote the remainder of our space unto a topical treatment of the whole subject.

"Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths" (Mat 5:33). It is almost ludicrous to see what shifts many of the commentators have put themselves to in their efforts to identify this statement of Christ's with one or more of the Mosaic statutes, ending with the confession that His actual words cannot be found anywhere in the Old Testament, and supposing that He here epitomized the teaching of the law thereon. Such confusion is inexcusable and such an explanation most unwarrantable. The fact is that our Lord does not here refer to the divine precepts at all, but instead to the Jews' perversion of them. He pursues identically the same order in these verses as He had followed in the preceding sections. First, He mentions the pharisaic corruption of the divine law, and then sets forth the character of that righteousness which He requires from the citizens of His kingdom on the matter under discussion.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Exo 20:7). Here is the original and fundamental law concerning oaths, with which we may also link, "Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name" (Deu 6:13). Thus an oath was a solemn appeal to the dread name of JEHOVAH, which, by awaking the spirit of the swearer to a consciousness of the

awe-inspiring presence and cognizance of the Most High, gave all its sanctity and power to it. And then, when anyone *had* so sworn, there was the solemn warning that the Lord would not hold him guiltless that took His name in vain. Thus it is quite clear that Israelites were permitted to swear by the name of the Lord, but having once done so, they must not change their minds nor in any way fail to keep their promise.

It is striking to note that when the psalmist delineated the character of him who was fitted to “abide in the LORD’s tabernacle” and “dwell in his holy hill” (i.e., commune with God and enjoy His presence forever), that one of the marks specified is, “He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not” (Psa 15:1, 4)—that is, who at no cost will go back upon his sworn word. It is therefore obvious from these passages that the Mosaic law had a strong tendency to check the practice of oath-taking and to restrict the same unto solemn occasions. The interested reader may also consult such passages as Exodus 22:11-12; Leviticus 5:1, 19:12; Numbers 5:19-21.

But the Jewish doctors had found ways of perverting the divine statutes, and the Pharisees had perpetuated and added to their corruptions. From the language used by Christ on this occasion, we have no difficulty in ascertaining the nature of their errors and evil practices. First, it is clear from Matthew 5:33, that they had unwarrantably *restricted* the Mosaic precepts upon oaths to the single prohibition against perjury. They drew the wicked inference that there was no evil in any oath, at any time, provided a man did not foreswear himself. Thus they opened wide the door for men to multiply oaths on any matter and every trivial occasion.

Not only was perjury severely condemned by the Mosaic law, but any vain and *needless* use of the name of God in our ordinary communications was strictly prohibited. No man ought voluntarily to take an oath unless it be in a matter of controversy and the contention cannot be settled without it, “For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife” (Heb 6:16). But the Pharisees had so wrested the law, they taught that so long as men swore truthfully as to matters of fact and performed their vows in case of promise, all was well. They seem to have had no conscience of swearing *lightly*. In order for an oath to be lawful, it requires not only that the affirmation be true and the vows performed, but that such a mode of affirmation or vowing be *necessary*.

Second, it is equally plain from Christ’s words in Matthew 5:34-36 that the Jews had wrested the third commandment by inventing the idea of swearing *by the creature*. Aiming to ingratiate themselves with men by pandering to their corruptions—for it is ever the way of all false teachers to accommodate the truth to the blindness and lusts of their dupes—the scribes devised a means whereby men might swear without the guilt of perjury although they swore ever so falsely, and this was to swear not by the name of God, but by the heavens or the earth, by Jerusalem or the temple. They made a distinction between oaths: according to them, some were binding, others were not—the obligation of an oath depending upon the nature of the object by which the person swore (Mat 23:16).

It is not difficult to see why such a device was resorted to by the leaders or why it should be so popular with their followers. The law was very definite, “Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear *by his name*” (Deu 6:13). To swear in the name of the Lord was not only ordained for the placing of a solemn bridle upon fallen man’s proneness to lying, but also to restrain the act itself unto serious matters and important occasions. Hence, this invention of swearing by some inanimate object removed the very awe with which an oath should be invested and surrounded. Yet one can readily perceive how easily those hypocrites could cloak their wickedness—pretending such veneration for God that His name must not be used by the people.

Philo taught, “It is a sin and a vanity presently to run to God or the Maker of all things, and to swear *by Him*: it is lawful to swear by our parents, by heaven, and the stars.”

Third, it is equally obvious from our Lord’s words in Matthew 5:37 that the Jews had been encouraged and permitted to make use of oaths *lightly* and commonly in their ordinary conversation. This would logically and inevitably follow upon the second evil to which we have just referred, for such a device was not only dishonest and demoralizing in itself, but it was sure to bring about an utter disregard of the third commandment, for since such oaths (where the name of God was omitted) would be lightly esteemed, men would be inclined to resort unto oaths upon almost any matter or occasion. “With the exception of oaths by the gold of the temple and by the sacrifices of the altar—which, for some selfish or superstitious reason, they held to be binding—they appear to have thought that to swear by any created thing was a very little consequence, involved no obligation, and might be done in common conversation without sin” (John Brown, 1784-1858).

“But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth; for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King” (Mat 5:34-35). In these verses and in the two which immediately follow, our Lord protests against the erroneous teachings and corrupt practices of the scribes and Pharisees. Let it be clearly understood that all of the things prohibited by our Saviour in this sermon were in themselves, and also by virtue of the law of God, antecedently *evil* and unlawful. Most certainly He is not here pitting Himself against any of the Mosaic precepts—rather was He restoring them to their *original place*, purity, and power. It was the pharisaic veil of religious hypocrisy which Christ rent asunder, exposing the corruptness of their traditions and denouncing the soul-ruining sins into which the great body of the people had been drawn.

Let any of the immediately preceding sections of this sermon be considered, and it will at once be found that the particulars there mentioned by Christ were things which were wrong in themselves, and declared so in the positive law of God. Was it not gross wickedness to be angry with a brother without cause, and to call him “Raca and fool”? Was it not exceedingly sinful to look upon a woman so as to lust after her? In like manner, what is here prohibited by Christ in His, “Swear not at all,” is not the legitimate taking of an oath in law courts, nor even between man and man so as to end a controversy, but rather that which was directly opposed to the Mosaic statutes, yet practiced and supported by the false interpretations of the law by the Pharisees.

“But I say unto you, Swear not at all” (Mat 5:34). This injunction of Christ’s supplies another example of the need for careful interpretation of the language of Scripture. Not a few good men have been misled here by the mere sound of words, failing to ascertain their real sense. By taking the prohibition absolutely, instead of relatively, they have certainly erred. This verse also shows us the importance of comparing Scripture with Scripture, for it is quite clear not only from the Old Testament, but from many passages in the New, that in certain circumstances and when they are ordered by the rules of God’s Word, oaths *are lawful*, yea necessary—we shall discuss this at more length next month (D.V.). But we do not have to go outside the bounds of our present passage to find that Christ did not intend His prohibition to be taken without any limitations. He Himself qualified it, first, by forbidding us to swear by any creature, and second, by reprehending all oaths in our ordinary conversation.

Had His, “Swear not at all,” meant that He here forbade all oaths, in any form and under every circumstance, it was needless to add anything more, and in such a case what is found in the next two verses would simply be a multiplying of words to no purpose. Instead, Christ proceeded to amplify and explain His prohibition, and at the same time expose the sophistry of the Pharisees’

devices and show wherein lay the sinfulness of the same. They had invented a method of swearing which they supposed would clear the oath-taker from incurring the guilt of breaking the third commandment, and that was to swear by some creature, instead of doing so in the sacred name of the Lord God. *This* it was which Christ was here reproving and in so doing He once more revealed to us the exceeding “breadth” of the divine commandments (Psa 119:96).

“Swear not at all: neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth; for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King” (Mat 5:34-35). Here Christ made it plain that by no subtle subterfuge can men escape the solemn responsibility of an oath. Though they may omit mentioning the fearful name of God, yet let them know that His is the name of Creator and Owner of all things, and therefore it is invoked in all the works of His hands. If men swear by “heaven,” as the Pharisees recommended, let them duly bear in mind that *that* is God’s “throne,” and so it is really Himself that they summon as a witness to their integrity. If men swear by “the earth,” that is God’s “footstool,” and he who swears by it, swears by the God whose footstool it is. If by “Jerusalem,” that was the Capitol, the seat of His worship.

“Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black” (Mat 5:36). A swearing by any creature necessarily implies an appeal unto God Himself, because of its relation to Him. The whole universe is the Lord’s, and therefore to swear by any part of it, is a reference unto its august Maker and Ruler. If we swear by our “head,” that, too, has been given us by God and is His far more than it is ours. God has made it and has the sole disposing of it—a statement easily proven—for you are incapable of changing the colour of a single hair on it! An oath by your head, if it has any meaning at all, is an oath to the universal Proprietor. Every oath, because it *is* an oath, is an ultimate reference to deity. Man’s inability to really change the colour of his hair is here brought in by Christ to demonstrate that he has no power over his head. If, then, man has no power over the least creature (a hair!), then how unlawful and ridiculous it is for him to swear by any creature!

“But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Mat 5:37). In these words Christ makes further amplification of His “Swear not at all,” and lays down an important rule which is binding upon all. “Your communication” means your everyday dealings with your fellows, particularly your common speech or conversation. Thousands of things are true, which yet it would be profaning the name of God to swear to. Christ was not here referring to judicial transactions at all, but to the ordinary intercourse of men with each other. “He did not censure His followers from what was said before a magistrate, but for what passed in their ordinary communications: that is, light and unnecessary oaths. This was a sin so prevalent among the Jews that even Christians who were called from among them stood in need of being warned against it, James 5:12” (Andrew Fuller, 1754-1815).

“Swear not at all....but let your communications be Yea, yea; Nay, nay” (Mat 5:33, 37). In its particular application to His own people, Christ here struck at the root of the special evils He was now condemning, by demanding from His followers veracity in every word. It was as though He said, I not only forbid you to swear falsely, but to swear at all—in your common speech. What need should there be for *you* to swear?—you who are disciples of Him who is “the truth”! As the followers of the Holy one, you must speak the truth in every utterance of your lips. Your character and conduct is to be such that all acquainted with you have the assurance that your word is your bond. If your communications are “yea” in the promise and “yea” in the performance, then there will be no need for you to appeal to God in witness of your veracity. Alas that the standard now set by the vast majority of professing Christians is so very far beneath this, and that the word of many of them is often worth less than that of those who make no profession at all.

“Whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil”—that is, anything savouring of an oath, or even extravagant avowals in our ordinary conversations, are sinful in the sight of God.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

94. *His Fervent Praise*

“And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Arauna the Jebusite. And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded” (2Sa 24:18-19). Here we behold David’s trustful and thankful acceptance of the mercy vouchsafed him. He received not the grace of God in vain, but complied promptly with His revealed will. To unbelief it would seem too good to be true that God’s displeasure was now appeased, but faith laid hold of the prophet’s word, knowing that an “altar” spoke of propitiation and acceptance. And this is ever the way with those who have truly repented of their sins and humbled themselves before the Lord. Satan may seek to persuade them that they have transgressed beyond the hope of forgiveness, but sooner or later the heart of the Christian will turn again to the Antitypical Altar, and overcome the adversary with the blood of the Lamb (Rev 12:11).

How different, for the moment, was the attitude of Ornan, “And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him *hid* themselves” (1Ch 21:20). This is in direct contrast and presents to us a most important truth. on the one hand, the case of Ornan terror-stricken with the sight of the destroying angel, tells us that no flesh can stand naked, as in its own resources, before the Lord. on the other hand, David here exemplified the fact that penitent sinners may confidently draw near to Him in the power of simply believing in His wondrous grace. At this time the greatness of God’s mercy had not been revealed to Ornan—he knew nothing of the “altar” that was to be set up in his threshingfloor, and therefore, as nakedly a creature in the sight of God—as Adam before Him in such a case—he hid himself.

But David *had* had revealed to him the remedy, which mercy rejoicing against judgment had provided, and therefore he hesitated not. Though shamed and humbled, he immediately responded to Gad’s message, and “went *up*”—significant word (cf. Gen 13:1, etc.)—delivered from the mire into which he had fallen. The angel’s “sword,” *still unsheathed*, had no alarms for him now, for he goes to the very place where he stood (1Ch 21:16)! Is not this remarkable? the very spectacle which filled Ornan with fear, had no terror for David. Believing, he was neither ashamed nor confounded. Consequently we see in his action here no disturbance of the flesh, but all is quietness and assurance as he rested on the Word of God. What a lesson is there here for our needy hearts. Alas, what cowards we are! What trifles we allow to frighten us. O for more confidence in the living God, more reliance upon His promises—less occupation with what intimidates the flesh.

“And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshingfloor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground” (1Ch 21:21). Let us not lose sight of the blessed humility of David here—ever a prominent spiritual grace in his character and conduct. Does the reader perceive to what we now call attention? It is this—David did not treat with Ornan mediately, through one of his underlings, but *directly*. Was not this in perfect keeping with the “sackcloth?” He still took the place of humility. Ah, dear friends, it is the emptied vessel which God fills. Rightly did Matthew Henry (1662-1714) declare, “Great men will

never be less respected for their humility, but the more.” Those who are self-important and pompous only display their littleness and meanness.

“And Araunah [Ornan] said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To *buy* the threshingfloor of thee, to build an altar unto the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people” (2Sa 24:21). Here we behold David as the *righteous* one. Though he was a king, and though he had received commandment from the Lord to build an altar at this particular place, nevertheless he insisted upon making fair payment to this man, even though a Gentile. This is ever a mark of true spirituality—those who walk with God, are honourable in dealing with their fellowmen. “Owe no man any thing” (Rom 13:8) is a necessary application of, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mat 22:39). Neither high office nor pressure of circumstances can justify one in taking an unfair advantage of another. Nothing lower than “in all things willing to *live honestly*” (Heb 13:18) must be the Christian’s standard. Those who attended Christ most closely during the days of His public ministry, neither imposed upon the kindness of others nor begged favours, but *bought* their food (Joh 4:8).

“And Araunah [Ornan] said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and other instruments of the oxen for wood” (2Sa 24:22). The language of 1 Chronicles 21:23 is yet more definite, “Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I *give* thee the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it *all*.” What noble generosity was this! But we prefer to look at Araunah’s liberality from the divine side—when anyone befriends us, we should ever discern *the Lord’s* prompting such kindness. But what we would particularly emphasize now is that here we have another illustration of the principle that when God works, he always works at *both ends* of the line. He who wrought in David a readiness to comply with His request, was the same as now moved Araunah to meet him more than half way. If He sends Elijah to Zarephath, He makes a widow willing to share her portion with him. There is great encouragement in this if faith lays hold of the same. If God continues to grant us messages, He will continue to prepare hearts to receive them.

“All these things did Araunah [Ornan], as a king, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee” (2Sa 24:23). Some have drawn the conclusion from these words that Araunah [Ornan] himself was of royal stock, for the Jebusites were the original owners of Zion (2Sa 5:6-9), but there is nothing else in Scripture to support this view. Rather do we understand our verse to signify that Ornan acted with royal generosity. A most laudable contention it was between a good king and a good subject. Since it was to David, and since it was for the Lord, Araunah would not sell, but *give*. on the other side, David, since it was for the Lord, would not take, but *pay*. So far from his words, “The LORD thy God accept thee” (2Sa 24:23) denoting that he was not himself a believer in and worshipper of JEHOVAH (as if an idolater had been permitted to dwell on mount Zion!) they evidence that Araunah was possessed of faith and spiritual intelligence.

“And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing” (2Sa 24:24). Here again we should view things from the standpoint of the divine workings. God’s moving Araunah [Ornan] to act so magnanimously afforded David an opportunity to display his devotedness to the Lord. A gracious heart will not serve God with that which costs him nothing, nor will he deem that true piety which involves no sacrifice. This is the fruit of *faith*. Carnal nature begrudges everything, and says with Judas, “To what purpose is this waste?” (Mat 26:8).

but faith will not withhold from God its Isaac (Heb 11:17). It is also the fruit of *love*, which deems nothing too good for the Lord—witness the woman with her precious spikenard. The denial of self and the mortification of his lusts are the unfailing marks of a genuine saint. How these words of David need to be laid to heart in this flesh-pleasing age!

“So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver” (2Sa 24:24). As usual, infidels have called attention to the “discrepancy” in 1 Chronicles 21, where we are told, “So David gave to Ornan [Araunah] for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight” (1Ch 24:25). But two different things are in view. Samuel mentions David buying the threshingfloor and the oxen, whereas Chronicles refers to his purchase of “the place,” which probably signifies the whole of his land—which afterwards become the extensive site for the temple. It is to be noticed that for the former David paid in “silver,” which speaks of *redemption*, whereas for the latter he gave “gold,” the emblem of *divine glory*. Spiritually speaking, we do not learn the value of the “gold,” until we are experimentally acquainted with the “silver.” The amount of the gold was twelve times as great as that of the silver, showing this was for the complete number of Israel’s tribes and typifying the entire body of Christ.

“And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings” (2Sa 24:25). This supplies the final line to our typical picture, for here we behold David as the accepted worshipper. “Accepted” we say, for 1 Chronicles 21 tells us that the Lord, “answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering” (1Ch 21:26), which announced that his sacrifice had been received on high (cf. Lev 9:24; 1Ki 18:38-39; 2Ch 7:1-3). Thus does the God of all grace delight to honour those who confide in Him, by granting tokens of His approbation. But note well the *strength* of David’s faith and the heartiness of his thanksgiving—he offered on that altar not only burnt offerings, but peace offerings as well. Now the “peace offering” spoke of *communion*, for (while the burnt offering was wholly-consumed upon the altar) *this* was shared in by God, all the males of the priesthood, and that of the offerer himself (Lev 7:6, 15)—each had their portion.

“And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof” (1Ch 21:27). “So the LORD was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel” (2Sa 24:25). What a remarkable *ending* is this to the second book of Samuel! The atoning sacrifice appeasing the just displeasure of God, the erring one restored to full communion with Him, and the discovery made to David of the place where the temple was to be built, and the worship of Israel subsequently to be carried on. Sorrow was turned into joy for all who had their portion of the peace offerings that day. What thoughts must then have occupied their hearts as they partook of that sacrifice according to divine appointment. They feasted on the very offering which God had accepted. Second Samuel, then, closes by showing us David *in full fellowship with the Lord*. What a blessed foreshadowment of eternity! How it reminds us of the closing words of the parable of the prodigal son, “Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry” (Luk 15:23)!

In addition to the two historical accounts furnished us by 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21, Psalm 30 (composed very shortly afterwards) throws further light on the exercises of David’s heart at that time. As Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) pointed out in his introductory remarks upon Psalm 30, “A Psalm and Song at the Dedication of the House of David, or rather, A Psalm: a Song of Dedication for the House By David.” It is “A song of *faith* since the house of JEHOVAH, here intended, David never lived to see. A Psalm of *praise*, since a sore judgment had been stayed and a great sin forgiven.” The translation and punctuation of the title to this thirtieth Psalm is definitely settled for us by David’s own words in 1 Chronicles 22, “Then David

said, This is the house of the LORD God [referring to Araunah's threshingfloor], and this the altar of the burnt offering for Israel" (1Ch 22:1).

"I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me" (Psa 30:1). This Psalm is a "song" and not a complaint. An experimental realization of the joy of deliverance, contrasted from previous anguish, is its characteristic note. The "foes" to which David refers are to be understood as evil spirits as well as Satan's serfs among men—they are ever ready to rejoice at the falls, griefs, and chastisements of those who fear God. For having recovered him from his fall and thus saving him from utter embarrassment before his enemies, David praised God.

"O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit" (Psa 30:2-3). It is beautiful to see how David referred to Him according to His covenant title, for as we pointed out last month, it was in His covenant faithfulness that JEHOVAH caused the desolating pestilence to cease. David's, "I cried unto thee" tells of the acuteness of his distress. He was too agitated to *pray*, yet he poured out his soul unto Him who understands the language of inarticulate groans. So desperate had been his plight, and so signal the Lord's intervention in mercy, David felt as one who had been recovered from the dead.

"Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness. For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psa 30:4-5). It was not only in mercy but in holiness God had acted, as His bidding David to erect an altar clearly evidenced. Does not the psalmist teach us here a much-needed lesson? How often we praise the Lord for His goodness, His long-sufferance, His restoring grace, but how rarely we bless Him for His *holiness*, which is chief among His perfections! David found cause for rejoicing in the brevity of the divine judgment—the plague had lasted but a few hours, but His favour is life everlasting. What a mercy it is that His chastisements (even if continued to the end of our earthly course) are but "for a moment" (2Co 4:17), in contrast from the eternity of bliss which awaits His beloved.

"And in my *prosperity* I said, I shall never be moved, LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled" (Psa 30:6-7). How clearly this confirms the exposition we gave, tracing back David's folly in numbering the people to the *pride* of his heart. Here is plainly revealed to us the secret of his sad fall. It is true that he had not attributed the success of his arms to anything in himself, or his men, but rather had freely ascribed the victories to the Lord's favour (2Sa 22:1, 48-50), yet he fondly imagined that God had made his kingdom invincible, one that would never be overthrown. And the Lord had hidden His face, as He always does when we forsake the place of conscious weakness and dependency upon Him. And poor David was "troubled"—brought to confusion and dismay, for no "mountain," however firm, can yield a saint satisfaction when the smile of JEHOVAH's countenance is concealed from him. What a warning is there here for us against cherishing a sense of carnal security!

"I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication" (Psa 30:8). "Prayer is the unfailing resource of God's people. If they are driven to their wits' end, they may still go to the mercy-seat. When an earthquake makes our mountain tremble, the throne of grace still stands firm, and we may come to it" (C. H. Spurgeon). on a former occasion at Ziklag, when David was deeply distressed, for the people had spoken of stoning him, he had "encouraged himself in the LORD his God" (1Sa 30:6), so now he sought for refuge in God and the divine faithfulness failed him not. Not in vain do believers commit themselves into the hands of the Lord.

“What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth? Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper” (Psa 30:9-10). The intensity of David’s sufferings are plainly discovered to us here. Outwardly he was clothed in sackcloth, but that was a feeble expression of his inward anguish. As the king of Israel, it had specially devolved upon him to honour the divine statutes, but he had broken them and caused his subjects to do so too. Just retribution had fallen upon his kingdom. Plaintively does he plead with JEHOVAH—would his death promote God’s cause on earth? would it issue in divine adoration? Let then mercy rejoice against judgment.

“Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever” (Psa 30:11-12). Here is further proof (if any be needed) that this thirtieth Psalm treats of the same period of David’s life as is before us in 2 Samuel 24. And a grand finale do its closing verses supply. David had begged God to be gracious unto him, and He was gracious. Such wondrous mercy made “glory” vocal with the voice of ceaseless thanksgiving, for GLORY is to be the dwellingplace of redeemed and rescued sinners—those who have, like David, proven for themselves the greatness and sufficiency of the Lord’s mercies. “I will give thanks unto thee forever”—such will be our employ in glory, and all because of the *Sacrifice*. Verses 11 and 12 are true of Christ Himself and therefore of the members of His body also.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

11. Its Opposition

Wherever the doctrine of election is Scripturally presented, it meets with fierce opposition and bitter declamation. It has been so throughout the entire course of this Christian era, and that, among all races and classes of people. Let the high prerogatives of God be set forth, let the sovereignty of His grace be proclaimed, let men be told they are but clay in the hands of the divine Potter to be shaped into vessels of wrath or vessels of mercy as seems good in His sight, and at once there is an uproar and outcries of protest. Let the preacher insist that the fallen creature has no claim whatever upon his Maker, that he stands before Him as a convicted felon, and is entitled to nothing but everlasting judgment. And let him declare that all of Adam’s progeny are so utterly depraved that their minds are “enmity against God,” and therefore in a state of inveterate insubordination, that their hearts are so corrupt they have no desire for spiritual things, their wills so completely under the domination of evil they cannot turn unto the Lord, and he will be denounced as a heretic.

But this should neither surprise nor stagger the child of God. As he becomes more familiar with the Scriptures, he will find that in every generation the faithful servants of God have been hated and persecuted, some for proclaiming one part of the truth, some for another. When the sun shines on a dunghill, an odious stench is the consequence. When its rays fall upon the stagnant waters of a swamp, diseases are multiplied. But is the still to be blamed? Certainly not. So when the Sword of the Spirit cuts to the root of human pride, reveals man to be a fallen and foul being, reduces him to an impotent creature—laying him in the dust as a bankrupt pauper, and declares him to be entirely dependent upon the discriminating pleasure of a sovereign God—there is a

storm of opposition evoked and a determined effort is made to silence such flesh-withering teaching.

The method which is usually followed by those who reject this truth is one of *misrepresentation*. The doctrine of election is so grand and glorious that any opposition at all to it is perverted. Those who hate it can neither look upon nor speak of it as it really deserves. Election is treated by them as though it did not include a designation to faith and holiness, as though it were not a conforming of them unto the image of Christ—yea, as though the elect of God might continue to commit all manner of wickedness and yet go to heaven, and that the non-elect, no matter how virtuous they be, or how ardently they long for and strive after righteousness, must assuredly perish. False inferences are drawn, grotesque parodies exhibited, and unscrupulous tactics are employed to create prejudice.

By such devilish efforts do the enemies of God seek to distort and destroy this blessed doctrine. They besmirch it with mire, seek to overwhelm it with things odious, and present it to the indignant gaze of men as something to be repudiated and abominated. A monster of iniquity is thus created and christened “Election,” and then presented to the world as something to be cast out as evil. Thereby multitudes have been cheated out of one of the most precious portions of divine truth, and thereby some of God’s own people have been sorely perplexed and harassed. That the avowed opponents of Christ should revile a doctrine taught by Him and His apostles is only to be expected. But when those who profess to be His friends and followers join in denouncing this truth, it only serves to demonstrate the cunning of that old serpent, the devil, who is never more pleased than when he can persuade nominal Christians to do his vile work for him. Then, by God’s grace, let not the reader be moved by such opposition.

The vast majority of these opposers have little or no real understanding of that which they set themselves against. They are largely ignorant of what the Scriptures teach thereon and are too indolent to make any serious study of the subject. Whatever attention they do pay to it is mostly neutralized by the veil of prejudice which obstructs their vision. But when such persons examine the doctrine with sufficient diligence to discover that it leads only to holiness—holiness in heart and in life—then they redouble their efforts to do away with it. When professing Christians unite with election’s detractors, charity obliges us to conclude that it is because of failure to properly understand the doctrine. They take a one-sided view of this truth—they view it through distorted lenses—they contemplate it from the wrong angle. They fail to see that election originated in everlasting *love*, that it is the choosing of a company to eternal salvation, who otherwise would have inevitably perished, and that it makes that company a willing, obedient, and holy people.

We shall not now attempt to cover the whole range of objections which have been brought against the doctrine of election. Our discussion would be incomplete if we totally ignored them. The workings of unbelief are always endless in number. The child of God needs to be occupied with something more profitable. Yet we feel that we should at least consider briefly the ones which the enemy supposes are the most forceful and formidable. Not that our object is to try and convince them of their errors, but rather with the design of seeking to help fellow-*believers* who may have been shaken if not stumbled thereby. Our business is not to refute error, but (under God) to establish our readers in the truth. In order to do this, it is sometimes needful to expose the wiles of Satan, show how baseless are the most insidious of his lies, and seek to remove from the Christian’s mind any injurious effect they may have had upon him.

Before starting on this unwelcome task, let it be pointed out that any lack of ability on our part to refute the calumnies of opponents is no proof that their position is impregnable. As the renowned Joseph Butler (1692-1752) pointed out long ago in his masterly “Analogy,” “If a truth

is established, objections are nothing. The one, [i.e., truth], is founded upon our knowledge, and the other on our ignorance.” once it is established that two and two make four, no quibbling or juggling with figures can disprove it. “We should never suffer what we know to be disturbed by what we know not,” said that master of logic, William Paley (1743-1805). once we see anything to be clearly taught in Holy Writ, we must not allow either our own prejudices or the antagonism of others to shake our confidence in or adherence to it. If we are satisfied that we have a, “Thus saith the Lord,” to rest upon, it matters nothing if we be unable to show the sophistry in the arguments brought to bear against it. Be assured that God is true, even if that involves our accounting every man a liar.

The bitterest enemies against the doctrine of election are *the papists*. This is exactly what might be expected, for the truth of election can never be made to square with the dogma of human merits—the one is diametrically opposed to the other. Every man who loves himself and seeks salvation by his own works, will loathe sovereign grace, and seek to load it with contempt. on the other hand, those who have been effectually humbled by the Holy Spirit and brought to realize that they are utterly dependent upon the discriminating mercy of God will have no hankering after, nor patience with a system which sets the crown of honour upon the *creature*. History bears ample testimony that Rome detests the very name of Calvinism. “From all sects there may be some hope of obtaining converts to Rome *except Calvinism*,” said the late “Cardinal” Manning (1808-1892). And he was right, as our own degenerate age bears full witness, for while no regenerated Calvinist will ever be fatally deceived by the wiles of the Mother of Harlots, yet thousands of “Protestant” (?) Arminians are annually rushing to her arms.

It is an irrefutable fact that as Calvinism has met with less and less favour in the leading Protestant bodies, as the sovereignty of God and His electing love have been more and more crowded out of their pulpits, that Rome has made increasing progress, until today she must have both in England and in the U.S.A. a greater number of followers than any single evangelical denomination. But saddest of all is that the vast majority of those now occupying so-called Protestant pulpits are preaching the very things which further Rome’s interests. Their insistence upon the freedom of fallen man’s will to do good must fill the papist leaders with delight—in the Council of Trent she condemned all who affirmed the contrary. To what extent the leaven of Popery has spread may be seen in that “Evangelical Protestants” (?) who oppose the doctrine of election are now employing the self-same objections as were used by the Italian doctors four hundred years ago.

But to come now to some of the objections, first, such a doctrine is *utterly unreasonable*. When it suits her purpose, Rome makes a big pretense of appealing to human reason, but at other times she demands that her children close their mental eyes and accept blindly whatever their unholy “mother” is pleased to palm upon them. Yet Rome is by no means the only offender at this point—multitudes of those who regard themselves as Protestants are guilty of the same thing. So, too, almost always, the first response of those who make *no* religious profession, when they have this truth presented to their notice, is to exclaim, “Such a concept does not appeal to me at all. If there is a God, and if He has anything at all to do with our present lives, I believe He will give us all an equal chance, balance our good deeds against our bad, and be merciful unto us. To say that He has favourites among His creatures, and that He fixed the destiny of everyone before his birth, strikes me as outrageous.”

Our first reply to such an objection is that, it is quite beside the point. The only matter which needs deciding at the outset is, What do the Scriptures say? If election be clearly taught therein, *that* settles the matter for the child of God—settles it once and for all. Whether he understands it

or not, he knows that God cannot lie and that His Word is “true from the beginning” (Psa 119:160). If his opponent will not allow this, then there is no common ground on which they can meet, and it is utterly futile to discuss the matter with him. Under no circumstances must the Christian allow himself to be drawn away from his stand on the impregnable rock of Holy Writ, and descend to the treacherous ground of human reason. Only on that high plane can he successfully withstand the onslaughts of Satan. Re-read Matthew 4 and observe how Christ vanquished the tempter.

The Holy Word of God does not come to us craving acceptance at the bar of human reason. Instead, it demands that human reason surrender itself to its divine authority and receive un murmuringly its inerrent contents. It emphatically and repeatedly warns men that if they despise its authority and reject its teachings, it is to their certain eternal undoing. It is by that Word each of us shall be weighed, measured, judged, in the day to come, and therefore it is the part of human wisdom to bow to and thankfully receive its inspired declarations. The supreme act of right reason, my reader, is to submit unreservedly unto divine wisdom, and accept with childlike simplicity the revelation which God has graciously given us. Any other, any different attitude thereto, is utterly unreasonable—the derangement of pride. How thankful we should be that the Ancient of Days condescends to instruct us.

Our second reply to the above objection is that in a written revelation from heaven we should fully expect to find much that transcends the grasp of our poor earth-bound minds. What were the use of God communicating to us only that which we already knew? Nor are the Scriptures given to us as a field on which reason may be exercised—what they require are *faith and obedience*. And faith is not a blind, unintelligible thing, but confidence in its Author—an assurance that He is too wise to err, too righteous to be unjust—and therefore He is infinitely worthy of our trust and subjection to His holy will. But not only is God’s Word addressed to faith, there is much in it which is contrary to nature, much that is most mysterious, much that leaves us wondering. Faith must be tested—to prove its genuineness. And God delights to honour faith: though His Word be not written to satisfy curiosity, and though many questions are not there fully answered, yet the more faith be exercised, the fuller is the light granted.

God Himself is profoundly mysterious. “Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him!” (Job 26:14). “How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out” (Rom 11:33). We must therefore expect to find in the Bible much that strikes us as strange—things “hard to be understood” (2Pe 3:16). The creation of the universe out of nothing, at the mere fiat of the Almighty, is beyond the grasp of the finite mind. The divine incarnation transcends human reason, “Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in flesh” (1Ti 3:16). That Christ should be conceived and born of a woman who had known no contact with man, cannot be accounted for by human reason. The resurrection of our bodies, thousands of years after they had gone to dust, is inexplicable. Is it not, then, most unreasonable to reject the truth of election because human reason cannot fathom it!

Second, it is *highly unjust*. Rebels against the Supreme Sovereign hesitate not to charge Him with unrighteousness because He is pleased to exercise His own rights and determine the destiny of His creatures. They argue that all men should be dealt with on the same footing, that all should be given an equal opportunity of salvation. They say that if God shows mercy unto one and withholds it from another, such partiality is grossly unfair. To such an objector we reply in the language of Holy Writ, “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over

the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?” (Rom 9:20-21). And there we leave him.

But some of the Lord’s own people are disturbed by this difficulty. First, then, we would remind them “that God is light” (1Jo 1:5), as well as “love.” God is ineffably holy, as well as infinitely gracious. As the Holy one, He abhors all evil, and as the moral Governor of His creatures it becomes Him to eternally manifest His hatred of sin. As the Gracious one, He is pleased to bestow favours upon the undeserving and to give an everlasting demonstration that He is “the Father of mercies.” Now in election *both* of these designs are unmistakably accomplished. In the preterition and condemnation of the non-elect, God gives full proof of His holiness and justice, by visiting upon them the due reward of their iniquities. In the foreordination and salvation of His chosen people, God makes a clear display of the exceeding riches of His grace.

Suppose that God had willed the destruction of the entire human race—then what? Had that been unjust? Certainly not. There could be no injustice whatever in visiting upon criminals the penalty of that law which they had defiantly broken. But what had then become of God’s *mercy*? Had nothing but inexorable justice been exercised by an offended God, then every descendant of fallen Adam had inevitably been consigned to hell. Now on the other hand, suppose God had decided to open wide the floodgates of mercy and carry the *whole* human race to heaven—then what? The wages of sin is death—eternal death. But if every man sinned and none died, what evidence would there be that divine justice was anything more than an empty name? If God had saved all sinners, would not that necessarily inculcate light views of sin? If all were taken to heaven, should we not conclude that this was due us as a right?

Because all are guilty, are the hands of divine mercy to be tied? If not, if mercy may be exercised, then is God obliged to wholly renounce His justice? If God is pleased to exercise mercy upon some, who have no claim thereto, cannot He also show Himself to be a just Judge by inflicting upon others the punishment to which they are entitled? What wrong does a creditor do if he releases one and enforces his demands on another? Am I unjust because I bestow charity on a beggar and decline doing so to his fellow? Then is the great God less free to impart His gifts where He pleases? Before the above objection can have any force it must be proven that every creature (because he is a creature) is *entitled* to everlasting bliss, and that even though he falls into sin and becomes a rebel against His Maker, God is morally *obliged* to save him. To such absurdities is the objector necessarily reduced.

“If eternal felicity be due to every man without exception, surely temporal felicity must be their due likewise—if they have a right to the greater, their claim to the lesser can hardly be doubted. If the Omnipotent is bound, on penalty of becoming unjust, to do all He can to make every individual happy in the next life—He must be equally bound to render every individual happy in this. But are all men happy? Look around the world and say Yes if you can. Is the Creator therefore unjust? none but Satan would suggest it—none but his echoes will affirm it. The Lord is a God of truth, and without iniquity—just and right is He...Is the constituted order of things mysterious? impenetrably so. Yet the mysteriousness of God’s dispensations evinces not the injustice of the Sovereign Dispenser, but the shallowness of human comprehension and the shortness of human sight. Let us then, by embracing and revering the Scriptural doctrines of predestination and providence, give God credit for being infinitely wise, just, and good—though for the present His way is in the deep and His footsteps are not known” (Augustus Toplady, [1740-1778] author of “Rock of Ages”).

Finally, let it be pointed out that God *never refuses mercy* to anyone who humbly seeks it. Sinners are freely invited to forsake their wicked ways and sue unto the Lord for pardon. The

Gospel feast is spread before them—if they refuse to partake thereof, if instead they loathe and turn away from it with disdain, is not their blood on their own heads? What sort of “justice” is it which requires God to bring to heaven those who hate Him? If God has performed a miracle of grace in you, my reader, and begotten in *your* heart a love for Him, be fervently thankful for the same, and disturb not your peace and joy by asking why He has not done the same for your fellow-transgressors.

THE HOLY SABBATH

7. *Its Christianization*

From the beginning God determined that the ruination of the old creation should be followed by the producing of a new creation, with a new law of that creation, a new covenant, and a new Sabbath rest, unto His own glory by Jesus Christ. The renovation of all things by the Mediator was divinely foretold (Act 3:21)—it was to be a “time of reformation” (Heb 9:10). From the epistles we learn that this renovation of all things has been accomplished by Christ, “Old things are passed away,” etc. (2Co 5:17)—the old covenant, the old order of worship, the Judaical Sabbath. “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; in him” (Eph 1:10). only those things pertaining to the Mosaic economy remain which are useful to our living unto God, and they abide not on their old foundation, but on a *new disposition of them in Christ*, cf., 1 Corinthians 9:21.

Thus it is with the Holy Sabbath—it remains, yet it has undergone a decided renovation. As the incarnation of God’s Son affected the chronology of the world (for all civilized time is, by common consent, dated from the year of His birth!), so His death and resurrection terminated the old covenant and ratified the new, and this necessarily resulted in a change of the weekly day of rest. Last month, we pointed out that the *first* day of the week as now being the one divinely appointed for Sabbath observance was, first, adumbrated in the Old Testament types, where “the *eighth* day” is so conspicuous. Second, that it was clearly intimated by what is recorded in the New Testament. The first day being that of our Lord’s resurrection and the day of meeting with His disciples. Third, that it was so celebrated by the early church, Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2.

We are now to consider, fourth, that this change was *conclusively demonstrated in Hebrews 4*. We will first call attention to the fact itself as there stated, and then endeavour to indicate and elucidate the course of the apostle’s argument in that chapter. In Hebrews 4:8, it is expressly affirmed, “For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of *another* day.” What this other “day” is, may be unequivocally ascertained from the context—it is the Holy Sabbath—“God did rest the seventh day from all his work” (Heb 4:4). So, too, immediately after mentioning “another day” (i.e., another or different one from the “seventh”), the apostle went on to say, “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God” (Heb 4:9). In proof of this and also to identify this “*another* day,” he declared, “For he [not “they,” but “he,” which is Christ] that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his” (Heb 4:10).

What has just been pointed out is quite simple and easy to understand, but in order to grasp the force of the apostle’s argument we need to gird up the loins of our minds and attend very closely to his chain of reasoning. First, we must observe that here in chapter 4, he is *continuing* what he had said in chapter 3. There he gave an exhortation unto faith, obedience, and perseverance (Heb

3:1-6), and this he enforced by a quotation from Psalm 95, which contained a pointed exhortation and a solemn warning taken from the case of those who fell under divine wrath because they were guilty of the sin contrary to the duties of faith, obedience, and perseverance (Heb 3:7-11). This he at once follows by making application of the warning unto the Hebrews, and by expounding certain expressions in this quotation which he had made from the psalmist (Heb 3:12-18).

Because the words of Psalm 95 contain not only a warning applicable to New Testament saints, and more especially because those words also had interwoven in them a prophecy (note “promise” in Heb 4:1) concerning the rest of God in Christ by the Gospel and our duty thereon, Paul proceeded to enlarge upon and confirm his exhortation in Heb 3:12-13, still using the language of Psalm 95 for that end. First, he propounds the duty which he aimed to press on the Hebrews (Heb 4:1-2). Second, he established the foundation of his exhortation, by showing that the “rest” mentioned by David was still future when he wrote Psalm 95 (Heb 4:3). Third, he enters into a careful discussion of and differentiates between the various “rests” of God (Heb 4:4-10). Fourth, he concludes by returning to and repeating his original exhortation (Heb 4:11).

Let it be clearly grasped at this stage that the apostle’s design in Hebrews 4:4-11 was to *confirm* what he had laid down in verses 1-3, which we paraphrase thus, There is under the Gospel a promise of entering into the rest of God left or remaining unto believers, and they *do enter* into that rest by mixing the promise of it with faith. It was the more necessary to press this upon the Hebrews—that notwithstanding their ancient and present enjoyment of the land of Canaan, yet their fathers fell short of entering into God’s rest because of their unbelief, and that now they (their children) were under a new trial or test, a new rest being proposed unto them in the promise. This he proves by a testimony out of Psalm 95, whereof he had previously treated in Hebrews 3.

Now the application of Psalm 95 to the case of the Hebrews was liable to a serious objection—the “rest” mentioned there by David seemed to be one *long since past*. If that *were* the case, then these Hebrews could have no new or fresh concern in it, and therefore could be in no danger of coming short of it. It was to remove such an objection, and to confirm what he had previously advanced, that the apostle occupied himself in what follows, and this he does by a direct appeal to Psalm 95, showing from the proper signification of its words, from the time when it was written, and from the persons there addressed, that no other “rest” was there intended than what was here being proposed by him unto them, namely, the rest of God and His people in the Gospel.

The general argument insisted upon by the apostle to support his design and establish his purpose, consists in an enumeration of all the various “rests” of God and His people mentioned in the Old Testament. From the consideration of them all, he proves that no other rest could be intended by the language of David in Psalm 95 than the rest of the Gospel, whereinto all who believe do now enter. This he arrives at, most logically, by a process of *elimination*. First, the rest “promised” (Heb 4:1) in Psalm 95 was neither the rest of God from the works of creation, nor the Sabbath rest which ensued thereon (Heb 4:4-6). Second, nor was it the rest of Canaan, which Joshua brought the people into (Heb 4:7-8). No, it was a spiritual rest which remained or subsisted for believers to enjoy now (Heb 4:8-10). We are now prepared to enter into detail.

In verse 3, three things are laid down. First, an assertion, which comprises the whole intendment of the apostle in this passage, “For we which have believed do enter into rest.” Second, a proof of that assertion from the words of the psalmist, “As he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest,” or as the Psalm reads, “They should not enter into my rest” (Psa 95:11). Third, an elliptical entrance into a full confirmation of his assertion and the due

application of his proof produced unto what he had designed, “Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” Now that “rest” which believers enter through faith in Christ (cf. John 16:33) is first and primarily the spiritual rest of God, and is not to be restricted unto the eternal rest in heaven, though that will be the fruition of it. God rests in Christ (Isa 42:1) and in His people (Zep 3:17).

“As I have sworn in my wrath, If they shall enter into my rest” (Heb. 4:3), or “that they should not enter into my rest.” How did those words contain a *confirmation* of what has been affirmed in the preceding clause? Two ways. First, by an axiom of logic. It is a well-known rule that unto immediate contraries contrary attributes may be certainly assigned, so that he who affirms the one at the same time denies the other, and he who denies that one affirms the other. For instance, if I say it is “day,” I also affirm it is *not* “night.” If, then, those who believed not entered not into God’s rest, then it logically follows that those who believe *do* enter into it. Second, theologically—according to the analogy of faith—every threatening also includes a promise and every promise has also the nature of a threat in it.

“Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world” (Heb 4:3). In those words, the apostle began his answer to an anticipated objection against what he had asserted of the Gospel rest. Now all “rest” presupposes *labour*, consequently each several “rest” of God must have some work preceding it. So it was, first, with His rest in Genesis 2:2, that was preceded by the six days of creation. This the apostle at once refers to in verse 4, “For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.” Now as John Owen (1616-1683) so convincingly pointed out, God’s rest here is not spoken of absolutely, with respect to Himself only, but rather with reference to an appointed rest that ensued thereon for His creatures to rest in with Him, for this is the apostle’s scope all through this passage. Hence he refers us back to the whole passage from which he quotes (Gen 2:2-3), and there we learn that God not only rested on the seventh day, but “blessed” it for the rest of man. Thus he first treats of the Sabbath in relation to the state of man under the law of nature.

“And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest” (Heb 4:5). The “in this” has reference to Psalm 95, which he is here expounding and applying to the case of the Hebrews. The word “again” emphasizes the fact that the apostle is now alluding to the *second* “rest” of God and the proposal He made unto His people of their entering into it. At the finish of His work, God rested the seventh day and blessed it for a day of rest unto His creatures. And “again,” on another occasion, He spoke of “my rest.” What that “other occasion” was, Psalm 95 tells us—it was when Israel was in the wilderness (Psa 95:8). God had finished another series of miraculous works when He brought His people out of Egypt and conducted them through the Red Sea. Then He took them into covenant relationship with Himself (at Sinai), renewed the law, and set before them the rest of Canaan. That a spiritual rest was then proposed unto Israel is clear from the apostle’s changing the psalmist’s, “They should not enter into my rest” (Psa 95:11) to, “If they shall enter”—the exclusion of some definitely implied the entrance of others into God’s rest if they complied with His terms.

At the risk of being wearisome, but for the benefit of those desiring to really understand this passage, we will here summarize the force of the apostle’s reasoning so far as we have yet gone. God’s rest was tendered unto and entered into by some (*viz.*, believers) from the foundation of the world. It must therefore be another rest which the psalmist (so long after) spoke of, and which the descendants of Abraham were afresh invited to enter into, as later in his discussion the apostle more clearly proves. And they who deny any Sabbath rest from *the beginning* remove all foundation for Paul’s discourse. Had there been no rest from the foundation of the world what

need for him to prove that the “rest” mentioned in Psalm 95 was *not* the original one, if there had been none such? The very object of the apostle in again referring to Psalm 95 was to show that the “rest” mentioned by David was not that which was appointed from the beginning of the world, but a much *later* one.

What that second and later “rest” was, we have defined in the last paragraph but one, as the rest of Canaan—not merely external relief from their wilderness wandering, but an entrance into the spiritual rest of God. Ere proceeding further we give proof of this, for we will take nothing for granted. There was a rest of God under the Mosaic economy. The prayer about it was, “Arise, O LORD, into *thy rest*; thou, and the ark of thy strength” (Psa 132:8)—the ark being the symbol and pledge of God’s presence and rest. This “rest” of God followed upon the completion of His mighty works in bringing Israel into Canaan. After the establishment of His worship therein, He said of it, “This is *my rest* for ever: here will I dwell” (Psa 132:14)!

God having entered into His rest in like manner as formerly (upon the finishing of His glorious work), two things ensued thereon. First, the people were invited and encouraged to enter into the rest of God. This the apostle treats of in Hebrews 3 and 4. Their entrance into that rest being conditioned upon their faith and obedience. Although some of them came short of it, because of their unbelief, yet others entered into it under the leadership of Joshua. Second, this rest, both of God and of His people, was expressed by appointing a day of rest which was a token and pledge of God’s present rest in His instituted worship, and was designed as a means in the solemn observance of that worship to further their entrance into His rest eternally. Hence the seventh day was to Israel a special sign that He was their God and they His people.

While it is true that the day appointed in connection with this second rest of God was the same as the first one, viz., the seventh, yet it was now established upon new considerations and unto new ends. The time for the change of the day of rest was not yet come, for the work of God in bringing Israel into covenant-relationship with Himself, conducting them into Canaan, and instituting His worship among them, was but preparatory to yet another work and rest. The covenant of works, to which the original Sabbath was annexed, being not yet abolished (but only modified), therefore the day of rest was not then changed.

Now to proceed. The apostle goes on to show that Psalm 95 prophetically intimated that there was yet to be a *third* rest of God—which His people were to enter into—an especial rest under the Messiah, which he here proposed unto the Hebrews and exhorted them to enter into (Heb 4:11). In this third state there was to be a particular condition of rest, distinct from and superior to each of those which had gone before. To the constitution thereof, three things were required—some signal work of God completed, whereon He entered into His rest. Second, a spiritual rest ensuing therefrom, for them that believe to enter into. Third, a new day of rest to express this rest of God and to be a pledge of our entering therein. These things we now further inquire into.

“Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief” (Heb 4:6). Here the apostle draws a conclusion which is incisive, but observe carefully it is based on the principle that a promise is included in every conditional threatening, for unless the word of the psalmist, “They should not enter into my rest” (Psa 95:11) may also be (deductively) understood as, “if they shall enter,” that is, they shall providing they meet the conditions, there would be no force whatever in saying, “that some *must* enter.” They who entered not in because of unbelief or “disobedience” were the adult Israelites who came out of Egypt. The rest of Canaan which they missed was typical of the present rest of believers in Christ.

“Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, *Today*, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Heb 4:7). In this verse, the apostle confirms what he had just affirmed about a new rest and a new day of rest remaining for the people of God to enter into and which rest he proposes unto them. After the institution of the Sabbath rest at the beginning, and after the proposal of the rest of Canaan to Israel in the wilderness, God, in addition (“Again”), limited or designed and determined another particular rest and “day,” which was neither of the former, namely, that of *the Gospel*. It is to be carefully noted that in this verse the apostle expressly *changes his terms*, God had “limited” or “defined” not only a “certain” or “particular” *rest*, but a DAY, because it was Paul’s design to show that God had determined not only another (a third) “rest,” but also *another* “day” as a pledge of this new rest.

The force of his argument in verse 7 is taken from *the time when* this “day” was limited or determined. Had those words of David (in Psa 95) been uttered by Moses just before Israel entered the typical rest of Canaan, they might have been thought to pertain thereunto and to have contained in them an exhortation unto Israel as that season. But instead, it was “after so long a time,” namely, five hundred years after Moses, that God gave this message through the psalmist. Consequently it *must* have related and referred to some other “rest” than Canaan, and some other “day” than the Jewish Sabbath. Therefore, there is still a promise remaining of entering into this (third) rest of God, unto which we must take heed that we come not short of it by unbelief and disobedience.

“For if Jesus [Joshua] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of *another day*” (Heb 4:8). In this verse, the apostle removes a possible objection and gives further confirmation of his argument, by a particular application of it unto the point before him. That which he still insists upon is, his principal assertion from the words of David, namely, the rest prepared and proposed in the Gospel unto believers. To this the Hebrews might object—Although the people who came out of Egypt entered not into the promised rest of God, yet the next generation did so under Joshua—why then propose this rest unto us and warn against our danger of missing it? This objection is conclusively set aside by showing that God in David proposed “*another day*” of rest unto Israel centuries *after* Joshua, and as no new Sabbath was appointed in David’s time, his words must be understood prophetically. Hence there *was* a rest proposed unto the Hebrews (and so us) and “another day” to memorialize it.

“There remaineth therefore a rest [keeping of a Sabbath] unto the people of God” (Heb 4:9). The apostle here shows, in a brief summary, what had been conclusively established in his whole disquisition—three things indubitably followed. First, that a divine and spiritual rest remains for the people of God to enter into and enjoy with Him. Second, that a Sabbath day to memorialize it, and be a means of entering into that rest, abides under the Gospel. Third, that it must of necessity be “*another day*,” a different one from that which obtained under the old covenant. It is to be duly noted that the apostle did not say, “There awaiteth” or “There is yet to be a sabbath keeping,” but “There remaineth.” The reference is not to something future, but what is present. This word is used in the same sense when applied negatively to the system of sacrifices: “There *remaineth* no more sacrifice for sins” (Heb 10:26). How striking that this occurs in Hebrews! The Levitical priesthood has been set aside, the temple is no more, Judaism is abolished—but a Sabbath remains!

We wish to call special attention to the fact that in Hebrew 4 verse 9, Paul again deliberately *changed his terms*. The word for “rest” here in verse 9 is an entirely different one from that used in verses 1, 3, 5, 8, 10. It is “Sabbatismos” which speaks for itself. The R.V. has, “There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God.” It was a word coined by the apostle to

express the whole sense of that with which he was treating—that is, to denote both the rest itself and the appointment of “another day” as a token of it—it signifies our rest in God and the day which is the pledge of it. And this Sabbatismos remaineth—the word “remaineth” signifies to be left after others have been withdrawn (as the primitive and Judaical Sabbaths have), to continue unchanged, as the Christian Sabbath will unto the end of the world. Here, then, is a plain, positive, unequivocal declaration by the Spirit of God, “There *remaineth* therefore a sabbath keeping.” Nothing could be simpler, nothing less ambiguous, for this is addressed to the “Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb 3:1). Hence, we solemnly and emphatically declare that the man who says there is no Christian Sabbath takes direct issue with the New Testament Scriptures. We must leave for next month the closing verses of this most important passage.

A TENDER HEART

“Because thine heart was tender” (2Ki 22:19). We have already considered the circumstances and significance of these words last month. Let us now proffer a few remarks upon how a tender heart may be *preserved*. This is a matter of great importance, for though such a most desirable possession be obtained as a sovereign gift from God, yet it can only be *retained* by much diligence on our part. This should scarcely need any arguing, yet hyper-Calvinists are likely to demur, supposing that an insistence upon Christian responsibility is the same thing as crying up creature ability. But does not the natural shadow forth the spiritual here, too? Is it not a fact with which we are all familiar that the more “tender” any object or creature be, the more care and cultivation it requires?

“Keep thy heart with all diligence” (Pro 4:23). This must put an end to all quibbling on the part of objectors—where God speaks there must be an end of all strife. And diligence, great and constant diligence, is required on our part if a tender heart is to be preserved. How? In what directions? First, by guarding against everything which is hostile to it. To be more specific, it is sin which hardens the heart. In exact proportion as sin obtains dominion over us, do we steal ourselves against God. And it is just here that our accountability comes in, “Awake to righteousness, and sin not” (1Co 15:34). Though we cannot impart a tender heart, we can certainly impair one. “Harden not your hearts” (Heb 3:8) was the Lord’s call to His people of old, and to us also today, and if we are to comply therewith we must fear, hate, and resist *sin*.

Sin is insidious. Scripture speaks of “the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb 3:13). If we are not on our guard, it will steal upon us unawares. Unless we are wide awake and alert to the danger, sin will overcome us like the fumes of a deadly gas. That is why the Lord bids us, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Mat 26:41). Yes, watch as well as pray and pray as well as watch. We all know what happened to Peter because he failed so to do, and his case is recorded as a solemn warning for us. “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away” (Pro 4:14-15). Notice carefully how the same prohibition is iterated and re-iterated again and again in these verses. It is the first approach of sin we most need to resist. It is by making conscience of its earliest stirrings within that a tender heart is preserved.

Every Christian will readily allow that sin is insidious, but it is one thing to recognize this in theory and quite another to be regulated by it in practice. All will agree that one of the most

effective means of victory over sin is to steadfastly refuse its first advances. Yet the fact remains that few do so. It is at this very point we must take our stand if a tender heart is to be retained. But how? By guarding against carnality. Things indifferent become a snare if they are not kept within due bounds. That which is lawful is not always expedient. An immoderate use of the creature will bind chains upon us which are not easily snapped. Inordinate affection for those nearest to us will sap true spirituality. Beware, then, of setting your love too much upon mere *things* or creatures.

Nothing will keep the heart tender so much as cultivating the spirit of filial awe. Alas that this is now so rarely insisted upon. “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil” (Pro 8:13). Necessarily so, for God is ineffably holy and where He is revered sin is loathed. “By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil” (Pro 16:6), for two cannot walk together “except they be agreed” (see also Amo 3:3). The more concerned I am not to displease my Master, the more shall I eschew that which He forbids. “Be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long” (Pro 23:17), for “Happy is the man that feareth *alway*” (Pro 28:14). We must strive to be in the fear of God not only in the first hour of devotion, but throughout the day. The more we live in the conscious realization that the eyes of the Holy one are upon us, the more will our hearts be kept truly tender.



November

A TENDER HEART

“Because thine heart was tender” (2Ki 22:19). What a desirable thing is a tender heart. How earnestly we should aspire after one. And when such has been graciously bestowed upon us, what diligence we should exercise in seeking to preserve the same. The tenderness of Josiah’s heart was precious in the sight of the Lord, and in consequence thereof his prayers were answered, as the remainder of our opening text declares. There is nothing like a tender heart, my reader, for obtaining the ear of the Lord. A tender heart is one which is responsive to the voice of God, and unless we possess this how can we expect Him to hear our calls? A tender heart is the only one which truly honours God, as it is the only one which ensures our growth in grace. How deeply important, then, is the question, Have you, have I, really a tender heart? May we be enabled to answer truthfully.

In the last two issues, we pointed out some of the principal characteristics of a tender heart, and also sought to indicate those duties which must be performed if we are to retain this valuable possession. But it is probable that not a few of our readers would prefer for us to tell them how a tender heart may be *recovered*. They are already persuaded of the great excellence of this spiritual treasure and they also perceive clearly what is necessary in order to retain it. What grieves them is that they are conscious of guilty failure in safeguarding this divine gift. They are sensible that the fine gold has become dim, that little foxes have spoiled their vines, that their conscience is no longer so sensitive as it once was, that they do not respond so readily to the motions of God’s Spirit—that much hardness now resides in their hearts.

It is sadly true that a tender heart may be lost—not absolutely so, but relatively—not permanently, but temporarily. But sadder still is the fact that many who have suffered this deprivation are unconscious of it. It is with them as it was with Ephraim of old, “Strangers have devoured his strength, and he *knoweth it not*: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he *knoweth not*” (Hos 7:9). They may still attend the means of grace and perform their outward devotions, but their hearts are not in them. They may still be respected by their fellow-Christians and regarded as in a healthy spiritual state, while in reality they are backsliders. Sights from which they once shrank appall them no longer. Things which used to exercise their conscience do so no more. The standard at which they formerly aimed is now regarded as too strict and severe.

Said the apostle to the Galatians, “Ye *did* run well; who [or “what”] did hindered you?” (Gal 5:7). What are the things which destroy tenderness of heart? Ungodly companions is one. Satan will tell the young Christian that he or she may keep old friends and suffer no loss, but God says, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1Co 15:33). Friendship with worldlings will soon have a paralyzing influence upon true spirituality. Prayerlessness is another thing which speedily affects the heart. Unless a close fellowship with God be maintained—and

that is impossible if the throne of grace is neglected—coldness and hardness will soon steal upon us. Equally so will a neglect of the Word. This will not necessarily mean the omission of reading so many chapters each day, but the absence of actually communing with God therein. The spirit of hypocrisy, pretending to be what we are not, hardens—for guile and tenderness are incompatible.

Yes, a tender heart may be lost, as truly as first love may be left (Rev 2:4). Can it be regained? Yes, though not as easily as it may be hardened. How? First, by warming afresh at the fire of God's love. This is ever the most effectual means of removing hardness of heart. What was it that melted and broke you down at your first conversion? Was it not a sense of the divine grace and a sight of Christ's dying love? And nothing is so calculated to soften the backslider—it is "the goodness of God" which leads to repentance (Rom 2:4). What was before David when he commenced his contrite confession? This—the Lord's "lovingkindness" and the "multitude of his tender mercies" (see Psa 51:1). When was it that Peter went out and wept bitterly? Was it not when the Saviour "turned, and looked upon Peter" (Luk 22:61)?

Was it not the *sorrow* which Peter saw in that look—a sorrow which issued from love for him—which broke his heart?! The Lord had given him every proof that he was dear unto Him, and how had Peter requited that love? And has not the Lord given you, my brother, my sister, abundant evidence that you are precious in His sight? Did He deem any sacrifice too great to make atonement for your sins? Has He not favoured you above millions of your fellows in bringing you to a saving knowledge of the truth? Has He not bestowed the Holy Spirit upon you? Has He not borne with your dullness with infinite patience? Can you dwell upon these things with unmoved heart? Surely not. Seek unto Him, then, and your coldness and hardness will indeed be thawed.

Second, by genuine contrition. As it is the allowance of sin which hardens the heart, so it is sorrow for sin which softens it. Hence, when the Lord admonishes the one who has left his first love, His word is, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works" (Rev. 2:5). First, "Remember *therefore* from whence thou art fallen," which looks back to the previous verse. Call to mind the happy fellowship you once enjoyed with the eternal Lover of your soul, when He found delight in you, and your own heart was satisfied. Consider "from *whence* thou art fallen"—no longer leaning on His bosom, but having entered a course which both displeases and dishonours Him. Unless this produces godly sorrow in you, nothing else will, and it is godly sorrow which "worketh repentance" (2Co 7:10). Take a leaf out of the copybook of the prodigal son—arise, forsake the far country, return to your Father, and pour out your griefs into His welcoming ear.

Third, by the exercise of faith. "And do the first works" (Rev 2:5). What was the first work you did when you originally came to God in Christ as an empty-handed and contrite sinner? Was it not to cast yourself upon His mercy, to lay hold of His promises, to trust in the sufficiency of Christ's atoning blood? Well, the same remedy is available now. Did not David cry, "*Create* in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psa 51:10)?—deal with me now as Thou did at the first! And was he not able to say, "He restoreth my soul" (Psa 23:3)? Precious promises are recorded in the Word which exactly suit your case, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (Jer 3:22). "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely" (Hos 14:4). Make these promises your own, plead them before God and count upon Him making them good in your own case.

In conclusion, a word or two on some of the *evidences* of a tender heart. We mention one or two of these so that writer and reader may *test* himself by them. Is your heart affected by the

present state of Christendom? Are you made to sigh and cry “for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (Eze 9:4)? Is your experience, in some measure at least, that “Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law” (Psa 119:53)? “Mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD’s flock is carried away captive” (Jer 13:17)—is that how you feel? Again—“I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision” (Act 26:19)—do you respond to the motions of God’s Spirit? Finally, do you mourn over your own hardness and grieve over your callousness? *These* are some of the manifestations of a tender heart.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

12. The Law and Oaths—Matthew 5:33-37

“Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Mat 5:33-37). Last month we gave an exposition of these verses, in which we showed how our Lord here condemned the wicked devices of the Scribes, and the evil practices of the Pharisees and their followers. Now we propose to treat the subject topically, for there is real need today for a Scriptural enforcement of the whole subject.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exo 20:7). This is the fundamental precept of God upon the matter of oaths, and the scope of its prohibition and the range of its meaning is far more extensive than is now commonly supposed. “Thy commandment is exceeding broad” (Psa 119:96), declared David of old, and clearly was it made manifest in Christ’s teaching. Those who have followed us closely in the previous articles will remember that in this sermon the Saviour has furnished us with some most important and invaluable rules for interpreting the Ten Commandments. First, that when God forbids one sin, He at the same time prohibits all sins of the same kind, with all the causes and occasions thereof. Second, that to the breach of any commandment there is annexed a curse, whether it be expressed specifically or not. Third, that where any vice is condemned, the opposite virtue is enjoined.

When God said, “Thou shalt not kill” (Exo 20:13), He not only prohibited the overt deed of murder, but also condemned every evil working of heart and mind which had a tendency to lead up to it—all hatred, anger, provoking language or gestures. When He said, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exo 20:14), He not only forbade the actual act of immorality, but also all unlawful lustings and desires, all impure thoughts and imaginations. In like manner, when He said, “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain” (Exo 20:7), He not only reprehended the vile sin of using any of His sacred titles in cursing, He not only prohibited the crime of perjury, but He also forbade us both to swear by any of His creatures or take any unnecessary oaths, as well as condemned all extravagant expletives.

Scholars tell us that an oath in the Hebrew is called, “shebuaḥ,” and that there are two things observable about it. First, that the verb “to swear” is used only in the niphal—a passive conjugation—which implies that we should be passive in swearing—that is, we should not take an oath unless called upon to do so, or at least when circumstances morally oblige us thereunto. Most significantly the Hebrew word is taken from a root that signifies “seven,” which perhaps implies it should be taken before many witnesses, and seven being the sacred and complete number, the name of an oath may be derived from it because it is appointed to put a complete end to differences. The Greeks called it “horkos,” most probably from a root signifying “to bind or strengthen,” for by an oath a man takes a bond on his soul which cannot be loosed ordinarily. The Latin *juro* and *jusjurandum* are plainly derived from “just”—that is “right and law.”

Let us now consider, first, the *nature* of an oath. An oath is a religious and necessary confirmation of things doubtful by calling God to be a Witness of truth and a Revenger of falsehood. That it is a confirmation is clear from Hebrews 6:16, where the Holy Spirit expressly affirms the same. That it is a religious confirmation appears from the fact that it is a part of divine worship, God Himself being invoked therein. In Isaiah 19:18, “Swear to the LORD of hosts,” is used for the whole of His worship. It must be a necessary confirmation because any oath is unlawful which concerns only trifling matters or things which need no solemn settlement. That God is called in both as Witness and Revenger is self-evident, because therein consists the form and all the force of an oath. The one who thus swears, acknowledges the divine perfections, appealing to Him as the God of truth and the Hater of lies.

Properly speaking, then, in an oath there are four things. First, a formal *assertion* of the truth, which should always be spoken even though no oath is taken. Second, a *confession* of the omnipotent presence of the thrice holy Lord God, whereby we do most solemnly acknowledge Him as both Witness, Judge, and Revenger of falsehood. Third, an *invocation* whereby God is called upon to bear witness to our conscience that what we swear to is nothing but the truth. Fourth, an *imprecation*, in which the swearer asks God to be the Revenger of all lies, binding himself to divine punishment if he swear falsely. Therefore it clearly follows that an oath is not to be lightly entered into, that one is not to be taken at all except in matters of real importance, and that it must be taken in the most solemn manner—otherwise we violate the third commandment and are guilty of the awful sin of taking the holy name of the Lord God in vain.

Second, the *design* of an oath consists in a solemn confirmation of what we affirm or deny by a religious invocation of the name of God, as one that knows and owns the truth. So far as God is thus invoked in an oath, it is part of His worship, both as required by Him and as ascribing glory to Him. When a man is admitted under oath he is, as it were, discharged from an earthly tribunal, having betaken himself to the Lord as the only Judge in the case. By what particular expression this appeal unto God and invocation of Him is made is not absolutely necessary unto the nature of an oath to determine. It is sufficient that such expressions be used as are approved, and received signs of such an invocation and appeal among those that are concerned therein. The placing of one hand upon a copy of Gods’ Holy Word while we are being sworn in, appears to us eminently desirable, while the other hand might well be raised toward heaven—but the kissing of the Book afterwards strikes us as both needless and unsuitable.

Third, a word now upon the *qualifications* or characteristics of lawful oaths. These are clearly expressed by the prophet, so that nothing needs to be added to them, and nothing must be taken from them. “Thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness” (Jer 4:2). “Truth” is required in it, in opposition unto guile and falsehood, for where this obtains not, God is called to be Witness unto a lie, which is to deny His very being. It must be “in judgment”

we swear—not lightly, not rashly, not without a just and sufficient cause. There must be discernment and careful discretion in exercise, both in connection with the thing in question which is to be confirmed, and also of the solemn nature of an oath and of the issue of the same. “In righteousness” we must swear, namely, that it be equity which we wish to confirm, tending to the glory of God and the good of our fellows.

When the above qualifications are complied with, and where matters are in controversy among men and the peace of human society in general, or particular, depends upon the rightful determination of them, it is meet and proper for a believer, being lawfully called, to confirm the truth which he knows by the invocation of God, with the design of putting an end to strife. Oath-taking is a part of the natural worship of God, which the light of nature leads unto. This is evident from the example of the Lord Himself, who at sundry times took an oath both before the Mosaic law (Gen 22:16) and afterwards. Now it is obvious that if men had not had from the light of nature an understanding of the nature, legitimacy, and obligation of an oath, this would have had no significance for them or have been of any use to them.

In earliest times, God often enlightened and more fully instructed men by His own example. In compliance therewith, we find that those who walked the closest with Him, centuries before the giving of the law at Sinai, did solemnly swear one to another when occasion did require it and when they were legitimately warranted in so doing. Thus Abraham swore to Abimelech (Gen 21:23-24) and required an oath to be taken by his servant (Gen 24:8-9). In like manner, Jacob swore with Laban (Gen 31:53). And so, too, Joseph swore to his father (Gen 47:31). Let it be duly noted that the instances had no respect unto the legal institutions of Moses, and therefore there is no reason to think there would be anything in the Gospel which condemned such a practice today.

One would think the above was quite simple and clear, but alas, such is man that he will discover difficulties where none exist and twist and wrest the plainest statement. Though the great majority of professing Christians have rightly understood and acted upon the teaching of Scripture on this subject, there have been a number that err therein. The Society of Friends and a few others consider that the New Testament expressly forbids the use of any oaths. They appeal to Christ’s saying, “Swear not at all” (Mat 5:34), and to, “But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation” (Jam 5:12), supposing these passages prohibit us swearing under any circumstances whatever—and therefore they refuse to bear witness upon oath even when called upon to do so by the rulers of the land.

It is evident that the verse quoted from James is derived from and has respect to the words of our Saviour in Matthew 5:33-37, it being an exhortation inculcating His precept and directions on the same matter. The same answer will therefore serve both places, nor will it be at all difficult to expose and refute the errors based thereon. First of all, it must be pointed out that there is nothing in the essential nature of an oath which can make it criminal or it would never have been enjoined by divine authority (Deu 6:13). An oath is simply an appeal to the Omniscient one (who searches the heart and is the great Governor of the world, punishing fraud and falsehood) as to the truthfulness of our testimony and the sincerity of our promises. As this is a dictate of the light of nature, no mere change of dispensation could make right to be wrong.

Second, the prophecy of Isaiah 45:23 belongs and is expressly applied to believers in the New Testament. “I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall *swear*”—see Romans 14:11. This had respect to what God had of old prescribed, Deuteronomy 6:13. This now, says the prophet, shall in the days of the Gospel be observed throughout the world, which certainly could

not be the case if it were unlawful to swear under any circumstances by that holy Name. In like manner, Jeremiah predicted concerning the calling and conversion of the Gentiles under the new covenant, “It shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The LORD liveth...then shall they be built in the midst of my people” (Jer 12:16). But that could be no direction or encouragement to converts of the Gentiles if it be unlawful for them to swear and if it be not their duty when duly called upon.

Third, as we have fully shown in our exposition of Matthew 5:33-37 (in last month’s article), Christ was there condemning only those oaths which were contrary to the law, prohibiting things which were essentially evil in themselves. It was the errors of the Jews He was exposing—the wicked perversions of the Pharisees He was refuting. That this must be the right way of understanding our Lord’s teaching in this passage appears plainly from the principles which He had laid down so emphatically at the beginning of this section of His sermon, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 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). If oaths pertain to “the law” or “the prophets” (and they did), then it most certainly was not Christ’s purpose to annul them. The Giver and Fulfiller of the law is not also its Destroyer.

Fourth, in the matter of judicial oaths, Christ Himself has left us an example (which we should follow, 1 Peter 2:21), for when He stood before the Sanhedrin, though He had previously refused to answer either His accusers or the high priest, yet He immediately responded to Caiaphas when he said, “I adjure thee by the living God” (Mat 26:63-64). Fifth, Paul, the greatest of the apostles, confirmed his testimony again and again by calling God for a Witness (2Co 1:23; Gal 1:20, etc.). In such passages, he most solemnly swears to the truth of his own affirmations concerning himself and his sincerity therein (cf. Rom 9:1). It was not respecting any doctrine he taught that he did swear to, for it needed no confirmation of an oath, deriving as it did all its authority and assurance from divine revelation. But it was concerning his own heart and purpose, whereof there might be some doubt, and when it was of great concern to the church to have the truth emphatically stated.

Sixth, Hebrews 6:16 tells us, “For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.” In this verse, Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, addressing the holy brethren who are “partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb 3:1), not only urges the common usage of mankind, but lays down a certain maxim and principle of the law of nature, whose exercise was to be approved amongst all. And if the practice thereof had not been lawful unto those to whom he wrote, namely, Christians, those who obeyed the Gospel, then he had exceedingly weakened the whole design of his discourse there concerning the oath of God, by shutting it up with this instance, which could be of no force to them if it were unlawful for them to practice the same or have an experience of its efficacy. Finally, if oaths had become unlawful under the New Testament, then God would not have continued their use in any kind, lest His people be encouraged to act contrary to His command. But He *did* so, commissioning an angel to “swear by him that liveth for ever and ever” (Rev 10:6).

From what has been before us in Matthew 5, we may perceive the importance and need of heeding two particular rules when interpreting Scripture. First, that universal affirmations and negations are not always to be universally understood, but are to be limited by their occasions, circumstances, and the subject matter treated of. Things expressed in universal language must be regarded according to the thing in hand. Thus, when the apostle declared, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1Co 9:22). If his language were taken without

limitation, it would signify that he became a blasphemer to blasphemers, etc., whereas his statement must be restricted to things indifferent and innocent, in which he yielded to the weakness of others. In like manner, when Christ said, “Swear not at all” (Mat 5:34), His obvious meaning (according to what follows) is, swear not blasphemously, needlessly, or by any mere creature.

Second, it is a rule of real use in the interpreting of Holy Writ that when anything is prohibited in one passage, but allowed in another, that not the thing absolutely considered is spoken unto in either case, but rather some particular mode, cause, end, or reason is intended. So here—in Matthew 5:34, swearing is forbidden, whereas in other passages we find it is allowed and that examples thereof are proposed unto us. Wherefore it cannot be swearing absolutely that is intended, but evil and needless swearing is condemned by the one, and swearing in right causes or for just ends is approved in the other.

Nor is the taking of an oath to be restricted to courts of law only. Exodus 22:11 and the instances of Paul in his epistles prove otherwise. In certain cases *private* oaths, between man and man, are perfectly legitimate. Boaz was a private person, who confirmed by an oath his promise of marriage to Ruth (Ruth 3:13). Obadiah was a private person, a righteous man, and one that feared the Lord, who declared with an oath the fact of which he wished to convince Elijah (1Ki 18:10). “I can find, therefore, no better rule than that we regulate our oaths in such a manner that they be not rash or inconsiderate, wanton or frivolous, but used in cases of real necessity” (John Calvin, 1509-1564). The awful solemnity of an oath appears from 1 Kings 8:31-32. So, too, we should duly lay to heart the fearful judgments of God which came upon Israel of old when they were guilty of breaking the third commandment (Jer 5:7-9; Zec 5:4).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

95. *His Closing Days*

The public life of David had been a stormy one throughout, nor was he permitted to end his career in tranquility—such is generally the lot of those in high station, who are ignorantly envied by so many. Even in his declining days, when the infirmities of old age were upon David, serious trouble broke out in his kingdom, so that both the public peace was jeopardized and his own family circle again threatened by the assassin. Another of his own sons now set himself not only against the will of his father, but also against the declared purpose of God—in which he was abetted by those who had long held positions of honour under the king. No doubt we should look deeper and see here a setting forth of the conflict which obtains in a higher realm—the enmity of the serpent against the woman’s seed and his opposition to the will of God concerning His kingdom. But it is with that which refers more immediately to David we shall concern ourselves.

The record of what we have referred to above is found in 1 Kings 1. That chapter opens by presenting to us the once virile and active king now going the way of all the earth—his natural spirits dried up, no longer able to attend to public affairs. The events chronicled therein occurred very near the close of David’s eventful career. Though not yet quite seventy, he is described as “old and well stricken in years.” Though blest with a vigorous constitution, the king was thoroughly worn out. Among the contributing causes, we may mention the strenuous life he had lived and the heavy domestic griefs which had fallen upon him. That he was still dearly beloved by his followers is evident from their kindly if ill-advised efforts for his comfort (1Ki 1:1-3).

David's falling in with their plan, shows him taking the line of least resistance, apparently out of deference to the wishes of his attendants. It was a device which has been resorted to in various climes and ages, yet surely it was one which did not become a child of God.

Old age as well as youth has its own particular snares, for if the danger of the latter is to disdain the advice of seniors and be too self-willed, the infirmities of the former place them more in the power of their juniors and they are apt to yield to arrangements which their consciences condemn. It is not easy to deny the wishes of those who are tending us, and it seems ungrateful to refuse well-meant efforts to make our closing days more comfortable. But while on the one hand, the aged need to guard against irritability and a domineering spirit, yet on the other, they must not be a willing party to that which they know is wrong. Legitimate means of restoring health and for prolonging our days should be employed, but unlawful measures and anything having the *appearance* of evil or which may become an occasion of temptation to us, should be steadfastly refused, no matter by whom it is proposed.

The Lord's *displeasure* against David's weakness in consenting to the carnal counsel of his friends is plainly marked in the immediate sequel. Serious trouble now arose from yet another of his sons. It is true that this was the fruit of his earlier laxity in ruling his children, for he was much too easy-going with them. Yet *the time* when this impious insubordination occurred leaves us in no doubt that it is to be regarded as a divine chastening of David for being a party to such a questionable procedure as that to which we have briefly alluded above. "Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him" (1Ki 1:5). Nothing is more conspicuous throughout the whole history of David than that whenever a believer sows to the flesh he will most certainly of the flesh reap corruption; and another solemn example of this is here before us.

David was now stricken in years, and the time for one to succeed him to the throne had well-nigh arrived. Yet it was for JEHOVAH alone to say who that one should be. But Adonijah, the oldest living son, determined to be that successor. Nor is this to be wondered at, for, "His father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?" (1Ki 1:6). David had permitted him to have his own way. He never crossed his will, never inquired the motive of his actions, nor at any time rebuked him for his folly. In allowing his son to be guided by his own unbridled will, David sadly failed to exercise his parental authority and to fulfil his parental responsibility—and bitterly did he now pay for his folly, as many since have also been made to do.

That which immediately follows verse 6 is recorded for our learning, and a most solemn warning does it point for our own day, when so many fond parents are allowing their children to grow up with little or no restraint placed upon them. They are only preparing a rod for their own backs. God Himself has forbidden parents to refrain from chastening their children when they need it, "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die" (Pro 23:13). And again, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Pro 13:24). And yet again, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Pro 19:18). Because of his parental neglect, David himself was in large measure responsible for the lawlessness of his son. Lax and indulgent parents must expect willful and wayward children, and if they despise the infirmities of their sires and are impatient to get possession of their estates, that will be all which they deserve at their hands.

David's unruly son now determined to exalt himself, even though he certainly knew that Solomon had been appointed by God to succeed David in the kingdom (2Sa 7:12-16; 1Ki 2:15-18). "Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he

prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him” (1Ki 1:5). In this magnifying of his state, he followed the evil example of his rebellious brother Absalom (2Sa 15:1)—a solemn warning this for older brothers to set their younger ones a good example. Adonijah dared to usurp the throne of Israel. He made a feast, gathered the people about him, and incited them to proclaim him as king (1Ki 1:7-9, 25). In this, too, he was again following the example of Absalom (2Sa 15:10), confident that where his brother had failed, he would now succeed. But like Absalom before him, Adonijah reckoned without God, “The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever” (Psa 33: 10-11).

Nevertheless, for a time it looked very much as though the daring revolt of Adonijah would be successful, for both Joab the commander of the army and Abiathar the priest, threw in their lot with him (1Ki 1:7). Thus does God often allow the wicked to prosper for awhile, yet their triumphing is but short. Joab, as we have seen in other connections, was a thoroughly unprincipled and ungodly man, and no doubt the impious Adonijah was more congenial to his disposition than Solomon would be. Moreover if this son of Haggith obtained the kingdom, then his own position would be secure, and he would not be displaced by a successor to Amasa (2Sa 19:13). So too Abiathar the high priest seems to have been less regarded by David than Zadok was, and probably he feared that Solomon would set his family aside for the line of Eleazar to which Zadok belonged.

Characters like Joab and Abiathar are ever actuated by selfish motives, though individuals like Adonijah often flatter themselves that the service of such is rendered out of love or esteem for their persons, when in reality very different considerations move them. Disinterested loyalty is a very rare thing, and where found it cannot be valued too highly. Those in eminent positions, whether in church or state, are surrounded by mercenary sycophants, who are ever eager to turn to their own advantage everything which transpires. It mattered nothing to Joab and Abiathar that their royal master was a pious and faithful one, who had steadily sought the good of the kingdom, or that Adonijah was a grasping and lawless semi-heathen. They were ready to forsake the one and espouse the other. So it is still: that is why those in high places are afraid to trust the ones nearest to them in office.

“There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand” (Pro 19:21). No planning on man’s part can thwart the purpose of the Most High. Saul had proved that—so too had Absalom—so now shall Adonijah. Yet the Lord is pleased to use human instruments in bringing His counsel to pass. He always has His man ready to intervene at the critical moment. In this instance it was Nathan the prophet, “Wherefore Nathan spake unto Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, saying, Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our lord knoweth it not?” (1Ki 1:11). Nathan had been faithful in rebuking David for his sin in former days (2Sa 12:7-12). He was faithful now in recalling to him the promise he had made concerning Solomon. He interviewed Bathsheba and persuaded her to go unto David and remind him of his oath (1Ki 1:11-13), and arranged that while she was speaking to the king, he also would come into his presence and confirm her testimony (1Ki 1:14).

It is blessed, both from the divine and human side, to see how readily and how graciously Bathsheba responded to Nathan’s suggestion. From the divine side, we may behold how that when God works He works at both ends of the line—if the prophet gave counsel under divine prompting, the queen was willing in the day of God’s power, as David also yielded thereto—each acted under divine impulse, yet each acted quite freely. From the human side, we may note that Bathsheba made no demur to Nathan’s counsel but readily acquiesced. Though David was her

husband she “bowed, and did obeisance unto the king” and addressed him as “my lord” (1Ki 1:16-17), thereby evidencing that she was a true daughter of Abraham. First she reminded him of his solemn oath that Solomon should reign after him (1Ki 1:17). Then she acquainted him with the revolt of Adonijah (1Ki 1:18). Next she assured the king that the nation awaited an authoritative word from him about the accession, and ended by warning him that if he failed in his duty she and Solomon would be in grave danger of their lives.

“And, lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in” (1Ki 1:22). It was something more than a political move on Nathan’s part to appear before the king at the exact moment of which Bathsheba had just said. It was an act of obedience to the Word of God, for the divine law required that matters of solemn moment must be confirmed by one or more witnesses. “one witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established” (Deu 19:15). The same principle was insisted upon by Christ on more than one occasion, and therefore it is binding on us today. Much needless trouble had been avoided in the church (Mat 18:16), many a false accusation had been exposed (Joh 8:13, 17), many a breach had been healed (2Co 13:1), and many an innocent servant of God had been cleared (1Ti 5:19), if only this principle had been duly heeded.

According to his promise to Bathsheba, Nathan entered the king’s presence and bore out what she had just told him. The prophet showed how urgent the situation was. First, he declared that the supporters of the revolt were so confident of success that they were even now saying, “God save king Adonijah” (1Ki 1:25). Second, he pointed out the ominous fact that neither himself nor Zadok the priest, Benaiah, or Solomon had been invited to the feast (1Ki 1:26), which made evident his lawless designs—neither the will of God nor the desire of his father were going to be consulted. Third, he endeavoured to get the aged David to take definite action before it was too late. He asks the king point blank if this thing was being done with his approval (1Ki 1:27), to make him realize the better what blatant insolence Adonijah and his party were guilty of in thus acting without authority from the crown. Thus did he make clear to David his public duty.

It was now that the real character of David asserted itself. Weak he was in the ruling of his own household, but ever firm and fearless where the interests of God’s kingdom were concerned. Nothing could induce him to resist the revealed will of the Lord of Israel. First, he now acknowledged again the faithfulness of God unto himself, “And the king sware, and said, As the LORD liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress” (1Ki 1:29). The Lord is the Deliverer of all who put their trust in Him and repeatedly had He delivered David out of the hands of his enemies. Second, God’s faithfulness to David (1Ch 22:9-13), now inspired him to be faithful to his covenant promise concerning Solomon, “Even as I sware unto thee by the LORD God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shalt sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day” (1Ki 1:30). Most blessed is this—whatever danger his own person might be threatened with, he hesitated not.

In what immediately follows, we are informed of the decisive measures taken by David to overthrow the plot of Adonijah. “Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king. The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon: and let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet and say, God save king Solomon. Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah” (1Ki 1:32-35). Orders were given for the proclaiming

of Solomon. He was to be set upon the royal mule, formally anointed, and duly proclaimed king. This important transaction was entrusted to men of God who had proved themselves in His service. Solomon would thus have the necessary authority for conducting state affairs until David's decease, after which there would be no uncertainty in the public mind as to his rightful successor.

“And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, and said, Amen: the LORD God of my lord the king say so too. As the LORD hath been with my lord the king, even so be he with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David” (1Ki 1:36-37). The measures proposed by the king met with the hearty approval of his advisers. Speaking in the name of the others, Benaiah expressed their complete satisfaction in the royal nomination. His “Amen” shows the original meaning and emphasis of this term—it was faith's affirmation, assured that God would make good His promise. Benaiah's language was that of fervent piety, for he realized that the plans of his master, no matter how wise and good, could not be carried to a successful conclusion without the blessing of divine providence—alas that this is so largely lost sight of today. He added the earnest prayer that God would bless Solomon's reign even more than He had his father's.

The orders which David had given were promptly executed. Solomon was brought in state to the place appointed and was duly anointed. This gave great joy and satisfaction to the people. “And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so the earth rent with the sound of them” (1Ki 1:40). Thereby they evidenced their cheerful acceptance of him as David's successor. In like manner, all who belong to the true Israel of God gladly own the Lordship of His Son. The sequel was indeed striking. No sooner was Solomon acclaimed by the loyal subjects of David, than news thereof was borne to Adonijah and his fellow-conspirators (1Ki 1:41-42). Instead of ending in joy, the feast of the rebel terminated in consternation, “And all the guests that were with Adonijah were afraid, and rose up, and went every man his way. And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar” (1Ki 1:49-50). Thus did the Lord graciously show Himself strong on David's behalf to the end of his course.

In closing, we would call attention to a most blessed typical picture, in which both David and Solomon are needed to give it completeness—compare the joint-types supplied by Joseph and Benjamin, Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha. First, David had been successful as “a man of war” (1Ch 28:3), for by him the Lord so overcame the enemies of Israel as to “put them under the sole of his feet” (1Ki 5:3). In like manner, the Lord Jesus by His death and resurrection was victorious over all His foes (Col 2:14-15). Second, Solomon had been chosen and ordained to the throne before he was born (1Ch 22:9)—so, too, Christ was the elect of God from all eternity (Isa 42:1). Third, Solomon rode on a mule, not as a warrior, but in lowly guise—so did Christ (Mat 21:1-9). Fourth, he was anointed with the sacred oil—type of the Spirit—so Christ received the Spirit in His fullness at His ascension (Act 2:33). Finally, rest and quietness was granted unto Israel throughout Solomon's reign (1Ch 22:9)—so Christ is now reigning as “the Prince of Peace” over His people.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

11. Its Opposition

Third, *the Gospel offer is meaningless*. Those who refuse to receive the truth of divine election are fond of saying that the idea of God having eternally chosen one and passed by another of His creatures would reduce evangelical preaching to a farce. They argue that if God has foreordained a part of the human race to destruction, it can contain no bona fide offer of salvation to them. Let it first be pointed out that this objection does not press upon Calvinism alone, but applies with the same force to Arminianism. Free-willers deny the absoluteness of the divine decrees, yet they affirm the divine prescience. Then let us turn the question round upon them, How can God in good faith bid men to repent and believe the Gospel, when He infallibly *foreknows* they will never do so? If they suppose the former objection to be irrefutable, they will find our question is unanswerable by their own principles.

Whatever difficulty may be presented at this point—and the writer has no thought of belittling it—one thing is clear—to whomsoever the Gospel comes, God is sincere in bidding its hearers submit to its requirements, receive its glad tidings, and be saved thereby. Whether we can or cannot perceive how this is so matters nothing, but the integrity of the divine character must be maintained at all costs. The mere fact that we are unable to discern the consistence and harmony between two distinct lines of truth, certainly does not warrant our rejecting either one of them. The doctrine of sovereign election is clearly revealed in the Scriptures—so, too, is the genuineness of the Gospel offer to all who receive it. The one must be contended for as earnestly as the other.

But do we not create our own difficulty by supposing that the *salvation* of men is God's sole object, or even His principal design, in the sending forth of the Gospel? But what other ends, it may be asked, are accomplished thereby? Many. God's first end in the Gospel, as in everything else, is the honour of His own great name and the glory of His Son. In the Gospel, the character of God and the excellence of Christ are more fully revealed than anywhere else. That a worldwide testimony should be borne thereto is infinitely fitting. That men should have made known to them the ineffable perfections of Him with whom they have to do is certainly most desirable. God, then, is magnified and the matchless worth of His Son proclaimed, even though not one sinner ever believed and was saved thereby.

Again—the preaching of the Gospel is the appointed instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit whereby the elect are brought to Christ. God does not disdain instrumental agencies, but is pleased to employ them. He who ordained the end, also appointed the means thereto. Just because God's elect are "scattered abroad" (Joh 11:52) among all nations, He has commanded that "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations" (Luk 24:47). It is by hearing the Gospel they are called out of the world. By nature God's elect are the children of wrath "even as others." They are lost sinners needing a Saviour, and apart from Christ there is no salvation for them. Therefore the Gospel must be preached to and believed in by them before they can rejoice in the knowledge that their sins are forgiven. The Gospel, then, is God's great winnowing fan, separating the wheat from the chaff, and gathering the former into His garner.

Moreover, the non-elect *gain much* from the Gospel, even though it effects not their eternal salvation. The world exists for the elect's sake, yet all share the benefits of it. The sun shines upon the evil as well as the good, refreshing showers fall upon the lands of the wicked as truly as on the ground of the righteous. So God causes the Gospel to reach the ears of many of the non-elect, as well as those of His favoured people. Why? Because it is one of His powerful agencies to hold in check the wickedness of fallen men. Millions who are never saved by it, are reformed. Their lusts are bridled, their outward course improved, and society is made more suitable for the

saints to live in. Compare the peoples without the Gospel and those who have it. In the case of the latter it will be found that higher morality obtains even where there is no spirituality.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the Gospel is a real test of the characters of all who hear it. The Scriptures declare that man is a fallen, corrupt, and sin-loving creature. They insist that his mind is enmity against God, that he loves darkness rather than light, that he will not be subject to God under any circumstances. Yet who believes such humbling truths? But the response to the Gospel by the non-elect demonstrates the verity of God's Word. Their continued impenitence, unbelief, and disobedience bears witness to their total depravity. God instructed Moses to go unto Pharaoh and make request that Israel should be allowed to worship JEHOVAH in the wilderness. Yet in the very next verse He told him, "And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand" (Exo 3:19). Then why send Moses on such an errand? To make manifest the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, the stubbornness of his will, and the justice of God in destroying such a wretch.

Fourth, *it destroys human responsibility*. Arminians contend that to affirm God has unalterably decreed and fixed the history and destiny of every man, would be to demolish human accountability, that in such a case man would be no better than a machine. They insist that man's will must be free, free equally unto good and evil, or otherwise he would cease to be a moral agent. They argue that unless a person's actions are without compulsion, and are in accordance with his own desires and inclinations, he could not be justly held responsible for them. From this premise the conclusion is drawn that it is the creature and not the Creator who chooses and decides his eternal destiny, for if his acts are self-determined, they cannot be divinely determined.

Such an objection is really a descent into the dark regions of philosophy and metaphysics, a specious attempt of the enemy to lead us away from the realm of divine revelation. So long as we abide by the Holy Scriptures, we are safe, but as soon as we resort to reasoning upon spiritual matters we are certain to err. God has already made known all that He deems well for us to know in this life, and any attempt to be wise above that which is written is naught but folly and impiety. From the Scriptures it is clear as a sunbeam that man—whether considered as unfallen or fallen—is a responsible being, that he is made to reap whatsoever he sows, that he will yet have to render unto God an account of all his deeds and be judged accordingly—and nothing must be allowed to weaken the impression of these solemn facts upon our minds.

The same line of reasoning has been employed by those who reject the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. It is contended that such a postulate entirely eliminates the human element from the Bible, that if we insist (as this writer, for one, most emphatically does) that not only the thoughts and sentiments but the very language itself is divine, that every word and syllable of the original manuscripts was God-breathed—then the human penman employed in transmitting the same were merely automatons. But this we know is false. In like manner, with as much show of reason might the objector declare that Christ cannot be both divine and human—that if He is God, He cannot be man, and that if He is truly man, it follows that He cannot be God. What is reasoning worth, my reader, upon such matters?!

The books of the Bible *were* written by men, written by them under the free exercise of their natural faculties, in such a way that the impression of their personalities is clearly left upon their several contributions. Nevertheless, they originated nothing—they were "moved by the Holy Ghost" (2Pe 1:21), and so completely were they controlled by Him, that not the slightest shadow of a mistake or error was made by them, and every thing they wrote were "the words which...the Holy Ghost teacheth" (1Co 2:13). The Redeemer is the Son of man, who was "in all things...made like unto his brethren" (Heb 2:17). Yet because His humanity was taken into union

with His divine person, everything He did possessed a unique and infinite value. Man is a moral agent, acting according to the desires and dictates of his nature. He is at the same time a creature, fully controlled and determined by his Creator. In each of these cases the divine and human elements coalesce, but the divine dominates, yet not to the exclusion of the human.

“Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it *must* needs be that offenses come” (Mat 18:7). Then surely, may an objector reply, there can be no guilt resting on him who introduces that which is inevitable. Different far was the teaching of Christ, “But *woe* to that man by whom the offense cometh!” (Mat 18:7). “When ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be” (Mar 13:7). There is a must-be for these death-dealing scourges, yet that alters not the criminality of the instigators of them. There is a needs-be for “heresies” (1Co 11:19), yet the heretics themselves are to blame. Absolute necessity and human responsibility are therefore perfectly compatible, whether *we* can perceive their consistency or not.

Fifth, it is objected against the truth of predestination that it *supercedes the use of* means and renders all incentives to human endeavour negative. It is asserted that if God has elected a man unto salvation that he will be saved although he remains utterly unconcerned and continues to take his fill of sin—that if he has not been elected, then no efforts to obtain eternal life would be of any use. It is said that for men to be told they have been divinely ordained either to life or death by an eternal and immutable decree, they will at once conclude that it makes no difference whatever how they conduct themselves. Since no act of theirs can to the slightest degree either impede or promote the foreordination of God, it is argued all motives to diligence are effectually neutralized, and that it is subversive of every exhortation to morality and spirituality.

Really, this is the most senseless of all objections. It is not an objection at all against the *Scriptural* doctrine of predestination, but against an entirely different concept, one hatched in the brains of ignorance or conceived by malignity in order to bring odium on the truth. The only sort of predestination to which this objection is applicable would be an absolute pre-appointment to an end without any regard to the *means*. Stripped of all ambiguity, this objection presupposes that God secures His purposes without employing any instrumental agencies. Thus, when the objection is exposed in its nakedness we see at once what a sorry figure it cuts. Those whom God has elected to salvation He has chosen to it “*through* sanctification...and belief of the truth” (2Th 2:13).

The fact is that God decreed to bring His elect to glory in a way of sanctification, and in no other way than that. And throughout their entire course He treats with them as rational and accountable creatures, using suitable means and motives to draw out their hearts unto Himself. To affirm that if they are elected they will reach heaven whether sanctified or not, is just as silly as to say Abraham might have been the father of many nations although he had died in infancy, or that Hezekiah could have lived his extra fifteen years without food or sleep. Prior to the taking of Jericho it was divinely revealed to Joshua that he should be master of that place (Jos 6:2)—the assurance was absolute. Did, then, Israel’s leader conclude that no action was needed, that all might sit down and fold their arms? No—he arranged the procession around its walls in obedience to God’s command and the event was accomplished accordingly.

We turn now to briefly consider some of the principal Scriptures used by those who resist the truth. “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof” (Pro 1:24-25). “I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts” (Isa 65:2). “How often would I have gathered thy children

together...and ye would not!" (Mat 23:37). We are told by Arminians that these declarations are irreconcilable with Calvinism, that they show plainly the will of God *can be* resisted and thwarted by men. But most certainly a disappointed and defeated God is not the God of Holy Writ. To draw from these verses the conclusion that the divine decrees fail of accomplishment is utterly erroneous. They have nothing whatever to do with God's eternal purpose, but instead, they respect only His *external* agencies, whereby He enforces man's responsibility, tests his character, and makes evident the wickedness of his heart.

"For God so loved *the world*, that he gave his only begotten Son" (Joh 3:16). From these words it is urged that if God loves the world He desires the salvation of the whole human race, and that it was for this end He provided a Saviour for them. Here it is a case of being misled by the mere sound of a word, instead of ascertaining its real import. To say that God gave His Son with the design of providing salvation for all of Adam's children is manifestly absurd, for half of them had already died before Christ was born, and the vast majority of them perished in heathen darkness. Where is there the slightest hint in the Old Testament that God loved the Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Babylonians? And where else in the New Testament is there any statement that God loves all mankind? The "world" in John 3:16 (as in many other places) is a *general* term, used in contrast from *Israel*, who imagined they had a monopoly on redemption. God's love extends far beyond the bounds of Judaism, embracing His elect scattered among all nations.

"And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (Joh 5:40). Strange to say this is one of the verses appealed to by those who will not have election at any price. They suppose it teaches the free will unto good of fallen man, and that Christ seriously intended the salvation of those who despise and reject Him. But what is there in these words which declares that Christ seriously intended their salvation? Do they not rather signify that He was here preferring a solemn charge against them? So far from our Lord's utterance implying that these men had the power within themselves to come to Him, they rather declare the perversity and stubbornness of their wills. Instead of any inclination for the Holy one, they hated Him.

"Who will have *all men* to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth...who gave himself a ransom for *all*" (1Ti 2:4, 6). In order to understand these words, they must not be considered separately, but in connection with their setting. From the context it is unmistakably evident that the "all men" God wills to be saved and for whom Christ died are all men *without regard to national distinctions*. Timothy's ministry was exercised chiefly among Jewish converts, many of whom still retained their racial prejudices, so that they were unwilling to submit to the authority of heathen rulers. This was why the Pharisees had sought to discredit Christ before the people when they asked Him whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar. Paul here tells Timothy that Christians were not only to yield obedience unto Gentile rulers, but to pray for them as well (1Ti 2:1-2).

In 1 Timothy 2, Paul struck at the very root of the prejudice which Timothy was called upon to combat. The law of Moses was now set aside, the distinction which so long obtained between the lineal descendants of Abraham and the rest of mankind no longer obtained—God willed the salvation of Gentiles and Jews alike. Note particularly these details. First, "There is one God (see Rom 3:29-30!), and one mediator between God and [not "the Jews" but] men" (1Ti 2:5). Second, "Who gave himself a ransom for all [indefinitely], *to be testified in due time*" (1Ti 2:6). When Christ was crucified it was not generally understood, not even among His disciples, that He gave Himself for Gentiles and Jews alike, but in "due time" (particularly under Paul's ministry,) it was clearly "testified." Third, "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle...a teacher of the *Gentiles*" (1Ti 2:7). Fourth, "I [with apostolic authority] will therefore that men pray *every*

where” (1Ti 2:8). Those professing the faith of Christ must drop at once and forever, their Jewish notions and customs—Jerusalem no longer possessed any peculiar sanctity.

“We see Jesus...that he by the grace of God should taste death for *every man*” (Heb 2:9). Have you taken the trouble to ascertain how that expression is used elsewhere in the New Testament? “And then shall *every man* have praise of God” (1Co 4:5). Does that mean all of Adam’s race? How can it, when “Depart from me, ye cursed” (Mat 25:41) will be the portion of many? “The head of *every man* is Christ” (1Co 11:3)—was He the Head of Judas or Nero? “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to *every man*” (1Co 12:7). But some are “sensual, having not the Spirit” (Jude 1:19 and cf. Rom 8:9). It is “everyone” in *God’s family* that is meant in all of these epistle passages. Note how the “every man” of Hebrews 2:9 is defined as “many sons” (Heb 2:10), “brethren” (Heb 2:11), “children” (Heb 2:13-14).

“There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them” (2Pe 2:1). This verse is often cited in an attempt to disprove that Christ died for the elect only, which only serves to show what desperate shifts our opponents are reduced to. Why the verse makes no reference unto Christ at all, still less to His death! The Greek word here is not “kurios” at all—the one commonly used when referring to the Lord Jesus, but “despotes.” The only places where it occurs, when applied to a divine person, are Acts 4:24; 2 Timothy 2:21; Jude 4; Revelation 6:10, in all of which God the Father is plainly intended, and in most of them as manifestly distinguished from Christ. “Bought” here has reference to temporal deliverance, being taken from Deuteronomy 32:6. Peter was writing to Jews, who boasted loudly they were a people purchased by the Lord, and therefore he used this expression to aggravate the impiety of these false teachers among the Jews.

“Not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance” (2Pe 3:9). Here again a false meaning is extracted by divorcing a snippet from its context. The key to this verse is found in the word “us-ward”—“the Lord is...longsuffering to us-ward,” for He is not willing that “any” *of them* should perish. And who are they? Why, the “beloved” of verse 1 (those mentioned at the beginning of the first epistle, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit (1Pe 1:2)”, and because He has purposed that “all” *of them* should come to repentance, He refers to the second coming of Christ (2Pe 3:3-4). Christ will not return till the last of His people are safely in the Ark of Salvation.

THE HOLY SABBATH

7. Its Christianization

In these particular articles upon the Christianization of the Sabbath, we are seeking to establish (from Scripture) two things. First, that there is a *Sabbath* appointed by God for this dispensation—a *Christian Sabbath* for His people to keep holy and enjoy. Second, that this Christian Sabbath is to be observed upon “*another day*” of the week than the one celebrated throughout the Old Testament era. The one passage in the New Testament which above all others most conclusively proves both of these points is Hebrews 4:8-10, and therefore are we seeking to give a careful exposition of these verses and their setting. We would ask those who are really interested and concerned to re-read at this stage our article in the October issue and then proceed with this.

Last month, we got as far as Hebrews 4:9, which expressly declares, “There remaineth therefore a rest [keeping of a Sabbath] to the people of God.” Nothing could be simpler, nothing less ambiguous than that verse. The striking thing is that it occurs in the very epistle whose theme is the superiority of *Christianity* over Judaism—a theme developed by showing the superiority of Christ (the center and life of Christianity) over angels, Adam, Moses, Joshua, Aaron, and the whole Levitical economy. It is an epistle addressed to “holy brethren, partakers of the *heavenly* calling” (Heb 3:1). Therefore it cannot be denied that Hebrews 4:9 is referring directly to *the Christian Sabbath*. Hence, we solemnly and emphatically declare that the man who says that there is *no* Christian Sabbath takes direct issue with the *New Testament Scriptures*.

“There remaineth therefore a rest [keeping of a Sabbath] to the people of God” (Heb 4:9). In this, and the following verse, the apostle evidences the perfect analogy between the several rests of God and His people discoursed of in this chapter. First, at the beginning there was the creative work of God and His resting therefrom, which made way for a rest for His creatures in Himself and His worship by the contemplation of the works He had made. A day was specially assigned for that purpose—that was the primitive Sabbatismos. Second, there was a great work of God in bringing Israel out of Egypt and the establishing of His people in Canaan, which made way for their entering into His rest and worship, a Sabbath day being appointed to express both the one and the other—this was the Mosaic Sabbatismos.

So now, under the Gospel, there is a Sabbath comprised of all these. As we shall see, there was another and greater work of God, and a rest of His own ensued thereon. on that work is founded the promise of rest spiritual and eternal to those who do believe, and the determination of a new day expressive of the one and the other. This is the Christian Sabbatismos. That the redemptive work of Christ has not only secured this spiritual rest to His people, but has also necessitated and resulted in *a new Sabbath* to celebrate it appears from two things in the apostle’s discourse. First, by his referring to our Gospel rest by the name of DAY (Heb 4:8). Second, from his coining of this term “Sabbatismos” to express both our spiritual rest and the Sabbath-keeping which memorializes the same.

“For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works as God did from his” (Heb 4:10). Plain and simple as these words are, yet they have been grievously wrested by most of the commentators. They are generally regarded as referring to *believers* entering into the rest of God, through their believing of the Gospel. But there are two considerations which expose the error of this view. First, the verse does *not* read, “*They* who enter into his rest,” but “*He* that is entered into.” Second, if the reference was to believers, *what* are the “works” from which they cease? Their sins, say some; their legalistic efforts to win God’s approval, say others; their sorrows and sufferings, from which they shall rest in heaven, say yet others. But *how* could they be said to rest from any such works, “*AS* God from his” own? It is utterly impossible to satisfactorily answer such a question. No, the verse speaks not of believers, but of *Christ*.

“For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his” (Heb 4:10). Here the apostle concludes his argument by declaring that the “rest” which remains for believers to enter into (Heb 4:3), and the new day appointed by God for this dispensation (Heb 4:9), have a new and special foundation, which the previous rests and days had no interest or concern in, namely, that the Author of it ceased from His own works and entered into His rest. Proofs that this verse refers *to Christ* are many. First, its opening “For,” which denotes that the apostle now indicates whence it is there is a new Sabbatismos remaining for the people of God. He had before shown there could be no such rest but what was founded upon the

works of God. Such a foundation this new rest must have, and does have. It is the work of Him by whom the church is builded: Hebrews 3:3-4.

Second, the change of number in the pronoun from the plural to the singular intimates the same thing. In Hebrews 4:1-3, the apostle had used “us” and “we,” but here, verse 10, he says, “*He* that is entered.” This is the more noticeable because in the verse immediately preceding he had mentioned “the people of God.” That it is *not they* who are here in view further appears from the fact that they never cease from their works while left in this world. No other reason can possibly be given for this change of number except that a single person is here expressed. Third, note it is not simply said of this person that, “He that is entered into rest” (as in Heb 4:3 and 8), but “into *his* rest” absolutely. God spoke of “my rest,” here He mentions “his rest”—Christ’s rest!

Fourth, there is a direct parallel supplied by this verse between the works of the old creation and those of the new, which the apostle is openly comparing together. 1. In the *Authors* of them—of the former it is said of God the Creator, He did “rest from all his works” (Heb 4:4). So “He [Christ] also hath ceased from his own.” 2. The *products* of the one and of the Other are mentioned—Their respective “works,” and there is a due proportion between them, each being creative and “very good.” 3. There is the *rest* of the one and of the Other, and these also have a proportion to one another. It should now be unmistakably plain to every impartial reader that it is the person of Jesus Christ who is the subject spoken of in verse 10.

The blessed person referred to, then, in verse 10 is the Lord Jesus, and none other—the Author of the new creation. This alone gives meaning to the causal conjunction. There is a Sabbatismos now for the people of God, FOR Christ is entered into His rest. What is denoted by His “rest” we must now inquire. This was certainly not His being in the grave. His body indeed rested there for a brief season, but that was no part of His *mediatory* rest, as He is the builder of His church, and that for two reasons. First, His entombment was part of His *humiliation* (Isa 53:9). Second, the separation of His soul and body was *penal*, a part of the sentence of the law which He underwent, and hence Peter declares, “The pains of death” were not loosed until His resurrection (Act 2:24).

Nor did Christ first enter into His rest at His ascension, rather was that an entrance into His *glory*, as in the full public manifestation of it. No, Christ’s entrance into rest was in, by, and at His resurrection from the dead. For it was then and thereon He was freed from the power and service of the law, being discharged from the debts of our sins. It was then and thereon that all prefigurations and predictions concerning the work of redemption were fulfilled. It was then and thereon that He received “the promise of the Holy Ghost” (Act 2:33), and the whole foundation of the church of God was laid upon His person. It was then and thereon that He was “declared to be the Son of God with power” (Rom 1:4). God manifesting unto all that this was He of whom He said, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (Act 13:33).

“Thus did the Author of the new creation, the Son of God, having finished His works, enter into His rest. And this was, as we all know, on the morning of the *first* day of the week. And hereby did He limit and determine the day for a sacred Sabbatical rest under the New Testament. For now was the old covenant (the Siniatic) utterly abolished, and therefore the day which was the pledge of the rest of God and man therein, was to be taken away. As the rest from the beginning of the world had its foundation from the works of God, and His rest which ensued thereon, which was determined unto the seventh day, because that was the day wherein God ceased from those works—which day continued under the legal administration of the covenant by Moses—so the rest of the Lord Christ is the foundation of our rest, which, changing the old covenant and the day annexed unto it, He hath limited unto the *first* day of the week, whereon He ceased from His works and entered into His rest.

“Wherefore when the Lord Christ intended conspicuously to build His church upon the foundation of His works and rest, by sending the Holy Spirit with His miraculous gifts upon the apostles, He did it on *this day*—which was then among the Jews the feast of Pentecost. Then were the disciples gathered together with one accord, in the observance of the day signalized to them by His resurrection (Act 2:1). And by this did their obedience receive a blessed confirmation, as well as their persons a glorious endowment with abilities for the work which they were immediately to apply themselves unto” (John Owen, 1616-1683, to whom we are indebted for much in this and last month’s article).

It remains for us to point out that the rest into which Christ entered is proposed unto His people in the Gospel. This is asserted in the precious verse and is here made manifest. “There remaineth therefore a rest [keeping of a Sabbath] to the people of God,” (Heb 4:9) *because* Christ has entered into His rest. As the other rests—the one at the beginning of human history and the other at the beginning of the commonwealth of Israel—had their foundation in the works and rests of God, whereon a day of rest was appointed for them to keep, so has this new rest a foundation in the works and rest of Christ—who has built all things and is *God* (see Heb 3:3-4), determining a day for our use in and by that whereon He entered into His rest, which is the first day of the week.

Before giving a brief word on verse 11, let us refer to what may present a difficulty unto a few. It should be quite clear there is a Christian Sabbath, a Sabbath appointed for this dispensation. Some may be ready to say, Yes, for “the people of God” (Heb 4:9), but how about unbelievers? First, we answer, we know of nothing in Scripture which intimates that God requires unbelievers to celebrate the first day of the week as a memorial of our Lord’s resurrection, for Christ means nothing to them. But second, they *are* commanded to keep the Sabbath holy unto God their Creator and Ruler. The original covenant of Works has never been repealed, and all out of Christ are under it. Though the day of Sabbath observance is changed, God requires all alike, believers and unbelievers, to abstain from all secular employment on the Sabbath and keep the day holy unto Himself.

“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (Heb 4:11). First, it is to be noted that the apostle does not here use the term “Sabbatismos” (as in v. 9), but, “katapausis” as in verses 1, 3, 5, etc. This shows that he now returns to his principal exhortation—the reader will be helped on the passage as a whole if he places verses 4-10 in a parenthesis, thus connecting verse 11 with verse 3. In the opening verse of the chapter Paul has said, “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it,” and here he now makes known how that “fear” is to exert itself. It is not a “fear” of dread or doubt, but is such a reverential respect unto the divine threatenings and promises as would stir up its possessors unto all diligence to avoid the one and inherit the other.

The utmost of our endeavours and efforts are required in order to our obtaining an entrance into the rest of Christ. We are to “labour” or give the greatest possible diligence thereto. Men are in real earnest and spend their strength in striving after the bread which perishes—the same intentness and zeal are required in our seeking the Bread of Life. He who teaches men that an entrance into spiritual and eternal rest is a thing plain, easy, and suited to nature, does but delude and deceive them. To mortify sin, deny self, cut off right hands, endure all sorts of afflictions and persecutions—are painful, difficult, and attended with many hardships. The future state of the Christian is one wholly of rest, but his present state is a *mixed* one, partly of rest and partly of labour—labour against sin, rest in the love and grace of God.

Having now gone carefully through our passage let us see what we have learned from it. First, Hebrews 4 opens with a pointed warning taken from the case of the unbelieving Israelites of old (Heb 3:16-18). Second, but though those Israelites failed to enter into it, yet there is a rest of God proposed unto us in the Gospel, and which believers enter into (Heb 4:3). Third, this led the apostle to take up the different “rests” of God and His people—the Edenic, Mosaic, and Messianic (Heb 4:4-10). Fourth, in leading up to his climax, the apostle throws the emphasis not so much on the “rest” as on the DAY appointed to celebrate it. In Hebrews 4:7, he declares that God (prophetically) limited or determined “a certain day.” In Hebrews 4:8, he expressly refers to “another day” which supplies proof that a *different one* from the old seventh day is now instituted. In Hebrews 4:9, this other day and the rest it memorializes is definitely designated a “Sabbatismos” or “keeping of a Sabbath.” In Hebrews 4:10, he shows *why* the Sabbath day had been changed—because it was on that day Christ entered into His rest.

Well, then, may we with the utmost confidence exclaim with the psalmist, “*This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it*” (Psa 118:24). “We observe the day as henceforth our true Sabbath, a day made and ordained of God, for the perpetual remembrance of the achievements of our Redeemer” (Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892). It should be pointed out that the passage we have last quoted is part of a remarkable prophecy, which set forth both the humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus—“the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1Pe 1:1). The passage is quoted in the New Testament no less than six times, being expressly applied to the Saviour. First, He is seen as “the stone which the builders refused,” and then as “became the head of the corner” (Psa 118:2).

And how could that “stone,” contemptuously trodden underfoot by men, become “the head of the corner”? How indeed except by *being raised*!? It was by His triumph over death that Christ became the Head of the corner—a “corner” is when two walls meet together, and in resurrection Christ became Head of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles! The psalmist added, “This is the LORD’s doing, it is marvellous in our eyes” (Psa 118:23). And then follows, “*This is the day which the LORD hath made*” (Psa 118:24). What could be clearer? How perfectly it accords with Hebrews 4:9-10! That “day” was divinely “made” to memorialize Christ’s victory over the grave. God has “made it remarkable, made it holy, has distinguished it from all other days. It is therefore called the Lord’s Day, because it bears His image and superscription” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

And so it is—the Christian Sabbath is specifically designated “the *Lord’s day*” in Revelation 1:10. It is called such because it owes its pre-eminence to the Lord’s institution and authority. By taking to Himself the title of the “Lord also of the sabbath” (Mar 2:28), Christ clearly intimated His authority to determine which day of the week a Sabbath rest was to be observed by His people, and by ceasing from His works and entering into His rest on the *first* day of the week, He has “limited” this one for us. Those who are determined to close their eyes to all this evidence and get rid of the first-day Sabbath at any price, wrest these words in Revelation 1:10 by saying they signify “the day of the Lord” when He comes in judgment. But the immediate context is dead against them. All that follows from Revelation 1:10 to the end of chapter 3 shows that this opening vision respected present and *not future* things. Moreover, the Greek is different from 2 Peter 3:10! “The Lord’s supper” (1Co 11:20) memorializes His death, “the Lord’s day” celebrates His resurrection.

Here is a summary of the reasons why Christians should observe the Sabbath on the first day of the week. First, because that day was clearly anticipated by Old Testament typology—the striking things connected with “the *eighth day*.” Second, because the new covenant necessitated a

new day of rest to signify the old covenant was abrogated. Third, because the honour and glory of *Christ* required it. on the day specially appointed for divine worship, God would now have us occupied with His risen and exalted Son. Fourth, His own example bears witness thereto—His repeated meetings with His disciples (Joh 19) and His sending the Spirit on that day (Act 2:1) set His imprimatur upon it. Fifth, because the early church so celebrated it (Act 20:7; 1Co 16:1-2). There is not a single recorded instance in the New Testament of the saints meeting together for worship, after Christ's resurrection, on any other day but on the *first* of the week! Sixth, because we are expressly told that God has "limited" or determined "*another* day" (Heb 4:9) than the old one, and that, because Christ then rose from the dead (Heb 4:10). Seventh, because we are divinely assured that, in view of the raising up of the rejected stone to be the head of the corner, "This is *the day* which the LORD hath made" (Psa 118:24), and therefore is it called "the *Lord's* day" in the New Testament (Rev 1:10).

MORTIFIED EYES

"Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way" (Psa 119:37). The first request is for the removing of impediments to obedience, the other for addition of new degrees of grace. These two are fitly joined, for they have a natural influence upon one another. Unless we turn away our eyes from vanity, we shall soon contract a deadness of heart. When our affections are alive to other things, they are dead to God, therefore the less we let loose our hearts to these things, the more lively and cheerful the work of obedience. on the other side, the more the vigour of grace is renewed and the habits of it quickened into actual exercise, the more is sin mortified and subdued.

1. It therefore concerns those that would walk with God to have their eyes turned away from worldly things. He that would be quickened, carried out with life and vigour in the ways of God, must first be mortified, die unto sin. Speaking of the fruits of Christ's death, the apostle mentioned death unto sins before life unto righteousness (1Pe 2:25). If any would live with Christ, first they must learn to die unto sin. It is impossible for sin and grace to thrive in the same subject.

2. One great means of mortification is *guarding the senses*—eyes and ears, taste and touch—that they may not betray the heart. I put it so general because the man of God that is so solicitous about his eyes would not be careless of his ears and other senses. We must watch on all sides. When an assault is made on a city, if one gate be open it is as good as if all were. The ingress and egress of sin is by the *senses* and much of our danger lies there. There are many objects that agree with our distempers and by them insinuate themselves into the soul, and therefore things long since seemingly dead will soon revive again and recover life and strength. There are no means to keep the heart unless we keep the eye. In every creature Satan has laid a snare for us, to steal away our hearts and affections from God. The senses are so ready to receive these objects from without to wound the heart, for they are as the heart is. If the heart be poisoned with sin and became a servant to it, so are the senses of our bodies "weapons of unrighteousness" (see Rom 6:13). Objects have an impression upon them answerable to the temper and affections of the soul, and what it desires they pitch upon, and therefore if we let the senses wander, the heart will take fire.

3. Above all senses *the eye* must be guarded. First, because it is the noblest sense, given us for high uses. There is not only a natural eye to inform us of things profitable and hurtful for the natural man, but a *spiritual* use to set before us those objects that may stir us and raise our minds to heavenly meditations. By beholding the perfection of the creature we may admire the more eminent perfection of Him that made them, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork” (Psa 19:1). “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhood” (Rom 1:20). The perfections of the creature are to draw us to God and its defects to drive us from themselves. The eye, as it is used, will either be a help or a snare—either it will let in the sparks of temptation or enkindle the fire of true devotion. These are the windows which God has placed in the top of the building, that man from there may contemplate God’s works and take a prospect of heaven.

Second, because the eyes have a great influence upon the *heart* either to good or evil, but chiefly to evil. In this corrupt state of man, by looking we come to liking and are brought inordinately to affect what we do behold. “Seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye used to go a whoring” (Num 15:39). “If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes” (Job 31:7). These are the spies of the heart—brokers to bring it and the temptation together—the eye sees, and then by gazing, the heart lusts and the body acts the transgression. It is more dangerous to *see* evil than to hear it.—Thomas Manton, 1660.



December

LAST THINGS LAST

We opened the year by writing upon “First things First,” so it seems appropriate that we should offer a few remarks upon last things in this closing issue of 1939. The subject suggested by this title could be dealt with in various ways. We might, for example, consider that procrastinating tendency of fallen human nature to put off till later things which ought to be seriously attended to now. *Death* was the last thing in the experience of the countless millions whose bodies now lie in the cemeteries—how many of them were prepared to pass out of time into eternity? Like we, they knew that their life span would be but a comparatively short one at best. Yet, like most of our generation, it is greatly to be feared the majority of them lived as though they were going to continue here indefinitely, with plenty of time before them for preparing to meet their God. Here is a case where last things must not be left to the last. “O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would *consider* their latter end!” (Deu 32:29).

Or we might well dwell on the fact that the closing days of another year call for a solemn *review* of the months now behind us—how far we have redeemed the time or to what extent we have trifled it away. “Thou shalt *remember* all the way which the LORD thy God led thee” (Deu 8:2). We should be humbled at the recollection of how frequently we grumbled because His way was not the one we desired. We should judge ourselves unsparingly because we so often lagged behind and sought to turn aside into forbidden bypaths. We should ponder the amazing grace of God in condescending *to lead* us across this trackless desert, and think, too, of His infinite forbearance in *continuing* to lead those so ungrateful and intractable. We should praise Him for having kept us in the narrow way, which we had certainly forsaken had we been left to follow the bent of our own evil lusts. And we should return fervent thanks that we are now a year’s march nearer our heavenly home.

Again, we might consider how this order of last things last is now being so extensively *displaced* in the modern world. In 1 Timothy 2, where the Holy Spirit issues the command, “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (1Ti 2:11-12), He points out, “For Adam was *first* formed, *then* Eve” (1Ti 2:13). Headship was therefore given to the man (1Co 11:3). In the church and in the home the man and not the woman is to bear rule (1Pe 3:6). But more and more this divine order is being defied, and those who should be in subjection are taking the lead, the last (in the order of creation) insisting they should be first. The harvest we are beginning to reap from this evil sowing is indeed tragic—seen in the unruliness and selfishness of the rising generation.

But it is quite another instance of this turning of things topsy-turvy against which we would here protest—one that seems to have escaped the notice of many—or at any rate, one which is now being widely tolerated. We allude to the course being followed in so many quarters of the

insistent pressure of *prophecy* upon young converts. No sooner do a number of young people make a profession of salvation than (in many places) Bible study classes are organized for their benefit, where, for the most part, they are entertained with a lot of sensationalism, drawn from the politics of the present national and international situation, under the pretence that such is the accomplishment of divine prediction. Things of vital moment are relegated to the rear and matters of far less importance are pushed to the fore. Doctrinal instruction, practical teaching, devotional incentives are largely ignored, and exciting disquisitions on future earthly events are substituted in their place.

In theological textbooks, “Last things” (Eschatology) are rightly left for the closing chapters. We say “rightly,” for that is the order which God Himself has followed in the New Testament. Seven times over is the Apocalypse designated a “prophecy,” yet this is not placed at the beginning of the New Testament, but at *the end*—not that it is of least importance, but because we are not ready for it until we have digested the contents of the 26 books which precede it. It betokens gross spiritual incompetence, as well as carnal impudence, for self-styled Bible teachers to invert and so pervert this divine order, and it results in harm and not good to those who sit under them. In our day-schools, teachers have too much sense than to turn their scholars to the last chapters of a textbook on grammar or arithmetic before they have thoroughly mastered the earlier ones. Alas, that the children of this world are so often wiser than the children of light.

Incalculable harm is being done by this putting of “last things” first in the lives of young converts—this bringing before them the mysterious subjects of “the Revelation” before their characters have been formed after the example of Christ in the Gospels and by the precepts of the epistles. Such a policy is as senseless and fatal as would be the teaching of infants how to fly an airplane. Instead of being exercised as to how they may please God, young converts are now having their minds diverted to how soon the battle of Armageddon is likely to be waged—a matter about which no one on earth has the slightest inkling. Instead of seeking a fuller knowledge of the divine will for their own daily lives, babes in Christ are being occupied with profitless speculations as to how far Bolshevism and Fascism correspond to the “clay” and “iron” of Daniel 2:41. Instead of being instructed to seek a closer conformity to the image of Christ, they are puzzling their poor brains over the number and image of the Antichrist. Instead of giving themselves to earnest prayer for the revival of vital holiness, they are doting upon a “revived Roman empire.”

Moreover, at least nine-tenths of what is now being given out upon the subject of “last things” is but vain speculations. Russellites [Jehovah’s Witnesses] and Adventists are capitalizing on political events by trading upon the credulity of the ignorant, and at the same time are fattening their purses at the expense of lovers of the sensational—but both blind leaders and blind victims all end in the ditch. What is going to happen next among the nations is no concern of those whose citizenship is in heaven. Our rest is not here, and therefore it is the part of wisdom to set our affection upon things above. God has given us “the Revelation” not to stimulate the spirit of curiosity, but to humble us into the dust over our ignorance. Any attempt to lift the veil of futurity is not only futile, but impious. Let those who are called to feed the flock of Christ see to it that they give them the nourishing milk of God’s Word and not the filthy water of current happenings in the world. Leave “last things” until the last!

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

13. The Law and Retaliation—Matthew 5:38-42

In what is now to be before us, we may perceive once more the deep importance of observing the *scope* of a speaker or writer—of ascertaining the meaning and relation of the context—before attempting to expound a passage. We will not enlarge any further here upon this, having already done so in the introductory paragraphs of one or more of the preceding articles. It is failure at this very point which has resulted in some commentators of renown missing the force of our present portion. They suppose that our Lord here announced a higher standard of spirituality than Moses did, that He introduced a more merciful code of conduct than that which was required during the Old Testament economy. Yet, incredible as it may sound, these same men insist that other verses in this very chapter do not belong to us at all, but pertain only to some “Jewish remnant” of the future!

It does seem strange that men who have no slight acquaintance with the letter of Scripture should err so flagrantly. Yet nothing is more blinding than prejudice, and when a pet theory is allowed to dominate the mind, then everything is twisted and forced to conform to it. Surely it is perfectly plain to every unbiased soul that, as the same God is the Author of old and new covenants alike, there can be no vital conflict between them, that the fundamental principles underlying the one and the other must be and are in full accord. If those who are so desirous of being looked up to as men who “rightly divide the word of truth” (2Ti 2:15), would cease their grotesque efforts to illustrate what they suppose are “dispensational distinctions,” and would rather seek to display the wondrous and blessed *unity* of the Old and New Testaments, they would be rendering a more profitable service and God would be far more honoured.

A few of our own readers imagine that in our contending for the doctrinal and practical unity of the entire Scriptures that we confound two of its principal objects and subjects, and deny that there is any radical difference between the law and the Gospel. This is quite an unwarrantable conclusion. Yet do not such mistakes have their roots in the supposition that the Gospel is peculiar only to the New Testament? But we ask, Doesn’t the Old Testament contain more than types of the Gospel in the ceremonial law and predictions of it in the prophecies of Isaiah? Surely it does. Galatians 3:8 tells us expressly that the Gospel was preached unto Abraham and Hebrews 4:2 insists that it was also proclaimed unto Israel in the wilderness. Does not the whole of Hebrews 11 make it very plain that the Old Testament saints were saved in precisely the same way and on exactly the same ground as we are? Assuredly it does.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: 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. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away” (Mat 5:38-42). Christ is not here pitting Himself against the Mosaic law, nor is He inculcating a superior spirituality. Instead He continues the same course as He had followed in the context, namely, to define that righteousness demanded of His followers, which was more excellent than the one taught and practiced by the scribes and Pharisees, and this He does by exposing their error and expounding the spirituality of the moral law.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” (Mat 5:38). These words are found three times in the Pentateuch. They occur first in Exodus 21, a chapter which opens thus, “Now these are the judgments.” The word “judgments” signifies judicial laws.

The statutes recorded therein were so many rules by which *the magistrates* were to proceed in the courts of Israel when trying a criminal. The execution of these statutes was not left to private individuals, so that each man was free to avenge his own wrongs, but they were placed in the hands of the public administrators of the law. This is further borne out by the third occurrence of our text in Deuteronomy 19, for there we read, “And *the judges shall* make diligent inquisition....and thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (Deu 19:18, 21).

A century or so ago such verses as those last quoted were made the object of bitter attacks both by atheists and infidels, but today not a few who profess to be Christians denounce them as inhuman. In this flabby age, when sentiment overrides principle, the doctrine of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth strikes many as being cruel and barbarous. We shall not waste time in replying to such rebels—in due course the Lord Himself will deal with them and vindicate His honour. Nor is there anything in His Holy Word which requires any apology from us—rather does it strengthen our faith when we find so many caviling at its contents. Nevertheless, there may be a few of the saints who are somewhat disturbed by the barks of these dogs, so for their sake we would call attention to one or two details.

First, this divinely-prescribed rule was a *just* one, “And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again” (Lev 24:19, 20). What is more equitable than an exact quid pro quo? Surely it is a most elementary and unchanging principle of sound jurisprudence that the punishment should be made to fit the crime—neither more nor less. So far were the ancients in advance of our moderns that we find a heathen owning the righteousness of such a law, “But Adonibezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. And Adonibezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me” (Jdg 1:6-7). If it be objected that in this Christian era justice is far more tempered with mercy than was the case in Old Testament times, then we would remind the objector that, “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal 6:7) is found in the New Testament. “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Mat 7:2) are the words of Christ Himself.

Second, this Mosaic statute was a most merciful one. It is to be observed that in Exodus 21, both before and after the rule recorded in verses 23-25, legislation is there given concerning the rights of “servants,” or as the word really means “slaves.” If their masters, out of brutality or in a fit of rage, maimed them, then the magistrates were required to see to it that they in turn should be compelled to take a dose of their own medicine. Who can fail to see, then, that such a law placed a merciful restraint upon the passions of the owners and made for the safeguarding of the persons of their slaves. Moreover, this statute also curbed any judge who, in righteous indignation at the cruel injury of a slave was inclined to punish his master too severely. He was not allowed to demand a *life* for an eye or a limb for a tooth!

Third, such an arrangement was a *beneficial* one for society as a whole, for this law applied not only to masters and servants but to all Israelites in general. It was designed to protect the weak against the strong, the peaceful from lovers of violence. It was a wise and necessary means for preserving law and order in the community. This is clear from the closing verses of Deuteronomy 19, “Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you” (Deu 19:19-20). The fear of

punishment—providing that punishment be severe and summary—would deter the passionate and vicious. Thus, so far, from this law being a cruel and barbarous one, it was a most just, merciful, and beneficial one, calculated to remove “evil” and produce that which is good.

Ere passing on, let it be pointed out that this law of judicial retaliation ought to be upon our statute books today, and impartially and firmly enforced by our magistrates. Nothing would so effectually check the rapidly rising tide of crimes of violence. But alas so foolish and effeminate is the present generation that an increasing number are agitating for the abolition of capital punishment and the doing away with all corporeal punishment, and this in the face of the fact that in those countries where capital punishment is most loosely administered there is the highest percentage of murders, and that as corporeal punishment is relaxed crimes of brutal violence are greatly increasing. Those who have no regard for the persons of others are very tender of their own skins, and therefore the best deterrent is to let them know that the law will exact from them an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

“No man needs to be more merciful than God. The benefit that will accrue to the public from this severity will abundantly recompense it. Such exemplary punishment will be warnings to others not to attempt such mischiefs” (From Matthew Henry’s [1662-1714] comments on Deu 19:19-21). Magistrates were never ordained of God for the purpose of reforming reprobates nor to pamper degenerates, but to be His instruments for preserving law and order, and that, by being “*a terror to the evil*” (Rom 13:3). The magistrate is “the minister of God,” not to encourage wickedness, but to be an “avenger to execute *wrath* upon him that doeth evil” (see Rom 13:4). Let it not be forgotten that Christ Himself affirmed of the judge who refused to “avenge” the poor widow of her adversary, that he was one “which feared not God neither regarded man” (Luk 18:2).

Of course we do not expect to carry all our readers with us and we shall be rather surprised if we receive no letters condemning us for such “harshness.” But let us point out what we are firmly convinced are the causes of the moral laxity and the immoral sentimentality which now so widely prevails. We unhesitatingly blame *the pulpit* for the present sad state of affairs. The unfaithfulness of preachers is very largely responsible for the lawlessness which is now so rife throughout the whole of Christendom. During the last two or three generations thousands of pulpits have jettisoned the divine law, stating that it has no place in this dispensation of grace. And thus the most powerful of all *restraints* has been removed and license given to the lusts of the flesh.

Not only has the divine law been repudiated, but the divine character has been grossly misrepresented. The attributes of God have been perverted by a one-sided presentation thereof. The justice, the holiness, and the wrath of God have been pushed into the background, and a God that loves everybody thrust into the foreground. In consequence, the masses of churchgoers *no longer fear God*. For the past fifty years, the vast majority of pulpits have maintained a guilty silence on eternal punishment so that few now have any dread of the wrath to come. This logically follows from the former, for no one needs to stand in any terror of one who loves him. The repercussions have been unmistakable, drastic, and tragic. Sickly sentimentality regulated the pulpit until it dominated the pew and this evil leaven has so spread that it now permeates the whole nation.

Conscience has been made comatose—the requirements of justice are stifled—maudlin concepts now prevail. As eternal punishment was repudiated—either tacitly or in many cases openly—ecclesiastical punishments were shelved. Churches refused to enforce sanctions and winked at flagrant offenses. The inevitable outcome has been the breakdown of discipline in the home and the creation of a “public opinion” which is mawkish and spineless. Schoolteachers are

intimidated by foolish parents, so that the rising generation are more and more allowed to have their own way without fear of consequences. If some judge has the courage of his convictions and sentences a brute to the “cat” for maiming an old woman, there is an outcry raised against him. But enough. Most of our readers are painfully aware of all this without our enlarging any further, but few of them realize the causes which have led up to it—an unfaithful pulpit, the denial of eternal punishment, the misrepresentation of God’s character, the rejection of His law, the failure of the churches to enforce a Scriptural discipline, the breakdown of parental authority.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” (Mat 5:38). This divine statute, like those which were before us in the previous sections, had been grossly perverted by the scribes and Pharisees. They had wrested its purport and design by giving it a false application. Instead of confining it to the magistrates in the law-courts, they had made the statute a promiscuous one. The Jewish leaders had so expounded this precept as though God had given permission for each individual to take the law into his own hands and avenge his own wrongs. They intimated that it allowed each person to take private revenge upon his enemies—if your neighbour smite you and destroys one of your eyes, then go and do likewise to him. Thus the act of retaliation condoned.

Should it be asked, How came it that the scribes and Pharisees so glaringly wrested this law which was manifestly designed for the guidance of magistrates only? We would point out, first, it is a natural opinion that a man may avenge himself in private when wrong has been done to him personally. Second, answerable thereto there is a very strong desire *for revenge* in everyone’s heart by nature, and as the Jewish leaders sought to ingratiate themselves with the people rather than to please God, they pandered to this evil lust. In this we may see the workings of Satan, for in all ages his policy has been directed to the overthrowing of the divine order. The great enemy of God and man has ever sought to move corrupt leaders, both civil and religious, to so temper things to the depraved inclinations and popular opinions of the people that true piety may be overthrown.

Perceiving the earthly-mindedness and materialistic outlook of the Jews, the devil moved their teachers to dream about a Messiah who should dispense mundane rather than spiritual blessings, so that when Christ came preaching salvation from sin and exhorting men to lay up treasure in heaven, they despised and rejected Him. The Italians had ever been greatly addicted to sorcery and idolatry, as ancient writers testify, and though God vouchsafed them the true Gospel at the beginning of the Christian era, yet the devil knowing their natural disposition to superstition soon corrupted the truth among them, so that in a short time their church abounded as much in idolatry as ever they did when they were heathen. The like malicious practice has the devil shown among Protestants, for when he was unsuccessful in corrupting doctrine in the mouths of its leaders, he has greatly weakened it among the rank and file, by causing them to receive in their hearts only that which accords with their evil proclivities.

It is at this very point the true ministers of God stand out in sharp contrast from the devil’s hirelings. The latter are unregenerate men, with no fear of God in their hearts. “They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them” (1Jo 4:5). They trim their sails to the winds of public opinion. They accommodate their preaching to the depraved taste of their hearers. Their utterances are regulated by a single motive—to please those who pay their salaries. But the servants of Christ shun not to declare all the counsel of God, no matter how distasteful and displeasing it may be to the natural man. They dare not corrupt the truth and refuse to withhold any part of their God-given message. To glorify their Master and be faithful to the

trust He has committed to them is their only concern. Consequently, they share, in their measure, the treatment which was meted out to Him.

“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” (Mat 5:39). In this verse and the three which follow, Christ confutes the false application which the scribes had made of the Mosaic statute, and it is in this light that His exhortations here must be understood. That He is exhorting His followers absolutely to a passive endurance of any and every injury they may receive at the hands of wicked and unreasonable men, is to give a meaning to our Lord’s words which the context does not warrant, and which other passages and important considerations definitely forbids. That which He was refuting was the taking of *private* vengeance on those who wrong us. Further proofs in support of this must be left for our next.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

96. His Closing Days

The sand in David’s hour-glass was running very low. The time appointed for his departure from this world had almost arrived. Yet it is beautiful to behold him using his remaining strength in the service of God, rather than rusting out amid the shadows. The sun of his life had often been temporarily overcast, but it set in golden splendour, illustrating that word, “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof” (Ecc 7:8). The revolt of Adonijah was the last dark cloud to pass across his horizon, and it was quickly dissolved, to give place to blue skies of peace and joy. The final scenes are painted in roseate colours and the exit of our patriarch from this world was one which well-fitted the man after God’s own heart. Blessed is it to see him using his fast failing energies in setting in order the affairs of the kingdom, and to mark how the glory of the Lord and the good of his people was that which now wholly absorbed him.

The Holy Spirit has dwelt at quite some length upon the closing acts of David’s reign, supplementing the briefer account given in 1 Kings by furnishing much fuller details in 1 Chronicles. It is to these supplementary accounts we now turn. In them we, first, behold him completing the extensive preparations he had made for the building of the temple. Second, his giving solemn charge unto Solomon concerning the erection of the Lord’s house, concerning his own personal conduct, and concerning the removal of his enemies. Third, his charge to the princes to stand by and assist his son. Fourth, his ordering of the priesthood in their courses. Fifth, his charge to the officers of the nation. Sixth, his entrusting to Solomon the pattern or plan of the temple which he had received from God. Seventh, his final charge to the whole congregation. Most carefully did David prepare for the end of his reign and for the welfare of his successor.

“And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death” (1Ch 22:5). The dearest desire of his heart had been to erect a permanent house for the worship of God, and a tremendous amount of materials had he already acquired and consecrated to that end. But his wish was not granted—another was to have that peculiar honour—yet he did not, like so many peevish persons when their wills are crossed, mope and fret, and then lose all interest in the Lord’s service. No, he readily acquiesced in God’s will and continued his preparation. Yea, so far

from advancing age and increasing infirmities deterring him, they quickened him to increased diligence and effort.

The extent and value of the materials which David had gathered for the temple may be seen by, “Now, behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the LORD an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight; for it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared” (1Ch 22:14). These were all ready to hand to his successor, who made good use of the same. What encouragement is there here for us—much good may appear after our death, which we were not permitted to witness during our life. often we grieve because we see so little fruit of our labour, yet if we are diligent in preparing materials, others after us may build therewith. Then let us sow beside all waters and confidently leave the outcome with God. Those who are mature and experienced should consider the younger ones who are to follow, and furnish all the help they can to make the work of God as easy as possible for them.

We turn next to the charges which David gave to his son. The first concerned his building of the temple, for this lay most of all upon his heart. “Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the LORD God of Israel. And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build a house unto the name of the LORD my God: But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build a house unto my name because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight” (1Ch 22:6-8). Here we see how jealous God was of His types—as was also evidenced by His displeasure against Moses for striking the rock (on the second occasion) instead of speaking to it, and by His smiting Gehazi with leprosy for seeking a reward from the healed Naaman. The erection of the temple was a figure of Christ building His church, and this He does not by destroying men’s lives, but by saving them.

Continuing the “word” which David had received from the Lord, he adds, “Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon [Peaceable], and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his Father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever. Now, my son, the LORD be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the LORD thy God, as he hath said of thee” (1Ch 22:9-11). In what follows, David enjoined his son (1Ch 22:13) to keep God’s commands and to take heed to his duty in everything. He must not think that by building the temple he would secure a dispensation to indulge the lusts of the flesh. Nay, let him know that though king of Israel, he was himself a subject of the God of Israel, and would be prospered by Him in proportion as he made the divine law his rule (cf. Jos 1:8).

A little later he addressed him thus, “And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever. Take heed now; for the LORD hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it” (1Ch 28:9-10). How concerned David was that his son should be pious. Faithfully did he set before him the inevitable alternative—blessing if he served the Lord, woe if he turned away from Him. Here was a case where divine foreordination had made irrevocably certain the end, and yet where human responsibility was insisted upon. The perpetuity of God’s kingdom to David’s posterity was absolutely assured in Christ, yet the entail of the temporal kingdom was made contingent on the

conduct of David's descendants—if they were self-willed and remained disobedient, the entail would be cut off.

The same note of contingency is struck again unmistakably in, “*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*” (1Ki 2:4). Alas, we know from the sequel what happened. God punished the idolatry of Solomon by the defection of the ten tribes from his son, till ultimately the family of David was deprived of all royal authority. It has been thus all through the piece. Man has utterly failed in whatever trust God has committed to him. Sentence of death was written upon the prophetic, the priestly, and the kingly office in Israel. Was then the divine purpose thwarted? No indeed, that could not be. The counsels of God are made good in the Second Man and not in the first. It is in and by and through *Christ* the divine decrees are secured. And as it is in the Second Man and not in the first, so it is in a *heavenly* realm and not in the earthly that the Old Testament promises find their fulfillment. Christ, according to the flesh, was made of the seed of David, and in Him the kingdom of God is *spiritually* realized.

“And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD” (1Ch 28:20). It is noteworthy that that to which David principally exhorted his son was firmness and boldness. *Courage* is one of the graces most needed by the servants of God, for the devil as a roaring lion will ever seek to strike terror into their hearts. This was the charge given to Joshua when called to succeed Moses, “only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law” (Jos 1:7). To His servant the prophet, the Lord said, “Fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house” (Eze 3:9). The frowns of those who hate the truth are no more to be regarded than the flattery of those who would quench the Spirit by puffing us up with a sense of our own importance. “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mat 10:28) said Christ to the apostles—gifts are of no avail if we lack courage to use them.

The charge which David gave to Solomon concerning his old enemies is recorded in 1 Kings 2. “Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet. Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace....and, behold, thou hast with thee Shimei...which cursed me with a grievous curse....now therefore hold him not guiltless” etc. (1Ki 2:5-9). These orders are not to be regarded as issuing from a spirit of private revenge, but rather with a regard for the glory of God and the good of Israel. Joab had long-deserved to die for his cold-blooded murders, and the part he had recently played in aiding the revolt of Adonijah. While such men as he and Shimei lived they would be a continual *menace* to Solomon and the peacefulness of his reign.

The charge David made to the princes is found in 1 Chronicles 22, “David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon his son, saying, Is not the LORD your God with you? and hath he not given you rest on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand; and the land is subdued before the LORD, and before his people. Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God; arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary” (1Ch 22:17-19). once more we see how deeply concerned David was that the honour of JEHOVAH

should be promoted by the erection of a suitable dwelling place for His holy ark, and therefore did he command the princes to give whatever aid they could to his son in this undertaking. Monarchs can only forward the work of God in their dominions as they are supported by those nearest to them in high office. David urged upon them their obligations by insisting that gratitude to God for His abundant mercies called for generosity and effort on their part. He bids them be zealous by fixing their eyes on God's glory and making His favour their happiness. When the Lord truly possesses the heart neither sacrifice nor service will be begrudged.

From 1 Chronicles 23 and the chapters which follow, we learn of the considerable trouble David went to in fixing the arrangements for the temple services and putting in order the offices of it, in which he prepared for the house of God as truly as when he laid up silver and gold for it. It is noticeable that the tribe of Levi had multiplied almost fourfold (1Ch 23:3 and cf. Num 4:46-48), which was a much greater increase than in any other tribe. It was for the honour of JEHOVAH that so great a number of servants should attend His house—an adumbration of the countless millions of angels which wait upon the heavenly throne. A detailed account is supplied of the distribution of the priests and Levites into their respective classes and of their duties, such particularization showing us that God is a God of order, especially in matters pertaining to His worship. The distribution of the officers was made by lot (1Ch 24:5, etc.) to show that all was governed by the divine will (Pro 16:3). The priesthood was divided into twenty-four courses (1Ch 24:18), a figure perhaps of the “twenty-four elders” of Revelation 4:4.

“Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the house thereof...And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD....All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern” (1Ch 28:11-12, 19). David had received full instructions from God concerning the design of the temple and how everything was to be ordered in it. Nothing was left to chance or the caprice of man, nor even to the wisdom of Solomon—all was divinely prescribed. Moses had received a similar pattern for the building of the tabernacle (Exo 25:9), both of them being a figure of Christ and heavenly things. But the worship of God in this Christian era is in marked contrast from that which obtained under the Mosaic economy. In keeping with the much greater liberty which obtains under the new covenant, precise rules and detailed regulations for the external worship of God in every circumstance are nowhere to be found in either the Acts or the epistles.

The charge which David gave to the congregation was the longest of any. First, he warned them that Solomon was of tender years—less than twenty and therefore very young to assume such heavy responsibilities (1Ch 29:1). Second, he reminded them how he had himself, “prepared with all my might for the house of my God” (1Ch 29:2), having “set my affection” thereon, (1Ch 29:3), and urged his hearers to emulate his example by giving of their substance unto the Lord (1Ch 29:5). Both the leaders (1Ch 29:6-8) and the people (1Ch 29:9) responded “willingly” and liberally, so that David “rejoiced with great joy.” Then he magnified the Lord in these notable terms, “Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; *thine is* the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might” (1Ch 29:11-12).

The *deep humility* of the man was again evidenced when David added, “But who am I, and what is my people, that *we* should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. O LORD

our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of *thine hand*, and is all thine own” (1Ch 29:14-16). Beautiful is it to hear the king in his last words giving honour to whom honour is due. “And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your God. And all the congregation blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the LORD, and the king. And they sacrificed sacrifices unto the LORD...And they did eat and drink before the LORD on that day with great gladness” (1Ch 29:20-22). What a grand finale was this to the reign of David—the king surrounded by his subjects engaged in joyfully worshipping the King of kings!

“Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die” (1Ki 2:1). Not that extreme old age necessitated his demise, but because his appointed time had arrived. The length of our sojourn on this earth is not determined by the care we take of our health (though human responsibility requires that we abstain from all intemperance and recklessness), nor upon the skill of our physicians (though all lawful means should be employed), but upon the sovereign decree of God. “Man that is born of a woman is of few days...his days are *determined*, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass” (Job 14:1, 5). No, when the divinely-ordained limit is reached, all the doctors in the world cannot prolong our life a single moment. Thus we are told of Jacob, “The time drew nigh that Israel must die” (Gen 47:29)—“must” because God had decreed it. So it was with David. He had fulfilled God’s purpose concerning him, his course was finished, and he could now enter into his eternal rest.

“And he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth” (1Ki 2:1-2). He realized that his end was very near, yet he was not afraid to admit it nor afraid to speak of dying. He calmly referred to his decease as a “way.” It was not only an exit from this world, but an entrance into another and better one. He speaks of his death as “the way of all the earth”—from the earth its dwellers are taken and to it they return (Gen 3:19). Even the heirs of heaven (except those alive at Christ’s return, 1Co 15:51) must pass through the valley of the shadow of death, yet they need fear no evil. In like manner Paul spoke of his “departure” (2Ti 4:6), using a nautical term which refers to a ship being loosed from its moorings, so at death the soul is released from the cables which bound it to the shores of time, and it glides forth into eternity.

David made all the preparations for his departure with unruffled composure because he knew that death did not end all. He knew that as soon as he drew his last breath, the angels of God (Luk 16:22) would convey him into the abode of the redeemed. He knew that the moment his soul was absent from the body, he would be present with the Lord (2Co 5:8). He knew that in the grave his flesh should rest “in hope” (Psa 16:9) and that in the morning of the resurrection he should come forth fully conformed to the image of his Saviour (Psa 17:15). “And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead” (1Ch 29:28). His epitaph was inscribed by the Holy Spirit, “For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep” (Act 13:36). May we, too, be enabled to serve our generation as faithfully as David did his.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

12. Its Publication

During the last two or three generations, the pulpit has given less and less prominence to doctrinal preaching, until today with very rare exception it has no place at all. In some quarters

the cry from the pew was, We want living experience and not dry doctrine. In others, We need practical sermons and not metaphysical dogmas. And yet others, Give us Christ and not theology. Sad to say, such senseless cries were generally heeded. "Senseless," we say, for there is no other safe way of *testing* experience, as there is no *foundation* for practicals to be built upon, if they be divorced from Scriptural doctrine. Christ cannot be known unless He is preached (1Co 1:23), and He certainly cannot be "preached" if doctrine is shelved. Various reasons may be given for the lamentable failure of the pulpit—chief among them being laziness, desire for popularity, superficial and lop-sided "evangelism," love of the sensational.

Laziness. It is a far more exacting task, one which calls for much closer confinement in the study, to prepare a series of sermons, on say, the doctrine of justification, than it does to make addresses on prayer, missions, or personal work. It demands a far wider acquaintance with the Scriptures, a more rigid disciplining of the mind, and a more extensive perusal of the older writers. But this is too exacting for most ministers, and so they choose the line of least resistance and follow an easier course. It is because of his proneness to this weakness that the minister is particularly exhorted, "Give attendance to reading....take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them" (1Ti 4:13, 16), and again, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a *workman* that needeth not to be ashamed" (2Ti 2:15).

Desire for popularity. It is natural that the preacher should wish to please his hearers, but it is spiritual for him to desire and aim at the approbation of God. Nor can any man serve two masters. As the apostle expressly declared, "For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal 1:10)—solemn words are those. How they condemn them whose chief aim is to preach to crowded churches. Yet what grace it requires to swim against the tide of public opinion and preach that which is unacceptable to the natural man. on the other hand, how fearful will be the doom of those who, from a determination to curry favour with men, deliberately withhold those portions of the truth most needed by their hearers. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it" (Deu 4:2). O to be able to say with Paul, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you....I am pure from the blood of all" (Act 20:20, 26).

A superficial and lop-sided "evangelism." Many of the pulpiteers of the past fifty years acted as though the first and last object of their calling was the salvation of souls, everything being made to bend to that aim. In consequence, the feeding of the sheep, the maintaining of a Scriptural discipline in the church, and the inculcation of practical piety, was crowded out—and too often all sorts of worldly devices and fleshly methods were employed under the plea that the end justified the means. Thus the churches were filled with unregenerate members. In reality, such men defeated their own aim. The hard heart must be plowed and harrowed before it can be receptive to the Gospel seed. Doctrinal instruction must be given on the character of God, the requirements of His law, the nature and heinousness of sin—only then is a foundation laid for true evangelism. It is useless to preach Christ unto souls until they see and feel their desperate need of Him.

Love of the sensational. In more recent times the current has changed. A generation arose which was less tolerant even of superficial evangelism, which demurred at hearing anything which was calculated to make them the least uneasy in their sins. of course such people must not be driven from the churches—they must be catered to and given something which would tickle their ears. The stage of public action afforded abundant material. The world-war and such characters as the Kaiser, Stalin, and Mussolini were much in the public eye, as Hitler and Abyssinia have been since. Under the guise of expounding prophecy, the pulpit turned its

attention to what was styled “the signs of the times,” and the pew was made to believe that the “dictators” were fulfilling the predictions of Daniel and the Apocalypse. There was nothing in such preaching (?) that pricked the conscience, yet tens of thousands were deluded into thinking that the very hearing of such rubbish made them religious, and thus the churches were enabled to “carry on.”

Ere proceeding further, let it be pointed out that the objections most commonly made against doctrinal preaching are quite pointless. Take, first, the clamour for experimental preaching. In certain quarters—quarters which though very restricted, yet consider themselves the very champions of orthodoxy and the highest exponents of vital godliness—the demand is for a detailed tracing out of the varied experiences of a quickened soul both under the law and under grace, and any other type of preaching, especially doctrinal, is frowned upon as supplying nothing but the husk. But as one writer tersely put it, “Though matters of doctrine are by some considered merely as the shell of religion, and experience as the kernel, yet let it be remembered that there is no coming to the kernel but through the shell. And while the kernel gives value to the shell, yet the shell is the guardian of the kernel. Destroy that and you injure this.” Eliminate doctrine and you have nothing left to *test* experience by, and mysticism and fanaticism are inevitable.

In other quarters, the demand has been for preaching along practical lines, such people supposing and insisting that doctrinal preaching is merely theoretical and impracticable. Such a concept betrays woeful ignorance. “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). Study the epistles of Paul and see how steadily that order is maintained. Romans 1-11 are strictly doctrinal; 12-16 practical exhortations. Take a concrete example—in 1 Timothy 1:9-10, the apostle draws up a catalogue of sins against which the denunciations of the law are imminently directed, and then he added, “And if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound *doctrine*.” What a plain intimation is this that error in principles fundamental has a most unfavourable influence on practicals, and that in proportion as the doctrine of God is disbelieved the authority of God is disowned. It is the *doctrine* which supplies motives for obedience to the precepts.

In connection with those who cry, Preach Christ and not theology, we have long observed that they never preach Him as the one with whom God made a covenant (Psa 89:3), nor as His “elect” in whom His soul delighteth (Isa 42:1). They preach a “Christ” which is the product of their own imaginations, the creation of sentiment. If we preach the Christ of Scripture, we must set Him forth as the Servant of God’s choice (1Pe 2:4), as the Lamb “foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1Pe 1:19-20), as the one “set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel” (Luk 2:34), as the “stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense” (Isa 8:14). Christ is not to be preached as separate from His members, but as the Head of His mystical body—Christ and those whom God chose in Him are one, eternally and immutably one. Then preach not a *mutilated* Christ. Preach Him according to the eternal counsels of God.

Now if doctrinal preaching generally be so unpopular, the doctrine of election is particularly and pre-eminently so. Sermons on predestination are, with very rare exceptions, hotly resented and bitterly denounced. “There seems to be an inevitable prejudice in the human mind against this doctrine, and although most other doctrines will be received by professing Christians, some with caution, others with pleasure, yet this one seems to be most frequently disregarded and discarded. In many of our pulpits it would be reckoned a high sin and treason to preach a sermon upon election” (Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892). If that were the case fifty years ago, much more is it now. Even in avowedly orthodox circles, the very mention of predestination is like waving a red

rag before a bull. Nothing so quickly makes manifest the enmity of the carnal mind in the smug religionists and self-righteous Pharisees as does the proclamation of the divine sovereignty and His discriminating grace. And few indeed are the men now left who dare to contend valiantly for the truth.

Fearful beyond words are the lengths to which the horror and hatred of election have carried even avowedly evangelical leaders in their blasphemous speeches against this blessed truth. We refuse to pollute these pages by quoting from their ungodly speeches. Some have gone so far as to say that, even if predestination be revealed in the Scriptures it is a dangerous doctrine, creating dissent and division, and therefore it ought not to be preached in the churches—which is the self-same objection used by the Romanists against giving the Word of God to the common people in their own mother tongue. If we are to whittle down the truth so as to preach only that which is acceptable to the natural man, how much would be left? The preaching of Christ crucified is to the Jews a stumblingblock and to the Greeks foolishness (1Co 1:23). Is the pulpit to be silent thereon? Shall the servants of God cease proclaiming the person, office, and work of His beloved Son, merely because He is “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense” (1Pe 2:8) to the reprobate?

Many are the objections brought against this doctrine by those who desire to discredit it. Some say election should not be preached because it is so mysterious and secret things belong unto the Lord. But it is not a secret, for God has plainly revealed it in His Word. If it is not to be preached because of its mysteriousness, then for the same reason nothing must be said about the unity of the divine nature subsisting in a trinity of Persons, nor of the virgin birth, nor of the resurrection of the dead. According to others, the doctrine of election cuts the nerve of all missionary enterprise, in fact stands opposed to all preaching, rendering it entirely negative. Then in such a case the preaching of Paul himself was altogether useless, for it was full of this doctrine. Read his epistles and it will be found that he proclaimed election continually, yet we never read of him ceasing to preach it because it rendered his labours useless!

Paul taught that, “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13), yet we do not find that on this account he ceased to exhort men to will and endeavour those things which are pleasing to God, and to work themselves with all their might. If we are unable to perceive the consistency of the two things, that is no reason why we should refuse to believe and heed either the one or the other. Some argue against election because the preaching of it shakes assurance and fills the minds of men with doubts and fears. But in our day especially we should be thankful for any truth which shatters the complacency of empty professors and arouses the indifferent to examine themselves before God. With as much reason might it be said that the doctrine of regeneration should not be promulgated, for is it any easier to make sure that I have been truly born again than it is to ascertain that I am one of God’s elect? It is not.

Still others insist that election should not be preached because the ungodly will make an evil use of it, that they will shelter behind it to excuse their unconcern and procrastination, arguing that if they are elected to salvation that in the meantime they may live as they please and take their fill of sin. Such an objection is puerile, childish in the extreme. But what truth is there that the wicked will not pervert? Why, they will turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and use (or rather misuse) His very goodness, His mercy, His longsufferance, for continuance in a course of evil doing. Arminians tell us that to preach the eternal security of the Christian encourages slothfulness. While at the opposite extreme, hyper-Calvinists object to the exhorting of the unregenerate unto repentance and faith on the ground that it inculcates creature ability. Let us not

pretend to be wise above what is written, but preach all the counsel of God and leave results to Him.

The servant of God must not be intimidated or deterred from professing and proclaiming the unadulterated truth. His commission today is the same as Ezekiel's of old, "Be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious" (Eze 2:6-7). He must expect to encounter opposition, especially from those making the loudest profession, and fortify himself against it. The announcement of God's sovereign choice of men has evoked the spirit of malice and persecution from earliest times. It did so as far back as the days of Samuel. When the prophet announced to Jesse concerning his seven sons, "The LORD hath not chosen these" (1Sa 16:10), the anger of his firstborn was kindled against David (1Sa 17:28). So too when Christ Himself stressed the distinguishing grace of God unto the Gentile widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian, the synagogue worshippers "were filled with wrath" and sought to kill Him (Luk 4:25-29). But the very hatred this solemn truth arouses is one of the most convincing proofs of its divine origin.

Election is to be preached and published, first, because it is brought forward all through the Scriptures. There is not a single book in the Word of God where election is not either expressly stated, strikingly illustrated, or clearly implied. Genesis is full of it—the difference which the Lord made between Nahor and Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, and His loving Jacob and hating Esau are cases in point. In Exodus, we behold the distinction made by God between the Egyptians and the Hebrews. In Leviticus, the atonement and all the sacrifices were for the people of God, nor were they bidden to go and "offer" them to the surrounding heathen. In Numbers, JEHOVAH used a Balaam to herald the fact that Israel was "*the* people" who, 1. shall dwell alone and shall *not* be numbered among the nations" (Num 23:9), and therefore was he constrained to cry, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel" (Num 24:5). In Deuteronomy it is recorded, "The LORD's portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance" (Deu 32:9).

In Joshua, we behold the discriminating mercy of the Lord bestowed upon Rahab the harlot, while the whole of her city was doomed to destruction. In Judges, the sovereignty of God appears in the unlikely instruments selected, by which He wrought victory for Israel: Deborah, Gideon, Samson. In Ruth, we have Orpah kissing her mother-in-law and returning to her gods, whereas Ruth cleaves to her and obtained inheritance in Israel—who made them to differ? In 1 Samuel, David is chosen for the throne, preferred to his older brethren. In 2 Samuel, we learn of the everlasting covenant, "ordered in all things, and sure" (2Sa 23:5). In 1 Kings, Elijah becomes a blessing to a single widow selected from many, while in 2 Kings, Naaman alone, of all the lepers, was cleansed. In 1 Chronicles, it is written, "Ye children of Jacob, his chosen ones" (1Ch 16:13), while in 2 Chronicles, we are made to marvel at the grace of God bestowing repentance upon Manasseh. And so we might go on. The Psalms, prophets, Gospels, and epistles are so full of this doctrine that he who runs may read!

Second, the doctrine of election is to be prominently preached because the Gospel cannot be Scripturally proclaimed without it. Alas, so deep is the darkness and so widespread the ignorance which now prevails, that few indeed perceive that there is any vital connection between predestination and the Gospel of God. Pause, then, for a moment and seriously ponder these questions: Is the success or failure of the Gospel a matter of *chance*? Or to put it in another way, are the fruits of the most stupendous undertaking of all—the atoning work of Christ—left contingent upon *human* caprice? Could it be positively affirmed that the Redeemer shall yet, "see

of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isa 53:11), if all is left dependent upon the will of fallen man? Has God so little regard for the death of His Son that He has left it uncertain as to how many shall be saved thereby?

“The gospel of God” (Rom 1:1) can only be Scripturally presented as *the Triune God* is owned and honoured therein. The attenuated “Gospel” of our degenerate age confines the attention of its hearers to the sacrifice of Christ, whereas salvation originated in the heart of God the Father and is consummated by the operations of God the Spirit. All the blessings of salvation are communicated according to God’s eternal counsels, and it was for the whole election of grace (and none others) that Christ wrought salvation. The very first chapter of the New Testament announces that Jesus, “shall save *his people* from their sins”—not “may save,” but “shall save.” Not “shall offer to,” or “try to,” but “*shall save*” them. Again—not a single soul had ever benefited from the death of Christ if the Spirit had not been given to apply its virtues to the chosen seed. Any man, then, who *omits* the Father’s election, and the Spirit’s sovereign and effectual operations, preaches not the Gospel of God, no matter what is his reputation as a “soul winner.”

THE HOLY SABBATH

8. *Its Observance*

In previous articles, it has been shown that the Sabbath was instituted in Eden, observed by the patriarchs and renewed at Sinai—and that Israel’s prosperity and enjoyment of God’s blessings was to a large extent determined by their observance or non-observance of this divine ordinance. Turning to the New Testament, we have seen that Christ expressly affirmed the Sabbath was “made for man” and not for the Jews only, that He is “Lord of the Sabbath” and therefore invested with authority to determine which day of the week shall be sanctified as a holy rest. And we saw in Hebrews 4, the apostle proves that “another day” than that which obtained under the old covenant has been appointed for its celebration during the Christian era—the first day suitably celebrating the Saviour’s entrance into His mediatorial rest. This is demonstrated by the practice of the early church (Act 20:7; 1Co 16:1-2).

We are now to consider the all-important matter of how the Sabbath is to be kept. The chief end of God’s Word and of all instruction therein is that the doctrinal principles which it enunciates may direct us unto a performance suited thereto. The light which we receive from the Living Oracle lays upon us a binding obligation to walk accordingly. Doctrine must regulate deportment. This was the grand rule laid down by the Supreme Teacher, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (Joh 13:17). The design of our learning Scripture truth is for us to obtain such an understanding thereof that conduct accordant therewith may be produced. Where there is knowledge without the corresponding discharge of duty, the truth is held “in unrighteousness” (Rom 1:18) and then double is our guilt. Practice must conform to the precept.

It is, then, to the practical side of our subject we now turn—may divine wisdom be so granted us that we are preserved from going to an undue extreme either on the right hand or on the left. No one who is acquainted with human nature or who is conversant with the history and literature on this branch of our subject can honestly doubt there is a real danger of failing to preserve the balance here—as everywhere. on the one hand, care must be taken lest in our zeal for the sanctity and spirituality of the Sabbath we go to an excess in multiplying rules for its observance, and

thereby fall into the Pharisaic error of rigour and excess. on the other hand, there is a far greater danger today of erring on the side of laxity and of accommodating the laws regulating this institution to the lusts of the flesh and yielding to the corrupt practices of an evil and adulterous generation.

The strict requirements of God's holiness must be insisted upon, no matter how the world scoffs at or opposes them. As these very lines are being written [1939], God is manifesting His displeasure at the increasing desecration of His holy rest-day by disturbing the rest of Christendom—those nations which have enjoyed most of the privileges of the Gospel being seriously threatened with war. And the blame for this widespread desecration rests first and chiefly upon the churches—by the banishing of the law from its pulpits, by the feeble or total lack of protest to legislative bodies for letting down the bars and legalizing the profanation of the Lord's day, and by the general worldliness of its members. It is therefore high time that Christian leaders should faithfully expound the fourth commandment and cease accommodating it to the perverse wills and ways of the ungodly.

Sad, indeed, is the declension in genuine piety. The foundations have been forsaken, standards have been lowered, the spirit of compromise has prevailed till now, "Truth is fallen in the streets." Nor can the apostasy be checked by temporizing the commands of God to the corrupt course of the world. Yet we must beware of *adding to* those commands. Said the Puritan Owen, "I will not deny but that there have been and are mistakes in this matter. Directions have been given, and that not by a few, for the observance of a day of holy rest, which either for the matter of them or the manner prescribed, have had no sufficient warrant or foundation in the Scriptures. For whereas some have made no distinction between the Sabbath as moral and as Mosaic, unless it be merely in the change of the day, they have endeavoured to introduce the whole practice required on the latter into the Lord's day."

How is a happy medium in Sabbath observance to be obtained? What will preserve us from undue laxity on the one side and unwarrantable severity on the other? Where shall we turn for that much-needed guidance which will deliver us from the grievous yoke of Pharisaical excess and which will also prevent us from degenerating into the lawlessness of our moderns? We have searched long and diligently for a satisfactory answer to this question, but (amid much that was helpful on other branches of our subject) have failed to meet with anything clear and definite. Personally, our firm conviction is that we shall be kept from going wrong in this matter, if we, first, adhere strictly to the *letter* of the fourth commandment, and second, apply that commandment to the details of our lives in the *spirit* of the new covenant.

It should be apparent that we have now arrived at the most important branch of our subject. Unless both writer and reader are genuinely and earnestly desirous of keeping the Sabbath in a manner which will be pleasing to the Lord and beneficial to the soul, then all our previous efforts to prove that this divine ordinance is binding upon us today will avail little or nothing. But the task before us now is no easy one. Our chief difficulty being the avoidance of too great editing on the one hand and too much brevity on the other. We do not wish to extend these articles to the point of wearying our friends, yet we must not abbreviate so much that we withhold the help which is desired upon various problems that exercise not a few. Some have had no instruction upon Sabbath observance. Others have been given so many rules to follow that a spirit of bondage has been engendered. We shall therefore endeavour to steer a middle course.

Taking Exodus 20:8-11 as our starting point, we note first that that which outstandingly characterizes this season is its *sacredness*, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." This is basic and foremost. It is "the Lord's day," being instituted for His honour and glory. God, by the

appointing and blessing of it, has *made* this day—we, by the worship of Him and performance of spiritual exercises therein, are to keep it holy. And let it be carefully borne in mind that holiness pertains not only to external actions, but also and mainly to the spring from which they proceed, namely, the heart. Unless we sanctify the Sabbath in our hearts, the performing of outward devotions will avail us nothing. As the other six days are concerned mainly with secular things, the seventh is to be consecrated unto spiritual ends. Holiness stands opposed not only to all that is *sinful*, but also to the use of such things (our time and energy) as are *commonly* employed.

“Remember the sabbath *day* to keep it holy” (Exo 20:8)—not a part thereof, but the whole of it. In all countries where Romanism dominates, its deluded votaries spend a part of the morning in religious exercises, and for the balance of the day give themselves up to feasting and pleasuring. Sad to say this evil is becoming more and more rife in Protestant circles. Though we may not yet have gone to the same lengths of profanity as is general “on the Continent,” yet thousands in this land who attend some morning service, spend the afternoon and evening in making social calls on their friends, car riding, and other fleshly and worldly activities. It is this unholy mixture, this “lukewarmness”—being neither hot nor cold—which is so nauseating to the Lord. Because it is the Lord’s day, we rob Him of His due if we regard any part of it as ours.

The second thing we note, in Exodus 20:8-11, is that the Sabbath is expressly affirmed to be a day of *rest*, “The seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work” (Exo 20:10). That prohibition is qualified (as the example and teaching of Christ made clear) at two points only—the doing of that which is really essential to life and health, and engaging in acts of love and mercy. Apart from those exceptions, all work and labour—be it manual or clerical, physical or mental—is divinely forbidden. And this, as was pointed out in earlier articles, is a merciful provision of the Creator for His creatures. Continuous toil is injurious to our constitution. “The sabbath was made for man” (Mar 2:27), for his well-being, because he needed one day of rest in each week. This law is as binding upon and holds good for the wife equally as for the husband, for the servant as much as his master, yea, for his beasts of burden too.

This law is as binding upon our private lives as upon our public, upon the way in which we conduct ourselves within the home as on the outside. It is just as real a profanation of the Holy Sabbath for a merchant to cast up his ledger or write business letters on that day, as for a farmer to go out and plow his fields or sow corn. So, too, is it equally sinful for his wife to prepare and cook elaborate meals on the Lord’s day as it would be for her to do her weekly washing and ironing then. Nor can this be evaded—as many seem to suppose—by the mistress accompanying her husband to the morning service and leaving her daughter or maid to cook the biggest dinner of the week. Alas, in many homes, not only does the cook have no rest on the Lord’s day, but it is the heaviest one of the week for her.

Let us next point out that there is a positive side to the fourth commandment as well as a negative. Not only are we to abstain from all worldly business, but we are to be active in spiritual exercises. A day spent in idleness is not one which is kept holy. The Day of Rest is not to be one of indolence, but one of blessed and sacred diligence. Physical rest is necessary, but spiritual rest is yet more essential. In its higher aspect, true Sabbatical rest is the soul resting in the Lord. This is evident from the fact that the Sabbath is both an emblem and a pledge of the eternal rest of the saints, concerning which it is said, “His servants shall serve him” (Rev 22:3), which means that they will be actively engaged in His worship. Inasmuch then as the duties of this day are eminently spiritual, they are such as lie beyond our own powers to perform, and therefore we must seek the aid of the Holy Spirit.

A third thing we should observe is that the Sabbath is to be a *season of rejoicing*, “This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psa 118:24). The immediate context contains a grand Messianic prophecy, wherein the triumph of Christ was set forth. Under the figure of “the stone,” He is viewed first, in His humiliation, as despised and rejected by men, as being refused by the builders. Next He is portrayed in His glorification, as owned and honoured of God, as being made “The head stone of the corner” (Psa 118:22). The exaltation of Christ was in three stages—when He was raised from the tomb, when He ascended to heaven, and when He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. “This is the LORD’s doing, it is marvellous in our eyes” (Psa 118:23). The exaltation of Christ was wholly of the Lord—the product of His eternal counsel, the product of His mighty power, and it is the subject of never-ceasing wonderment to His redeemed.

“This is the day which the LORD hath made” (Psa 118:24), and therefore it is peculiarly and pre-eminently “the *Lord’s* day,” and so it is expressly denominated in Revelation 1:10. It is the day which the Lord made specially for this Christian dispensation, namely, the first of the week. It is the day which has been made forever memorable by loosing the Redeemer from the pains of death. It is now the day in which His people are to celebrate the Saviour’s victory over the sepulchre. And therefore Christians must exclaim, “We will rejoice and be glad in it”—not only because of its appointment, but because of its occasion, for Christ’s resurrection was both for His own honour and for our salvation. Holy mirth, then, should fill our hearts at this season. Sabbath days ought to be unto us as foretastes of heaven itself. Then let us welcome each weekly return of it and duly tune our hearts to show forth His praises therein.

The *order* of truth in the passage last quoted, is the order we must observe if we are to enter experimentally therein. We shall be glad and rejoice in proportion as our hearts are truly occupied with the risen Redeemer and of our being risen in Him. As Spurgeon well put it, “What else can we do? Having obtained so great a deliverance through our illustrious Leader, and having seen the eternal mercy of God so brilliantly displayed, it would ill become us to mourn and murmur. Rather will we exhibit a double joy, rejoice in heart and be glad in face, rejoice in secret and be glad in public, for we have more than a double reason for being glad in the Lord. We ought to especially rejoice on the Sabbath. It is the queen of days and its hours should be clad in royal apparel of delight.”

What abundant cause have we for rejoicing therein! The resurrection of Christ marked the end of His inexpressible humiliation and signaled the beginning of His unending glorification. It demonstrated that He had made an end of sins, effected reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness (Dan 9:24). It affords proof of God’s approval of the Mediator’s work and the acceptance of His sacrifice. It meant that the whole election of grace were delivered from death and hell when their federal Head became “alive for evermore” (Rev 1:18). The resurrection of Christ is both the pledge and the prototype of the resurrection of His sleeping people. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above” (Col 3:1). And what are those things which are above? Spiritual rest, spiritual joy—complete deliverance from our warfare with sin, unalloyed rejoicing in the Lord. Then “seek” them—by the actings of faith, by the exercise of hope, by the outgoings of love. We should have a double enjoyment of the things above—by anticipation now, by realization then.

The same keynote is struck in the first stanza of Psalm 92. It is to be noted that the inspired heading to this Psalm is, “A Song for the Sabbath day.” And what is its opening theme? This, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night. Upon an

instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound. For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands. O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep” (Psa 92:1-5). Praise is sabbatical work—the joyfulness of hearts resting in the Lord. Since a true Sabbath can only be found in God, it is essential that we be supremely occupied with His perfections on that day.

OUR ANNUAL LETTER

“But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil” (Pro 1:33). This has been a year wherein the tranquility of the world has been repeatedly and rudely disturbed, when the air has been filled with ominous threats, and when ruthless aggressors have terrorized the weak. The rattling of sabers has been heard on every side, politicians have fermented a spirit of unrest, newspapers have vied with each other in fostering sensationalism, and “signs-of-the-times” men have issued the most alarming predictions. In many lands mass hysteria more or less has seized the public, and generally speaking, men’s hearts have failed them from fear of the dreadful things which they believe are about to take place. But throughout it all, it was the privilege of God’s children to possess their souls in peace and patience, and be “quiet” even from the very fear of evil.

But how is such a state to be arrived at? What conditions must be met if this rest of mind is to be enjoyed? Important questions these—more important still that we obtain the right answers. God does not bestow this blessing arbitrarily, but according to *rule*—that is to say, if such a privilege is to be enjoyed, then we must meet the specified requirement. Yet this is not to bring in a legalistic element nor to imply that this boon may be *earned*. Rather is it to point out *the road* in which it is to be met with. It is most necessary to be clear on this point, for it is one on which some are not a little confused. Wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness, “and all her paths are peace” (Pro 3:17). But those “ways” must be entered and those “paths” have to be traversed if her gracious reward is to be received. Turn we into the bypaths of folly, and unpleasantness and unrest will be our certain portion. Quietness is not to be found in the regions where self-will reigns. The wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest. And why? because they have turned their backs upon the Rest-giver.

The chief requirement for the enjoyment of this spiritual security and tranquility is stated in our opening passage, “Whoso hearkeneth unto me.” Note also the tense of the verb—not merely “hearkens,” but “hearkeneth.” It is not so much an act as an *attitude* which is in view. To hearken unto the Lord denotes submission, faith, love, obedience. It is the heart of the renewed answering to the voice of its Beloved. It is the response made to the revealed will of God by those who have been forgiven much by Him. It is their yielding of themselves unto His royal authority. It is those who have been made wise unto salvation voluntarily entering into and treading wisdom’s “ways.” According as they do so, are they preserved from danger, delivered from error, and freed from fear, for their minds are stayed upon JEHOVAH. From His word they obtain a knowledge of His mind which has a sobering and steadying effect, whereas the world remains in darkness and subject to the terror of the night.

“But whoso hearkeneth unto me” (Pro 1:33). There is much in Scripture upon the subject of “hearkening,” especially hearkening unto other voices than that of God’s. It is most solemn to

note the first time the word occurs in Holy Writ, “And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife” (Gen 3:17). In consequence thereof, so far from “dwelling safely,” Adam was driven out of Eden (Gen 3:24), and instead of “peace,” the curse of God was his portion. “And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai” (Gen 16:2). Alas, how many men since then, Christian men also, have followed the carnal counsel of their wives, rather than the commands of God. Equally solemn is it to observe how many verses there are which record the Lord’s complaint thereon, “But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me” (Psa 81:11 and cf. Psa 106:25). “They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear” (Zec 7:11). And what is the penalty for refusing to hearken? “The anger of the LORD was hot against Israel...because that this people...have not hearkened unto my voice” (Jdg 2:20). “I will bring evil upon this people...because they have not hearkened unto my words” (Jer 6:19). What warnings are these!

“Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and *to hearken* than the fat of rams” (1Sa 15:22). The prime and essential element in hearkening to the Lord is the rendering of *obedience* to His precepts—that which we receive from Him by the ear is to be translated into conduct—into an actual compliance with His revealed will. And let it be carefully noted that God esteems obedience above and beyond worship, yea, He will not accept our worship while our wills are not in subjection to His. To honour God with our lips while our hearts are far from Him, and His commandments are disregarded, is hypocrisy of the worst sort (Mat 15:7-9).

While it is our happy privilege to be quiet from fear of evil, we cannot but mourn over the state of Christendom—the low level of genuine godliness evidenced on every side. It seriously affects such a work as this, for there is a steadily diminishing number who truly relish spiritual literature and are willing to contribute to its maintenance. “I will do all I can to get a few more readers—or rather supporters. It is easy enough to get ‘readers’ provided they get all their reading for *nothing*. That, I am afraid, is a strong feature of the people among whom my lot is cast—they are keen readers but poor payers.” There was a time when most of the able-bodied in this land had too much self-respect to beg or trade upon the charity of others, but slowly yet surely the welfare system has undermined the moral stamina of the masses, till now few have any scruples upon the matter. Thousands of preachers who receive a larger salary than the annual income of most of their members feel that someone ought to make them a present of the literature from which they cull much of their sermon matter. This conscienceless seeking of something for nothing is worldwide, and we refuse to be a party to it, even though it forces us to cease publishing.

During 1939, our circulation has shown a further marked decline, but for the sake of the handful who do appreciate this monthly messenger we hope to have sufficient readers to warrant our continuing for one more year. A considerable number of names on our list must be dropped with this issue, and therefore the realization of our hope to publish throughout 1940 will largely depend upon the number of *new readers* obtained for us by those who would deplore the cessation of this magazine. By the Lord’s goodness, gifts have come in freely so that each bill has been promptly paid, and we close again with a balance to the good. In the kind providence of God both of us have been preserved throughout another twelve months in good health and strength.

We have now completed our lengthy study of the Life of David. This will be followed by a much shorter series on the life of Elijah. We have also nearly finished our discussion of the important doctrine of election, and we then expect to take up the spiritual inability but moral responsibility of fallen man. The articles on the Sabbath will be completed by a consideration of some of the difficulties raised by and objections brought against the same. The Sermon on the

Mount will continue to engage our attention. These are our tentative aims, dependent for their realization on the sovereign will of God. The political outlook is so obscure, the diplomatic situation so uncertain, the leaders of the nations are following such a “hush” policy, that ordinary business is largely disorganized and most of the usual planning ahead is brought to a standstill. But the *Lord* has not changed and is in complete charge of the whole situation—not merely “permitting” this and that, but *working* “all things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph 1:11). So long as He makes it possible, we shall continue publishing this magazine as before. We are hoping to have this year’s issues bound as usual (though the price is likely to be higher) and to insert a notice about them in the January issue. We would appreciate it if regular customers send in their orders early, at say 5/ (\$1.15) so that we can fill them as soon as the volumes come to hand. Friends in Australia and America please correspond as formerly (mail services, though slower, are continuing), but forward all monies by International Money Orders.

“But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil” (Pro 1:33). Precious indeed is this assurance at such a time as the present. O that divine grace may enable both writer and reader to hearken unto the divine threatenings, precepts, and promises, and then shall we enjoy the smile of God’s countenance and the protection of His mighty arm. We heartily thank our few remaining friends for all their loyal support and know they will not fail us now that things are more difficult. Lovingly commending them to the God of all grace, and earnestly soliciting their continued prayers, we remain, by His abounding mercy.—A. W. and V. E Pink.

