

A lit candle, a magnifying glass over an open book, and a quill pen. The candle is lit, casting a warm glow. The magnifying glass is positioned over the left page of an open book. The quill pen is resting on the right page of the book.

Annual Volume

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STUDIES IN THE  
SCRIPTURES

ARTHUR W. PINK

# Studies in the Scriptures

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# JANUARY

## NEW THINGS

In writing upon things new and old, the question arises, What is the order in which they should be dealt with? Either is permissible according to taste, or for the purpose of emphasis, for no scriptural principle would be contravened whichever were given the preference. In our Bibles, the Old Testament comes before the New, and in the experience of a Christian, he is born naturally before he is born spiritually. Nevertheless, since our Lord said, “Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old” (Mat 13:52). We cannot err if we follow that classification. In view of the popular delusion of this generation, with its craze for what is novel and modern, and its contempt of that which is stable and ancient, it is perhaps necessary to point out that all new things are not good and desirable, nor all old things to be despised. For on the one hand, we read of “new gods,” which Israel wickedly followed (Jdg 5:8), and on the other, of “old paths” which we are bidden to ask for (Jer 6:16). In our remarks, we shall dwell the longest on those which are least understood, seeking to furnish help where it is most needed.

1. *The new heart.* “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Eze 36:25-26). Whatever fulfilment that prediction may or may not have in connection with the Jews at some future day, it is made good in the experience of the regenerate in all ages. The language is, of course, highly figurative, nevertheless, it expresses simple but grand realities. It describes the essential features of that miracle of grace which is wrought within the people of God. First, there is an effectual application of the pure Word of God unto their souls, whereby they are cleansed from the love of sin and conformed unto His holiness. “The fear of the LORD is to depart from evil,” yea, “to hate evil” (Pro 16:6; 8:13). When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, its affections are drawn unto things above, and it finds its satisfaction in them.

Second, a new heart and spirit are assured. The heart is the cause of all motions and actions. By nature, it is a heart of stone—insensible, inflexible, impenitent, impervious to spiritual things, unmoved by mercies or judgments, invitations or warnings, dead and dry—fit emblem of the vile and inveterate *enmity* of fallen man against God. But when He quickens us, then does He make good that word, “I will give them an heart *to know me*” (Jer 24:7). That is not a mere head knowledge of God, but an experiential one, which is accompanied by an approbation of Him,

communion with Him, acknowledgment of Him; or, as Deuteronomy 30:6 says, “*To love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.*” That new heart is tender, warm, pliable. The “new spirit” signifies an enlightened understanding, a sensitive conscience, a submissive will. There is then an inward and universal change, producing a transforming and permanent effect. A change which brings its subject to serve God sincerely and cheerfully. Those gifts are the bestowments of God’s sovereign favour and are communicated by divine power. Nothing whatever is here attributed to man. God appropriates the whole work unto Himself. The imparting of a vital principle requires a supernatural Agent. To remove the heart of stone and give a heart of flesh is an act of omnipotence.

2. *The new covenant.* This was inaugurated and established by the Lord Jesus, being founded on the blood of atonement. Its contents are described in Hebrews 8:8-12, where Jeremiah 31:31-34 is quoted. At the time God gave that assurance through the prophet, the fleshly descendants of Abraham were divided into two hostile groups, with separate kings and centres of worship. They were antagonistic to each other, and as such strikingly adumbrated the great division between God’s elect among the Jews and the Gentiles in their natural state and status (Eph 2:14, 16). But just as God announced that the separate houses of Judah and Israel should “become one” (Eze 36:16), so His elect among Jews and Gentiles are made one by Christ (Eph 2:14-18), and therefore are all born-again believers designated the “children and seed” of Abraham (Gal 3:7, 29), and are “blessed with faithful Abraham” (Gal 3:9). Thus, the house of Israel in Hebrews 8:10 is to be understood mystically and spiritually (cf. Rom 2:28-29; Gal 6:16). That this new covenant is in force today is clear from, “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he *is* the mediator of a better covenant” (Heb 8:6), from “This cup is the new testament in my blood” (Luk 22:20, compared with 1Co 11:24-25), and from “Wherefore the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us” (Heb 10:15).

The question has been raised, both by Calvinists and Arminians, as to whether the promises of Hebrews 8:10-12 are absolute or conditional, and rarely has one answered to the satisfaction of the other. The former dwelling upon 11 Samuel 23:5, and the latter upon Isaiah 55:3, neither giving due weight to *both* of those passages. Personally, we would say that those promises are absolute as they were made by God to Christ—conditional as they are made by Christ to us—to a full interest in them, faith and obedience are indispensable. To the sinner Christ says, “Incline your ear” (cease your rebellion and submit to My lordship), “and come unto me” (throw down the weapons of your warfare and cast yourself upon My mercy): “hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you” (Isa 55:3). Human responsibility is there addressed and enforced. Our compliance with those terms is conversion. Christ will not disgrace His grace by entering into a covenant with those who are still defiant and impenitent. “The honour of God would fall to the ground if we should be pardoned without submission, without confession of past sins, or resolution of future obedience” (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677).

3. *The new name.* “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it” (Rev 2:17). The “hidden manna” speaks of Christ’s feasting him with spiritual and inward refreshments—those enjoyments of Himself which the world knows nothing about. The giving of “a white stone” is a figure taken from a custom of the ancients, that being handed to those acquitted after trial, as a black one was to those condemned. Thus, it signified absolution from guilt. The “new name” tells of acceptance, as adopted ones take the name of the family into which they are adopted. The giving of a new name not only betokened a new beginning, but carried with it a high honour, as is clear from the cases of Abram (Gen 17:5), Jacob (Gen 32:5),

Simon (Joh 1:42), and Saul when commended to a new work (Act 13:9). The new name is an expression of the Lord's personal delight in the individual overcomer. No one else knows it because the ground of this knowledge is hid in his own consciousness and experience. In this world, his name is of no account, but then he will be owned by the Lord of glory, and be advanced to a new dignity.

4. *The new song.* The fundamental passage on this is Psalm 40:3, where the speaker is the Lord Jesus. In the preceding verse, He owns the Father's action in bringing Him up out of a horrible pit and miry clay, setting His feet upon a rock, and establishing His goings. Thus, it is the resurrected Christ who is in view. On the eve of His death, at the passover supper, He had sung one of the old Psalms (Mat 26:30), but upon His triumph over the grave a new song was put into His mouth, "even praise unto [not simply "His," but] *our* God." Thus, the members are conformed to their Head in this too, and exhorted, "O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvelous things" (Psa 98:1). This is a call to the renewed soul to celebrate the honour of the Lamb, who fulfilled the law on his behalf, put away all his sins by the sacrifice of Himself, and brought in an everlasting righteousness for him. Then has He not given him abundant cause to rejoice and to laud his wonderful Saviour? The Son of God took upon Him the form of a servant, became the poorest of the poor, suffered, and died in his stead. Then let him raise unto Him a song of loving gratitude and praise. Let him make melody in his heart unto the Lord, let him give vent to his joy (and not stifle it), let hosannahs resound unto the Conqueror of his foes. The angels celebrated the wondrous work of God in creation, "The morning stars sang together" (Job 38:7), but the Church has a far grander cause to hymn His praise, even redemption. The new song will be sung in heaven (Rev 5:9), but the saints are learning to lisp it even now.

5. *The new life.* "That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4)—abstaining from the things which displease, practicing what honours Him. Thanksgiving is to be translated into thanksgiving, *showing forth* the virtues of "Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1Pe 2:9).

6. *New mercies.* "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed....They are new every morning" (Lam 3:22-23). Each fresh day brings fresh proofs of His unfailing compassions, chief of which is His renewing us in the inner man day by day (2Co 4:16).

7. *The new earth.* "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2Pe 3:13). The question is often asked, "When will the prayer be answered and God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mat 6:10)? When the new earth replaces the old one, for *there*, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa 11:9).



# EXPOSITION OF JOHN'S FIRST EPISTLE

## 25. The World Prohibited (2:15)

*“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”*

The connection between our present verse and the foregoing ones may not be apparent at once, but a little reflection will make it evident that it is linked more or less closely to all that precedes. As we have previously pointed out, the contents of verses 12-14 were designed to pave the way for what follows. John would duly impress his readers with what the riches of grace had made them in themselves, and this in order to prepare them to respond cheerfully to the prohibition of verse 15. In view of what they now were in relation unto God in Christ, they should the more readily and heartily detest that which is directly opposed to Him. As we have repeatedly observed in those sections of the epistle already traversed, John is fond of presenting the truth under the form of sharply defined antitheses. It is so again here. Having described the several members of God's family, he sets over against them the world. They are solemnly reminded that they have to live their lives in an evil and hostile environment, and therefore are they warned against its menace, and instructed how to carry themselves toward it.

At the beginning of our chapter the apostle had announced, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not”; and to enforce that injunction he had stated the broad and basic principles by which the characters of believers are to be formed and their conduct regulated. They must fix their eyes upon the One who is their Advocate with the Father, keep God's commandments, and walk even as Christ walked (verses 1-6). Then he had descended from the general to the particular: calling upon them to exercise love unto their brethren (verses 7-11). Next, he had expressed some strong assurances (verses 12-14)—addressed to the different grades of Christians to whom he was writing—which were designed as motives and incentives unto a compliance with the exhortations to which he now returns. Following the command to love the brethren is the dehortation<sup>1</sup> “Love not the world.” It gives additional point and weight unto these precepts if we bear in mind that they are not only rules for the direction of conduct, but also tests by which we are required to examine and measure ourselves, for proof that we personally possess a saving knowledge of the truth.

As the apostle proceeded to develop his subject and pursue the several designs which he had before him when writing this epistle, the different tests which are presented become increasingly searching, and the line of demarcation between a valid and an invalid Christian profession is drawn more sharply. On the other hand, the characteristics and walk of the regenerate are so delineated and their portion and privileges so described, that their comfort and assurance should be proportionately deepened. Thus it is both a needful and a salutary thing for every one of us

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<sup>1</sup> **dehortation**— the act of exhorting (a person) against a particular purpose or course of action; advising or counseling against.

carefully and honestly to try himself by each of these admonitions and precepts. As James Morgan (1799-1873) pointed out, “Without conformity to them we are not entitled to conclude that ‘we know’ Christ or that we are ‘in Him’ by faith. As, therefore, we would have our evidences clear of a saving interest in Him, and would enjoy the assurance of a living faith, we must cultivate a close conformity to the manner of life enjoined by the apostle.” It is with such considerations before us that we should prayerfully ponder the interdiction of our present text, and, instead of viewing it abstractedly, suffer ourselves to be searched by it.

There is also an undoubted link between verses 15-17 and that which was before us in verses 9-11. There John had contrasted those who walk in darkness and those who abide in the light, and, as Erich Haupt (1841-1910) strikingly pointed out, here again (verse 15) is the “darkness,” though in its concrete form, where its kingdom is to be found. It is not sufficiently recognized that the world is the domain where darkness works and holds sway. Nor is it sufficiently realized that, morally, darkness is not an objective thing only, but a subjective one too, an operative force within man; yet Scripture speaks expressly of “the power of darkness” (Luk 22:53, Col 1:13) and “the rulers of the darkness of this world” (Eph 6:12). Darkness is as truly the animating principle in the unregenerate as light is in the saints. All that is outside of God in Christ is under the dominion of sin and Satan, which is but another way of saying that it is the realm of darkness. That is the fundamental reason why the world is not to be loved by us: it is the very antipodes from Him who is light, as is made very plain in the verses which follow, where its hideous features are depicted.

*“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”* This verse contains one of the innumerable proofs of the divine authorship of the Bible, for its teaching concerning the world is at direct variance with the beliefs and sentiments of humanity. If on the one hand that which is of great price in the sight of God (1Pe 3:4) is despised by the world, on the other hand that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God (Luk 16:15). Now if there be anything which is highly esteemed by man it is the world. He thinks highly of it, and speaks loudly in its praise, for he regards it as his world. Since it be that which his labours have produced, man views the world with pride and satisfaction, boasts of its progress, and is assured that it will yet develop into a real Utopia. Certain it is then that none of mankind ever invented such a statement as “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jam 4:4). Equally evident is it that our text never originated with the human mind.

The Bible uniformly condemns the world. Again and again Christ and His apostles indicted and warned the saints against it. When the Son of God became incarnate and tabernacled among men, “the world knew him not” (Joh 1:10); yea, He declared, “Me it hateth” (Joh 7:7). He insisted that the whole world was of less value than a man’s soul (Mat 16:26). He intimated that its cares and the deceitfulness of riches were the thorns which choked the Word and made its hearer unfruitful (Mat 13:22). He solemnly said, “Woe unto the world because of offences” (Mat 18:7). He announced that Satan was its prince (Joh 14:30). In reference to the Holy Spirit He stated, “whom the world cannot receive” (Joh 14:17). He averred,<sup>2</sup> “I pray not for the world” (Joh 17:9). He “gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world” (Gal 1:4), and therefore are His people forbidden to be conformed to it (Rom 12:2). The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God (1Co 3:19). “Ungodliness and worldly lusts” are linked together (Ti 2:12). 2 Peter 2:20 mentions “the pollutions of the world,” while 1 John 5:19 informs us that

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<sup>2</sup> **averred** – asserted as a fact; declared to be true.

“the whole world lieth in wickedness.” Such declarations as these are radically opposed to all the beliefs and philosophies of men.

The above passages greatly need pressing today upon all professing Christians: “all,” we say, genuine saints not excepted. A careful pondering of the same makes it very manifest that this dehortation “love not the world” is no incidental or secondary one, but rather one which is fundamental unto vital godliness. It is therefore a matter of great practical importance that we obtain a right understanding and definition of the world, the “things that are in it,” and especially of what is meant by loving the same; otherwise, how can we rightly keep this precept? There are some conscientious souls who are very apt to distress themselves needlessly through incorrectly interpreting the same, supposing that to have their thoughts engaged with secular things while performing their daily duties is a species of worldliness, and a contravention of this injunction. But that is not so: God requires every able-bodied person to be engaged in some useful occupation: “work with your own hands” (1Th 4:11), and “if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2Th 3:10).

Honest industry is incumbent upon all, and if our calling be a lawful one, then we should apply our minds to the same: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might” (Ecc 9:10). “Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, *and* look well to thy herds” (Pro 27:23). If there be an eye single to God’s glory and a conscientious performance of duty, He is as truly honoured and pleased by the farmer as by the preacher, the labourer as his employer. Indolence or inattention to practical matters is very far from being an evidence of spirituality: “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord” therein (Rom 12:11) is one of the marks of a true disciple. It is not sinful to trade, to be industrious in the same, and to acquire money; yet constant watchfulness is necessary lest we be captivated and ensnared: “if riches increase, set not your heart upon them” (Psa 62:10). Many a prosperous merchant has been a man of deep piety, and his wealth a power for good. Nor is it wrong for a Christian man to lay up in store for his family, agreeably to the bounty of the Lord toward him (2Co 12:14; 1Ti 5:8).

No. Scripture does not require the saints to renounce the duties of relative life, or to become careless in the discharge of them. The proper evidence of being a Christian is not merely to talk about divine things, but (by grace) to walk according to the rules of God’s Word in whatever position Providence has placed him: whether as a master or servant, husband or wife, parent or child, bearing rule or yielding obedience as unto the Lord. Diligence and fidelity in the management of temporal affairs are to be maintained, yet without a sinful conformity to the world. It is indeed necessary that the believer should ever bear in mind that “the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself” (Psa 4:3), and that as a stranger and pilgrim in this scene he must abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul (1Pe 2:11). Yet that is far from signifying that he is to make himself conspicuous as an oddity. There is a happy medium between a sinful compliance with the world, being a slave to its opinions and an imitator of its fashions, and a scrupulous singularity which repudiates the spirit and liberty of the Gospel, and which is in reality nothing but a spirit of self-righteousness.

“*Love not the world.*” In this and all similar passages the “world” is both a society and a system. The members of it are described as “men of the world, which have their portion in this life” (Psa 17:14). Their chief good consists of the things of time and sense: their consuming desire is to crowd as much as possible of earthly joy into the present. Of each of its prosperous citizens it is said, “Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches” (Psa 52:7). As a system, it is under the dominion of Satan: he is its “prince,” regulating its policy and politics; its “god” (2Co 4:4), directing its religions. It is therefore the embodiment of

his spirit, bearing his image and wearing his livery. Thus it is said of the unregenerate that they walk “according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2). As Christ declared to some of its most respected devotees, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will [desire and are determined to] do” (Joh 8:44); they listen willingly to his solicitations and readily credit his lies.

Considered morally, rather than materially, the *world* is synonymous with the kingdom of Satan (Mat 12:26) or the unregenerate part of mankind, together with the things on which they set their hearts: all that is outside “the kingdom of God”—where His authority is owned. “It is the reign or kingdom of ‘the carnal mind’ which is ‘enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.’ Wherever that mind prevails, there is the world” (Robert S. Candlish, 1806-1873). It is fallen human nature acting out itself under the influence of the devil, fashioning the framework of society after its own tendencies. Its very spirit is hostile to godliness, for it is dominated by carnal ambition, pride, avarice, self-pleasing, and sensuous desires and interests. Its opinions are false, its aims selfish, its pleasures sinful, its influence thoroughly demoralizing. The maxims which govern it, the springs which operate it, the ends which it seeks, are earthly, sensual, devilish. Its politics are corrupt, its honours empty baubles, its smiles fickle. Even to its own votaries it is a thing of bitter disappointments, for it is full of illusions and fierce rivalries.

Now since the world is the sphere of rebellion against God, His people are commanded not to love it. They are not to esteem it as their portion or treasure. They are forbidden to set their affections upon it. Love is the supreme affection in whatever heart it dwells. It is jealous and will brook no rival. Its very nature is to make everything else subordinate to the object on which it is set, whether that object be God, a human creature, riches or pleasure. To love the world is to give it the first place in our hearts, to idolize it, to make everything else subordinate to the acquisition and enjoyment of it, to despise whatever comes into competition with it. Where the world be loved, it possesses and governs the soul, overcoming the scruples of conscience and the principles of integrity, for its influence is subtle and insidious, powerful and perilous. It dominates many who do not suspect it. To love the world is to make its vanities the chief objects of our pursuit, to share its friendships, to court its smiles, to conform to its ways, and to find our happiness in what it yields. Since the world is openly antagonistic to God, for any of His people to love it is to exercise a spirit of hostility to Him—it is to act a traitor’s part, to hold converse with the enemy’s camp.

Even the habitable earth in which we reside must not be cherished by the Christian as though it were his eternal dwelling place: for “this *is not your* rest, because it is polluted” (Mic 2:10). As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) remarked, “It was never intended to be so: it was designed for our passage, but not for our portion; our inn, but not our home...let us therefore sit loose to it, live above it, and think of leaving it.” All the time we spend here is but a night in comparison with eternity. Even the patriarchs were not satisfied with Canaan, though, it flowed with milk and honey; instead, they “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth,” and desired a better country, that is a heavenly, “wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city” (Heb 11:13, 16). A loathness to leave this earth indicates that our affections cleave too much unto it. To be content with such a sinful scene as this is sure proof that any individual is in a sad state of heart. It is because of their proneness to cleave to it that God so often embitters this world unto them.

*“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.”* In the second clause the apostle descends from the general to the particular. One may renounce the world as a whole, and yet the heart still clings to some of its parts. Even an unregenerate religionist may separate himself from the grosser aspects of the world, refusing to have fellowship with the giddy and frivolous, scorn its carnal attractions, and yet remain a thorough worldling at heart. He may have no sympathy with its tone and spirit, and yet certain objects in it possess great attraction for and have power over him. It is all the same in essence whether I love the world collectively or any of the single things which comprise it. It is not sufficient that I eschew the ways of the world, I must also detach my affections from everything which seeks to claim them. I must not delight in anything which would cause me to lessen my esteem of Christ and heavenly things. I am not to value any object if it hinders the performance of my duties Godward, dulls my relish for His Word, or chills the spirit of praise and prayer. I am to prefer nothing to spiritual things. I may use many of the things that are in the world, but I must not abuse them, trust in them, or place my happiness in them.

Manton most helpfully pointed out:

“God doth not require that we should love nothing, think of nothing, but Himself: the state of this life will not permit that. But God must have all the heart so far (1) that nothing be loved against God—a prohibited object is forbidden: sin must not be loved. (2) Nothing above God with a superior love: ‘he that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me’ (Mat 10:37). (3) Not equal with God, for then our love is but a partial and half love, divided between God and the creature. God above all, and our neighbour as ourselves. God can endure no rival. Love to man is but the second commandment, and must give way to the first. (4) Nothing apart from God, but as subservient to Him: God in the creature, Christ in His members: myself, wife, children, natural comforts in God and from God.”

The Christian’s love is to be reserved for God, and not thrown away upon anything which is averse to Him, and therefore whatever present and sensible things exert a malignant influence upon the mind, as opposed to the influence and effect which spiritual and future things should have upon us, are to be shunned.

As “love not the world” is not an order forbidding the believer to have any intercourse with the society of the world or to engage in commerce therein, so love not the things that are in the world is not a prohibition against his making a moderate use of the comforts and conveniences of this life, agreeable to the station to which the Lord has appointed him here. Christians are not required to cut themselves off from all contact with their fellow men and retire into a monastery or convent; nor are they directed to abstain from pleasant food or the wearing of clothes which become their station; still less is it wrong for them to admire the wonders and beauties of God’s handiwork in the material creation. While he is bidden to be temperate in all things, yet it is no virtue for a saint to adopt the austerities of the Spartans or to practice the bodily mortifications of the Brahmins. There is a “strictness” which arises from ignorance rather than knowledge, and a self-denial which is the fruit of fanaticism rather than spirituality. To be wholly concerned about externals is to gratify the spirit of self-righteousness, for it is possible to starve the body while feeding pride.

*“If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”* It comes to the same thing whether the love of the Father refers to His being shed abroad in the heart, or ours to Him, for the one cannot be without the other. If my prevailing desires be for the things which are in the world, if I conform to its carnal manners, comply with its sinful demands, and would do anything rather than antagonize it, then obviously I am an unregenerate person. If my affections be set upon the

world which hounded His Son to death, and which hates His people in proportion as they see His image in them, how can the love of the Father dwell in me? It is impossible: the world, which lieth in the wicked, and the Father are irreconcilable, for they are diametrically opposed. Since they be thoroughly incompatible, love for the world and love to God cannot dwell together in the same heart. That was plainly taught by Christ: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other” (Mat 6:24). Both cannot rule the soul, for their governments and commands are contrary: their spirit and their course are diverse. Each person has to choose which of the two claimants for his heart shall be served and loved. Each Christian is required resolutely to resist the world in every respect in which it draws him away from God, and refuse to comply with it at the cost of disobeying Him.

Here are some tests by which the reader should examine himself to determine whether he loves the world or the Father. Which do you seek with the more fervour: the wealth and honours of the world, or the riches of grace and the approbation<sup>3</sup> of God? Which have the greater attraction: the pleasures of the world, which are but for a season, or those pleasures at God’s right hand, which are for evermore? Wherein lies your confidence: in the money you have “laid up for a rainy day,” or in the living and faithful God, who has promised to supply all the need of His people? Which occasions the deeper sorrow: a temporal loss, or the severance of fellowship with God? Which are you spending more money upon: personal comforts and luxuries, or the circulation of God’s Word and the spread of His Gospel? What most dominates your mind: thoughts and schemes after worldly advancements, or resolutions and efforts to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord? Do your “good intentions” materialize, or are they empty dreams?

## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

### 77. The Levites, Part 3

As we have pointed out in previous articles, Israel’s inheritance was one, but the land of Canaan was split into two unequal parts by the Jordan. Thus, in order to get a connected and complete picture of what it has pleased the Holy Spirit to make known concerning the apportioning of the country promised to Abraham and his seed, it is necessary to take into account the dispositions which were made under Moses. Then it was that two and a half of the tribes received their portions on the eastward side of the river, whereas Joshua 14-19 treats only of the allotting of the western sections to the remaining nine and a half tribes. The link between those important transactions is supplied by Joshua 13:33, for it connects what is said in 13:8, 15, 24, 29 (about the two and a half tribes), with what Joshua subsequently did. There we are told, “But unto the tribe of Levi, Moses gave not any inheritance: the LORD God of Israel was their inheritance, as he said unto them.”

As intimated in our last, the Levites are to be regarded both literally and typically, and typically in a twofold way—personally and officially. Personally, they shadowed forth the *entire*

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<sup>3</sup> **approbation** – warm approval; liking; praise.

*company of Christians* in their priestly character. Officially, they prefigured *the ministers* of Christ. Having considered the former, we now turn to the latter. But let us first quote a noteworthy comment of Thomas Scott (1747-1821) on Joshua 13:33, “As Moses was himself of the tribe of Levi, he gave a special proof that he acted by divine authority in the overlooking of his own family and his own tribe: for though the Levites were well provided for, yet the security of that provision was so interwoven with the worship of God that, had they universally apostatized, the Levites would have been left destitute; whilst all the other tribes would have had possession of their estates—that is, without some immediate divine intervention. Had Moses acted according to the natural bias of the human mind, he would probably have first provided for his own tribe; but on the contrary, he expressly appointed that they should have no inheritance in Israel.”

As Israel was a peculiar people and not to be reckoned among the nations (Num 23:9)—a figure of the church which is “not of the world” (Joh 17:14)—so the Levites were a peculiar tribe, in all respects different from the others—figure of the ministers of Christ (2Ti 2:4). The special position assigned the Levites is first shown in Numbers 1:1-3, 45-46. There we see how they were singled out for different treatment from their fellows, for when the census was taken to ascertain how many men were eligible for military service in each tribe, we are told, “But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them. For the LORD had spoken unto Moses, saying, Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel” (verses 47-49). Thus, they were exempted from military duties, because they were to be wholly devoted unto the Lord. “They that minister about holy things should neither entangle themselves nor be entangled in secular affairs. The ministry is itself work enough for a whole man, and all them too little enough to be employed in it. It is an admonition to ministers to distinguish themselves by their exemplary conversation from common Christians: not affecting to seem greater, but aiming to be better, every way better, than others” (Matthew Henry).

It was for the same reason that the Levites received no separate portion of Canaan. As Joshua 24:13 informs us, it was a land which abounded in “vineyards and oliveyards,” and *they* required considerable time and attention. The Levites had no fields to cultivate, nothing to divert their energies from fully serving the Lord. When it is said that, “The LORD God of Israel was their inheritance” (13:33), it is to be understood in a *temporal* sense, for spiritually He was the heritage of all the tribes. It was the will of God that the Levites should be supported by that portion which He reserved to Himself out of the estates of all the other Israelites, “I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in the tabernacle of the congregation” (Num 18:21, and see verse 24). A tithe from the fruits of the ground of the other tribes was given them, so that, without any expense or labour of their own, they were not only freed from secular toils and snares, but plentifully supplied with everything needful for their bodies.

In the above arrangement, we behold the sovereignty, the goodness, and the wisdom of God. His sovereignty in the various disposition of His favours; His goodness in relieving the Levites of any need to plough and sow; His wisdom in so ordering the mutual dependence of the tribes. Whereas the Levites were privileged to minister in the sacred work of the tabernacle, which no others were permitted to engage in, the other tribes had an inheritance in the land of Canaan which was denied the Levites. Thus, neither had occasion to envy or despise the other; and each alike had cause to be grateful unto the Lord. Such are the relations which God has appointed between His ministers and the rank and file of His people in this New Testament era. “If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?” (1Co 9:11). No indeed, for the labourer is worthy of his hire (1Ti 5:18). “Let him that is taught in the word

communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things” (Gal 6:6)—in everything that is needful for their comfortable subsistence. Thereby both the obligations and the honours are equally divided.

The method which God ordered for the supply of the temporal needs of the Levites made the same dependent upon the maintenance of the appointed worship of the Lord, for if the nation became either irreligious or idolatrous, they would neither bring sacrifices nor pay tithes. “Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin [contract guilt], and die. But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle” (Num 18:22-23). As Matthew Henry remarked, “If ministers expect that the people should keep in their sphere, and not intermeddle with sacred offices, let them keep in theirs, and not entangle themselves in secular affairs.” “Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for an inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe...and ye shall give thereof the LORD’s heave offering to Aaron the priest. Out of all your gifts ye shall offer every heave offering of the LORD, of all the best thereof” (verses 26-29). Thus were they to honour the Lord with their substance, practice what they preached, and set before the people an example of generosity. How that condemns the stinginess of many preachers today!

In addition to the tithe, a further part of the Levites’ portion was, “They shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire” (Deu 18:1). It was unto that the apostle made reference in 1 Corinthians 9:13-14, and showed that the same principle holds good in connection with those who correspond to the Levites in this dispensation, “Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” God has a variety of ways of providing for those who are more immediately dependent upon Him. The lilies toil not, neither do they spin, yet is clothing supplied them (Mat 6:28-29); the birds of the air sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet our heavenly Father feeds them (Mat 6:26). Christ sent forth the twelve “without purse or script,” yet when they returned from their mission and He asked them, “Lacked ye any thing?” They said, “Nothing” (Luk 22:35). Those who fully count on Him for the supply of their every need are not confounded.

“Command the children of Israel, that they give unto the Levites of the inheritance of their possession cities to dwell in; and ye shall give also unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them. And the cities shall they have to dwell in; and the suburbs of them shall be for their cattle, and for their goods, and for all their beasts....So all the cities which ye shall give to the Levites shall be forty and eight cities” (Num 35:2-8). It is to be borne in mind that, even though they served by courses, only a small percentage of them would officiate at the tabernacle, and those cities were required by the remainder of the tribe—their brethren and families, as well as their own wives and children. It is interesting to note that, as a mark of His special favour, God gave orders, “Notwithstanding the cities of the Levites, and the houses of the cities of their possession, may the Levites redeem at any time. And if a man purchase of the Levites, then the house that was sold, and the city of his possession, shall go out in the year of jubilee [i.e. revert to its original owner]....But the field of the suburbs of their cities may not be sold, for it is their perpetual possession” (Lev 25:32-34).

“Thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all the things that belong to it....And when the tabernacle sitteth forward, the Levites shall take it down: and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up; and



the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts. But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony” (Num 1:50-53). Thus were they divinely constituted the custodians of the tabernacle and the carriers of its sacred contents. This receives amplification in Numbers 4, where detailed charges were given the three principal families of the Levites; to wit, the Kohathites, the Gershonites, and the Merarites, who were named after the three sons of Levi—all which is recorded there going to show that God assigns the place and work of each of His servants according to His own sovereign pleasure. His ministers are not free to choose their own field or particular service, but the occupation of each is to be determined by the will of their Master.

The tasks assigned the Levites were many and varied, though for the most part humble and menial. They were “given unto Aaron and his sons” (Num 8:19) to minister unto them in subordinate and preparatory offices, while the priests were serving within the tabernacle itself. Though brethren of the priests, they were given to them as servants or assistants, and the meanest and most laborious part of the worship assigned them. They were not allowed to go within the sanctuary itself, nor even to look upon the sacred vessels. “Their brethren also the Levites were appointed unto all manner of service of the tabernacle of the house of God. But Aaron and his sons offered upon the altar of the burnt offering, and on the altar of incense, and were appointed for all the work of the place most holy” (1Ch 6:48-49). In fulfilling their appointment, it fell to them to keep the tabernacle and its instruments in a proper state for the divine service (Num 3:8), to carry its different parts when removing from place to place (Num 1:51). But it was Aaron and his sons who must *cover* the holy ark, the table of shewbread, the candlestick, and the altar of incense (Num 4:5-14). Only when Aaron and his sons “made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is set forward; *after that*, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die” (verse 15), nor were their eyes ever permitted to behold them.

In later times, when the temple was built, some of them occupied the post of door-keeper or porter (1Ch 9:14, 17, 23). “And they lodged round about the house of God, because the charge was upon them, and the opening thereof every morning pertained to them....Some of them also were appointed to oversee the vessels, and all the instruments of the sanctuary, and the fine flour, and the wine, and the oil, and the frankincense, and the spices...had the set office over the things that were made in the pans...were over the shewbread, to prepare it every Sabbath” (1Ch 9:32). Thus were they required to make themselves generally useful in connection with the service of the Lord and the public worship of the congregation of Israel. Though signally favoured by God in their calling, many lowly tasks fell to their lot. While greatly privileged, there was no place for the exercise of pride.

The Levites were also the ones who were responsible to take charge of the musical arrangements connected with the public worship. “And these are they whom David set over the service of song in the house of the Lord” (1Ch 6:31). So too under the reign of Solomon, we read that “also the Levites, which were the singers...being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps...the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound in praising and thanking the LORD” (2Ch 5:12-13). Finally, it was foretold of them that “they shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law” (Deu 33:10). According as Israel’s spirituality ebbed or flowed was that duty discharged. Thus, in the days of Asa, for a long season Israel had been “without a teaching priest” (2Ch 15:3), but under a partial reformation under Jehoshaphat, he sent out his

princes, accompanied by the Levites and priests, “and they taught in Judah” (2Ch 17:7-9). “And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the LORD” (2Ch 30:22, and cf. 35:3). It was chiefly through their instrumentality that the people were kept acquainted with the divine statutes (see also Nehemiah 8:7).

Thus the Levites were assigned a most elevated and privileged station, and yet they were called upon to perform the most lowly tasks, being servants unto others. So it is (or should be) with those who correspond to them now. The Christian ministry is dignified far above any earthly vocation. It was that which engaged the Lord of glory when He tabernacled upon earth, and it is that which He has established as a standing ordinance in His Church (Eph 4:11). Thus, the ministry of the sacred office belongs to a kingdom which is not of this world. It is charged with the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, promoting His glory, seeking the spiritual and eternal good of immortal souls. But so far from such an office fostering a vainglorious spirit, it should have a direct tendency to deepen self-abasement, and cause those who occupy it to “rejoice with trembling” (Psa 2:11), for who is sufficient for these things (2Co 2:16)? The utmost reverence is required in handling such high and holy things. Instead of pluming themselves, ministers of the Gospel have reason to cry, “Woe is me! For...I am a man of unclean lips” (Isa 6:5). Such a commission as theirs, so momentous a charge, calls for godly fear and trembling.

What point does the menial character of the Levites’ service give to “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (1Pe 5:3)! That prohibits ministers not only assuming any temporal power, but also attempting dominion over the faith and consciences of men. Let not preachers of the Gospel abuse their position: they are to win respect, and not command it. “The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all” (2Ti 2:24). Alas, love of power has been as great an evil in the ministry as has the love of money. Nor are papists the only offenders. There are many little popes and would-be popes among Protestants. Preachers are not given the right to usurp authority over their brethren, nor to adopt an arrogant or tyrannical attitude. A haughty and domineering spirit ill becomes those who profess to be the servants of Him who deigned to wash and wipe the feet of His disciples. The greatest ability and most unwearied diligence will not commend the minister unto the spiritually-minded unless he be clothed with humility.

The ministry of our Lord was distinguished by both the dignity of God and the compassion of a man. By the authority received from the Father, and yet by the lowliness of the servant, Who declared, “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister” (Mat 20:28). Thus, it was with the chief of His apostles, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given” (Eph 3:8) was his estimate of himself. *That* was the language of a true “Levite”! So too was his, “Yet have I made myself *servant* unto all” (1Co 9:19); and again, “ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake” and “I seek not yours, but you” (2Co 4:5; 12:14). Let Gospel ministers emulate the Levites in being unencumbered by worldly concerns, that they may devote themselves entirely to the service of God and His people. Let them not attempt to lift the covering that has been placed upon holy vessels, remembering that, “Secret things belong unto the LORD” (Deu 29:29). Let them be diligent in teaching the people the divine precepts. Let them take the lead in having a song of praise on their lips and commend Christ by a cheerful countenance.

# THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

## 10. Its Evidences, Part 1

After the ground we have already covered in the preceding articles, it might be thought there was no need for us to devote a separate section to the furnishing of *proof* that man is a fallen and depraved creature, one who has departed far from his Maker and rightful Lord. Though the Word of God needs no confirming by anything outside itself, it is not without value or interest to find that the teaching of Genesis 3 is substantiated by the hard facts of history and observation. And since there is no point on which the world is so dark as concerning its own darkness, we deem it requisite to make demonstration of the same. All men by nature, unrenewed in their minds by the saving operations of the Holy Spirit, are in a state of darkness with respect to any vital knowledge of God. Be they in other things never so learned and skillful, in spiritual matters they are blind and stupid. But that is something which they cannot endure to hear about, and when it be pressed upon their notice, their ire is at once aroused. The proud intellectualists who deem themselves so much wiser than the humble and simple believer, regard it as but an empty conceit of illiterates when told that “The way of peace they have not known (Rom 3:17).” Such infatuated souls are quite ignorant of their very ignorance.

Even in Christendom, the average churchgoer is fully satisfied if he learn by rote a few of the elementary principles of religion. By so doing, he comforts himself that he is not an infidel, and since he believes there is a God (though it be one which his own imagination has devised), he plumes himself that he is far from being an atheist. Yet, as to having any living, spiritual, influential and practical knowledge of the Lord and His ways, he is quite a stranger, altogether unenlightened. Nor does he feel in the least need of divine illumination. Nay, he has no relish of or desire for a closer acquaintance with God. Never having realized himself to be a lost sinner, he has never sought the Saviour, for it is only those who are sensible of sickness who value a physician—as none but those who are conscious of soul starvation yearn for the Bread of life. Men may proudly boast that this twentieth century is an age of enlightenment, but, however that may be so in a material and mechanical sense, it is certainly very far from being the case spiritually. It is often averred by those who ought to know better that men today are more eager in their quest for truth than in former days, but hard facts give the lie to such an assertion.

In Job 12:24-25, we are told concerning “the chief people of the earth” that “they grope in the dark without light.” How evident that is unto those whose eyes have been anointed with the Holy Spirit, yea, even to natural men who have not been given up to a strong delusion that they should believe a lie. Who but those blinded by prejudice and incapable of perceiving what is right before them would still believe in “the progress of man” and “the steady advance of the human race”? And yet such postulates are made daily by those who are regarded as being the best educated and the greatest thinkers. One had supposed that the idle dreams of idealists and theorizers would have been dispelled by the happenings of the past thirty years, when hundreds of millions of earth’s inhabitants were engaged in a life and death struggle, in which the most barbarous

inhumanities were perpetrated, tens of thousands of peaceful citizens killed in their homes, hundreds of thousands more maimed for the rest of their days, and incalculable material damage wrought. But so persistent is error, so widely accepted is this chimera of “evolution,” and so radically is it opposed to that which we are here contending for, that no efforts are to be spared in exposing the one and establishing the other. It is with the desire to do so that we now present some of the abundant evidence which testifies clearly to the utterly ruined condition of fallen mankind.

These proofs may be drawn from the teaching of Holy Writ, the records of human historians, our own observations, and personal experience. The third chapter of Genesis describes the origin of human depravity. In the very next chapter, the bitter fruits of the fall quickly begin to be manifested. In the former, we behold sin in our first parents, in the latter, sin in their firstborn, who very soon supplied proof of his having received an evil nature from them. In Genesis 3, the sin was against God. In Genesis 4, it was both against Him and against a fellow man. That is ever the order. Where there is no fear of God before the eyes, there will be no genuine respect for the rights of our neighbours. Yet even at that early date, we behold the sovereign and distinguishing grace of God at work, for it was by a God-given faith that Abel presented unto the Lord an acceptable sacrifice (Heb 11:4), whereas it was in blatant self-will and self-pleasing that Cain brought the fruit of the ground as an offering. Upon the Lord’s rejection thereof we are told, “And Cain was very wroth” (Gen 4:5), being angry because he could not approach and worship God according to the dictates of his own mind, and thereby displayed his native enmity against Him. Jealous of God’s approval of Abel, Cain rose up and murdered his brother.

Like leprosy, sin contaminates, spreads, and produces death. Near the close of Genesis 4, we see sin corrupting family life, for Lamech was guilty of polygamy, murder, and a spirit of fierce revenge (verse 23). In Genesis 5, death is written in capital letters over the inspired record, for no less than eight times do we there read, “and he died.” But again we are shown grace superabounding in the midst of abounding sin, for Enoch, the seventh from Adam, died not, being translated without seeing death. That much of his time was spent in expostulating with and warning the wicked of his day is intimated in Jude 14-15, where we are told that he prophesied, “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken *against him*.” Noah too was “a preacher of righteousness” (2Pe 2:5) unto the antediluvians, but seemingly with little effect, for we read, “And God saw that the wickedness of men was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,” that “All flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth,” and that the earth was “filled with violence through them” (Gen 6:5, 12-13).

But though God sent a flood which swept away the whole of that wicked generation, sin was not eradicated from human nature. Instead, fresh evidence of the depravity of man was soon forthcoming. After such a merciful deliverance from the deluge, after witnessing such a fearful demonstration of God’s holy wrath against sin, and after the Lord’s making a gracious covenant with Noah, which contained most blessed promises and assurances, one had supposed that the human race would ever after adhere to the ways of virtue. But alas, the very next thing that we read of is that “Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: and he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent” (9:20-21). Scholars tell us that the Hebrew word for “uncovered” clearly indicates a deliberate act, and not a mere unconscious effect of drunkenness—the sins of intemperance and impurity are twin sisters. The sad lapse of

Noah gave occasion to his son to sin, for, instead of throwing the mantle of charity over his parent's infirmity, he dishonoured his father, manifesting a total disrespect for and subjection to him. In consequence, he brought down upon his descendants a curse, the effects and results of which are apparent to this very day (verse 25).

As we pointed out over thirty years ago in an article on the subject, Genesis 9 brings before us the inauguration of a new beginning, and, a pondering of the same, causes our minds to turn back to the first beginning of the human race. A careful comparison of the two reveals a series of most remarkable parallels between the histories of Adam and Noah. Adam was placed upon an earth which came up out of "the great deep" (Gen 1:2), so also did Noah come forth on to an earth which had just emerged from the waters of the great deluge. Adam was made lord of creation (1:28), and into the hand of Noah, God also delivered all things (9:2). Adam was "blessed" of God and told to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (1:28), and in like manner, Noah was blessed and told to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (9:1). Adam was placed by God in a garden to "dress and keep it" (2:15), and Noah "began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard" (9:20). It was in the garden that Adam transgressed and fell, and the product of the vineyard was the occasion of Noah's sad fall. The sin of Adam resulted in the exposure of his nakedness (3:7), and likewise, we read that Noah "was uncovered within his tent" (9:21). Adam's sin brought down a terrible curse upon his posterity (Rom 5:12), and so did Noah's too (9:24-25). Immediately after the fall of Adam, a remarkable prophecy was given containing in outline the history of redemption (3:15), and immediately after Noah's fall, a remarkable prophecy was uttered containing in outline the history of the great divisions of our race (9:25-27).

Genesis 10 and 11 take up the history of the postdiluvian earth. They show us something of the ways of men in this new world—revolting against God, seeking to glorify and deify themselves. They make known the carnal principles by which the world-system is now regulated. Since 10:8-12 and 11:1-9 interrupt the course of the genealogies given there, they should be regarded as an important parenthesis—the former one explaining the latter. The first is concerned with Nimrod, and of him we learn that: 1. He was a descendant of Ham, through Cush (10:8), and therefore of that branch of Noah's family on which the curse rested. 2. Nimrod signifies "the rebel." 3. He "began to be a mighty one in the earth," which implies that he struggled for the pre-eminence and by force of will obtained it. 4. "In the earth" intimates conquest and subjugation, becoming a leader of and ruler over men. 5. He was a mighty hunter (10:9). Three times over in Genesis 10 and again in 1 Chronicles 1:10 is the term "mighty" used of him. The Hebrew word also being rendered "chief" and "chieftain." 6. He was "a mighty hunter *before the LORD*" (10:9). Compare that with "the earth also was corrupt *before God*" (6:11), and we get the impression that this proud rebel pursued his ambitious and impious designs in brazen defiance of the Almighty. 7. Nimrod was a king and had his headquarters in Babylon (10:10).

From the opening verses of Genesis 11, it is clear that Nimrod had an inordinate desire for fame, that he lusted after supreme dominion or the establishment of a world empire (10:10-11), and that he headed a great confederacy in open rebellion against JEHOVAH. The very word "Babel" signifies, "The gate of God," but afterwards, because of the Divine judgment inflicted on it, it came to mean, "Confusion." By putting together the different details supplied by the Spirit, there can be little doubt that Nimrod not only organized an imperial government, over which he presided as king, but that he also instituted a new and *idolatrous worship*. Though not mentioned by name in Genesis 11, it is evident from the foregoing chapter that he was the leader of the movement here described. The topographical reference in 11:2 is just as significant, morally, as is

“going *down* into Egypt” (Isa 31:1) and “*up* to Jerusalem” (Mar 10:33). “They journeyed *from the east*” connotes that they turned their backs on the sunrise. God had commanded Noah to “multiply, and replenish the earth” (9:1), but here we read, “And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven: and let us make us a name, *lest* we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (11:4). That was directly contrary to God, and He at once intervened, brought to naught Nimrod’s scheme, and “scattered them abroad upon the face of all the earth” (11:9).

At the Tower of Babel another crisis had arrived in the history of the human race. There mankind was again guilty of apostasy and declared defiance of the Most High. The divine confounding of man’s speech was the origin of the different nations of the earth, and, after the overthrow of Nimrod’s effort, we get the formation of “the world” as it has existed ever since. This is confirmed in Romans 1, where the apostle supplies proof of the guilt of the Gentiles. In verse 19, we read of “that which *may be* known of God”—through the display of His perfections in the works of creation. Verse 21 goes farther, and states, “When they *knew God* [i.e. in the days of Nimrod], they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools [in connection with the Tower of Babel], and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man.” It was then that idolatry commenced. In what follows, we are told three times over that “God gave them up” (verses 24, 26, 28). It was then that He abandoned them and “suffered all nations to walk in their own ways” (Act 14:16).

The next thing, after that great crisis in human affairs recorded in Genesis 11, was the divine call of Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel, but before turning to that, let us consider some of the effects of the former. The first of the Gentile nations about which Scripture has much to say are the Egyptians, and they made their depravity clear by ill-treating the Hebrews, and defying the Lord. The seven nations which inhabited Canaan when Israel entered that land in the days of Joshua were devoted to the most horrible abominations and wickedness (Lev 18:6-25; Deu 9:5). The characters of the renowned empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome are intimated in Daniel 7:4-7, where they are likened to wild beasts. Outside the narrow bounds of Judaism, the whole world was heathen, completely dominated by the devil. Having turned their backs on Him Who is light, they were in total spiritual darkness, given up to ignorance, superstition, and vice. One and all sought their happiness in the pleasures of earth, according to their various desires and appetites. But whatever “happiness” was enjoyed by them, it was but an animal and fleeting one, utterly unworthy of creatures made for eternity. They were quite insensible of their real misery, poverty and blindness.

It is true that the arts were developed to a high degree by some of the ancients and that there were famous sages among them, but the masses of the people were grossly materialistic, and their teachers propagated the wildest absurdities. They one and all denied a divine creation of the world, holding for the most part that matter is eternal. Some believed there was no survival of the soul after death, others in the theory of transmigration—the souls of men passing into the bodies of animals. In short, “The world by wisdom knew not God” (1Co 1:21), and where there be ignorance of Him, there is always ignorance of ourselves. They realized not that they were victims of the great deceiver of souls, who blinds the minds of those who believe not. No nation of old was as highly educated as the Greeks, yet the private lives of her most eminent men were stained by the most revolting crimes. Those who had the ear of the public and talked most about setting men free from their passions, and were held in the highest esteem as the teachers of truth

and virtue, were themselves the abject slaves of sin and Satan, and, morally speaking, society was rotten to the core.

The whole world festered in its corruption. Sensual indulgence was everywhere carried to its highest pitch. Gluttony was an art, fornication was indulged in without restraint. The prophet shows (Hosea 4) that where there is no knowledge of God in a land, there is no mercy and truth among its inhabitants. Instead, selfishness, oppression, and persecution bear all down. There is scarcely a page in the annals of the world which does not furnish tragic illustrations of the greed and grind, the injustice and chicanery, the avarice and consciencelessness, the intemperance and immorality to which fallen human nature is so horribly prone. Oh, what a sad spectacle does history present of our race! Abundantly does it bear witness to the divine declaration, "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity" (Psa 62:9). Modern infidels may paint a beautiful picture of the virtues of many of the heathen, and out of their hatred of Christianity, exalt them to the highest seats of intellectual attainment and moral excellence, but the clear testimony of history definitely refutes them.

The earth has been made an Acaldama by its murders and fightings deluging it with blood. "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty" (Psa 74:20). In ancient Greece, parents were at liberty to expose their children to perish from cold and hunger, or to be eaten up by wild beasts, and though such exposures were frequently practiced, they passed without punishment or censure. Wars were prosecuted with the utmost ferocity, and if any of the vanquished escaped death, lifelong slavery of the most abject kind was the only prospect before them. At Rome, which was then the metropolis of the world, the court of Caesar was steeped in licentiousness. To provide amusement for his senators, six hundred gladiators fought a hand-to-hand conflict in the public theatre. Not to be outdone, Pompey turned five hundred lions into the arena to engage an equal number of his braves, and "delicate ladies" sat applauding and gloating over the flow of blood. The aged and infirm were banished to an island in the Tiber. Almost two-thirds of the "civilized" world were slaves, their masters having absolute power over them. Human sacrifices were frequently offered on their temple altars. Destruction and misery were in their ways, and the way of peace they knew not (Rom 3:16-17).

The "Deists" of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries dilated much upon the charming innocence of the tribes which dwelt in the sylvan bowers of primeval forests, untainted by the vice of civilization, unpolluted by modern commerce. But when the woods of America were entered by the white man, he found the Indians as ferocious and cruel as wild beasts, so that, as one expressed it, "The red tomahawk might have been emblazoned as the red man's coat of arms, and his eyes of glaring revenge regarded as the index of his character." When travellers penetrated into the interior of Africa, where it was hoped to find human nature in its primitive excellence, they found, instead, primitive devilry. Take the milder races. To look into the gentle face of the Hindu one would suppose him incapable of brutality and bestiality, but let the facts of the Sepoy rebellion of last century be read, and you will find the mercilessness of the tiger. So too of the placid Chinaman. The Boxer outbreak and atrocities at the beginning of this century witnessed similar inhumanities. If a new tribe were discovered, we should *know* it too must be depraved and vicious. Simply to be informed that they were *men* would oblige us to conclude that they were "hateful, and hating one another" (Ti 3:3).

# INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

## Part 18

24. *The law of cause and effect.* By this we mean the observing and tracing out of *the connection* which exists between certain notable events in the life of an individual or nation and what led up to the same. For instance, the closing events recorded in the sad history of Lot startle and stagger us by their deplorable and revolting nature. Yet if we carefully ponder all that preceded, then the tragic finale can almost be anticipated. Or take the better-known case of Simon Peter's denial of Christ, which seems to be altogether out of keeping with what we know of his character. Strange indeed is the anomaly presented. That the one who feared not to step out of the ship and walk on the sea to his beloved Master, and who boldly drew his sword and smote off the ear of the high priest's servant when a strong force came to arrest the Saviour, should tremble in the presence of a maid, and be afraid to own the Lord Jesus! Nevertheless, his melancholy fall was not an isolated event having no relation to what had gone before. Rather was it all of a piece with his previous attitude and actions, being the logical, and virtually the inevitable, sequel to them. These are examples of a numerous class of cases, and they should be carefully borne in mind as we read the biographical portions of Scripture.

This principle of interpretation will be the more easily grasped when we point out that it is much the same as the law of sowing and reaping. That law operates now, in this world, and it is an important part of the expositor's task to observe its outworking in the lives of biblical characters.

Consider then some of the details recorded about Lot *before* his career ended amid the dark shadows of his mountain cave. After the initial reference to him in Genesis 11:31, nothing is said about him until after Abraham's sorry sojourn in Egypt. It appears that Lot contracted Egypt's spirit and acquired a taste for its fleshpots. In Genesis 13:6-7, we read of a strife between the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot. The Lord's later rewarding of the former and the subsequent conduct of the latter seem clearly to intimate which of them was to blame. The proposal that Abraham made to his nephew (13:8-9) was a most generous one, and Lot's carnality at once appeared in the advantage he took of it. Instead of leaving the choice to his uncle, Lot yielded to the lust of the eyes, and chose the plain of Jordan, which was well watered and "like the land of Egypt" (13:10)! Next, he "pitched his tent toward Sodom" (13:12). Then he went and "dwelt in Sodom" (14:12), forsaking the pilgrim's tent for a "house" (19:3). There he settled down, became an alderman, sitting in its "gate" (19:1), while his daughters married men of Sodom.

Let us in a similar way briefly trace the several downward steps which led to Peter's awful fall. There was first his self-assurance and proud boast when he declared, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I" (Mar 14:29). We doubt not his sincerity on that occasion, but it is clear that he realized not his instability. Self-ignorance and self-confidence ever accompany each other—not until self be really known is it distrusted. Second, he failed to comply with his



Master's exhortation, "Watch ye and pray" (Mar 14:38-40), and instead went to sleep again. It is only a felt sense of weakness which causes one earnestly to seek strength. Third, he disregarded Christ's solemn warning that Satan desired to seize and sift him (Luk 22:31, 33). Fourth, we behold him acting in the energy of the flesh in drawing the sword (Joh 18:10). Naturally, he meant well, but spiritually, how dull his perceptions. How completely out of place was his weapon in the presence of the meek and lowly Saviour! No wonder we are next told that he followed Christ "afar off" (Mat 26:58), for he was entirely out of the current of His Spirit. Solemn is it to see him disregarding the providential warning of the closed door (Joh 18:16). He was cold spiritually as well as physically, but how pathetic to see him warming himself at the enemy's fire (Joh 18:18). That he "sat down" in such circumstances (Mar 14:54) shows how serious was his decline. All of these things paved the way for his ultimate cursing and swearing (Mat 26:74).

What unmistakable and manifest instances are the above of the working of the law of cause and effect! But let us turn now to a different class of cases, where there was a different sowing and a happier reaping. In Genesis 22, we have one of the most touching and exquisite scenes presented in the Scriptures. There we behold grace triumphing over nature, the spirit rising superior to the flesh. It was the final and severest test to which the faith and obedience of Abraham were submitted. He was called upon to sacrifice his beloved Isaac, and to be himself the executioner. How grandly the sorely tried patriarch responded, binding his only son, laying him on the altar, taking the knife in his hand, and desisting not until a voice from heaven bade him slay not the lad. Now observe the blessed though less-known sequel. Said the angel of the covenant unto him, "By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for *because* thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed...*because* thou hast obeyed my voice" (verses 16-18). Thus was the Lord pleased to make mention of His servant's submission as the consideration of His gracious reward on this occasion. Not that there was any proportion between the one and the other, but that He thereby placed this honour upon that faith and obedience by which Abraham had honoured Him. Later, he made gracious promises to Isaac, "because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge" (26:2-5).

In Numbers 14, a very different scene is presented to our view. There we behold the reactions of Israel unto the doleful report made by the unbelieving majority of the spies which Moses had sent to reconnoiter Canaan. "All the congregation lifted up their voice, and...wept" (verse 1), conducting themselves like a lot of peevish children. Worse still, they murmured against Moses and Aaron, and spoke of appointing a new leader to conduct them back again to Egypt. At considerable risk to their lives (verse 10), Joshua and Caleb remonstrated with them. The Lord interposed, passed sentence upon that faithless generation, sentencing them to die in the wilderness. In blessed contrast therewith, He said, "But my servant Caleb, *because* he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it" (verse 24). Numbers 25 supplies us with another example of the same principle. Setting aside his own feelings, the son of Eleazar acted for the honour of JEHOVAH, and of him the Lord said, he "hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake...Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; *because* he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel" (verses 10-13).

Now it scarcely needs pointing out that neither Abraham, Caleb, nor Phinehas brought God into his debt, or placed Him under any obligation to them. Yet their cases illustrate a most important principle in the governmental ways of God. That principle is stated in His own

declaration:; “Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed” (1Sa 2:30). Though there be nothing whatever meritorious about the good works of His people, God is pleased to bear testimony of His approval of the same and make it manifest concerning His commandments that “in keeping of them there is great reward” (Psa 19:11). Thus the Lord witnessed to His acceptance of the holy zeal of Phinehas by putting an immediate stop to the plague upon Israel, and by entailing the priesthood on his family.

As Matthew Henry pointed out, “The reward answered to the service: by executing justice he had made an atonement for the children of Israel (Num 25:13), and therefore he and his should henceforth be employed in making atonement by sacrifice.” Proverbs 11:31 states the same principle. “Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth.” As Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) remarked, “Albeit that the dispositions of divine grace are to the fullest degree sovereign and irrespective of human merit, yet in the dealings of Providence there is often discernible a rule of justice by which the injured are at length avenged and the righteous ultimately delivered.”

David acknowledged, “The LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight” (Psa 18:24). He was alluding to God’s delivering him from his enemies, particularly from Saul. How had he conducted himself toward the king? Did he commit any sin which warranted his hostility? Did he injure him in any way? No, he neither hated Saul nor coveted his throne, and therefore that monarch was most unjust in so relentlessly seeking his life.

So innocent was David in this respect that he appealed to the great Searcher of hearts, “Let not them that are mine enemies *wrongfully* rejoice over me” (Psa 35:19). Thus, when he said, “The LORD recompense me according to my righteousness,” he was far from giving vent to a pharisaical spirit. Instead, he was avowing his innocence before the bar of *human* equity. Since he bore his persecutor no malice, he enjoyed the testimony of a good conscience. In all that he suffered at the hands of Saul, David retaliated not. He not only refused to slay, or even injure him when he was at his mercy, but he took every opportunity to serve the cause of Israel, notwithstanding the ingratitude, envy, and treachery he received in return. In his deliverance and in having the throne conferred upon him, David recognized one of the basic principles operating in the divine government of this world, and owned that God had graciously rewarded him because of his integrity.

Deity hesitates not to take as one of His titles, “The LORD God of recompences” (Jer 51:56), and has shown, all through His Word, that He deals with sinner and saint as such. Unto Joshua He said, that if he gave His Word its proper place, meditated in it day and night, that he might observe to do according to all that is written therein, “*Then* thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and *then* thou shalt have good success” (Jos 1:8 and cf. Job 36:11; Pro 3:1-4). On the other hand, He said to wayward Israel, “Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? *Because* ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you” (2Ch 24:20). That is an unvarying principle in His government. Of Uzziah, we read, “As long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper” (2Ch 26:5). The judgment of God even upon Ahab’s kingdom was postponed, “Because he humbled himself before me,” said God (1Ki 21:29). Contrariwise, He told David that the sword should never depart from his house, “because thou hast despised me” (2Sa 12:9-10). The New Testament teaches the same thing. “Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy” (Mat 5:7). “If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (6:15). “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (7:2). “*Because* thou hast kept the word of my patience, *I also* will keep thee” (Rev 3:10).

God has established an inseparable connection between holiness and happiness, and it is no small part of the expositor's work to point out that as our ways please Him, His smile is upon us, but when we are wayward, we are greatly the losers. To show that though God's people are not under the curse of the rod, they *are* under discipline—and for him to note scriptural illustrations of that fact. It is one thing to have our sins pardoned, but it is quite another to enjoy God's favours in providence and nature as well as spiritually, as the lives of biblical characters clearly exemplify. God does not afflict willingly (Lam 3:33), but chastens because we give Him occasion to do so (Psa 89:30-33). When we grieve not the Holy Spirit, He makes Christ more real and precious to the soul. The channel of blessing is unchoked, and real answers are received to prayer. But alas, how often we give God occasion to say, "Your sins have withholden good things from you" (Jer 5:25). Then let the preacher miss no opportunity of proving from Scripture that the path of obedience is the path of blessing (Psa 81:11-16), and demonstrate that God orders His ways with us according to our conduct (Jer 17:10)—He did so with Christ Himself, John 8:29; 10:17; Psalm 45:7.

25. *The law of emphasis.* The fundamental importance and perpetuity of the moral law was intimated in its being written by God's own finger, and by the two tables on which it was inscribed being placed for safe custody within the sacred ark. The inestimable value of the Gospel was signified in its being announced to the shepherds by an angel, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people," and his being joined by a great multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luk 2:10).

The relative weightiness of anything is generally indicated by the place and prominence given to it in the Scriptures. Thus, only two of the evangelists make mention of the actual birth of Christ. Only one of them supplies us with any details about His boyhood. Mark and Luke alone refer to His ascension, but all four of them describe His sacrificial death and victorious resurrection! How plainly that tells us *which* should be most pressed by His servants, and which should most engage the hearts and minds of His people!

Another means and method employed by the Spirit to arrest our attention and focus our minds upon distinct portions of the truth is His use of a great number of "figures of speech." In them, He has arranged words and phrases in an unusual manner for the purpose of more deeply impressing the reader with what is said.

The learned author of *The Companion Bible* (now almost unobtainable) dealt more fully with this subject than any English writer, and from him we now select one or two examples. The figure of *anabasis* or graduation, in which there is the working up to a climax, as in, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, *yea rather*, that is risen again, who is *even* at the right hand of God, who *also* maketh intercession for us" (Rom 8:33-34). So again in 11 Peter 1:5-7, "add to your faith virtue...charity." The opposite figure is that of *catabasis* or gradual descent, a notable instance of which is found in Philippians 2:6-8.

The more common form of emphasis is that of *repetition*. This is found in the Word in quite a variety of ways, as in the doubling of a name, "Abraham, Abraham" (Gen 22:11). There were six other individuals whom the Lord thus addressed, "Jacob, Jacob" (46:2), "Moses, Moses" (Exo 3:4), "Samuel, Samuel" (1Sa 3:10), "Martha, Martha" (Luk 10:41), "Simon, Simon" (Luk 22:31), "Saul, Saul" (Act 9:4). Then there was our Lord's pathetic, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem" (Mat 23:37), and His cry of anguish, "My God, my God" (Mat 27:46); as there will yet be the urgent "Lord, Lord" of the lost (Luk 13:25).

Such intensified forms of expression as “the holy of holies,” “the song of songs” (Song 1:1), “vanity of vanities” (Ecc 12:8), and the unspeakable “for ever and ever” (Psa 10:16; 45:6; Heb 1:8), express the same principle. Again, “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD” (Psa 27:14); “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phi 4:4). Yet more emphatic is the, “Holy, holy, holy” of Isaiah 6:3, the “O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD” (Jer 22:29), and because it will not, the, “I will overturn, overturn, overturn” (Eze 21:27), with the resultant, “Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth” (Rev 8:13).

A simple form of structural repetition occurs in the adoring language found at both the beginning and the end of Psalm 8, “O LORD our LORD, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!” Other forms of this principle are what are technically known as *cyloides*, or circular repetition, where the same phrase occurs at regular intervals, as in, “Turn us again, O God” (Psa 80:3, 7, 19); *epibole*, or overlaid repetition, where the same phrase is used at irregular intervals, as, “The voice of the LORD” (Psa 29: 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9); *epimone*, or lingering, where the repetition is with the design of making a more lasting impression, as in John 21:15-17, where our Lord continued to challenge the love of His erring disciple, and evinced His acceptance of his responses by His, “Feed my lambs, feed my sheep.”

In the Old Testament, many examples are found of what is called Hebrew parallelism, in which the same thought is expressed in different language. For instance, “He shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness” (Psa 9:8). “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Pro 16:18, and compare Isa 1:18). In other cases, the truth is driven home by a contrast, “The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just” (Pro 3:33, and 15:17). In the Greek, emphasis is indicated by the order of words in a sentence, “Now of Jesus Christ the birth was on this wise” (Mat 1:18); “But commendeth his love toward us” (Rom 5:8).

The importance of *heeding* the divine emphasis is intimated in a number of ways. The “verily, verily” (Joh 1:51 etc.) with which Christ prefaced some of His weightiest utterances. His use of the interrogative rather than the affirmative in such cases as, “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mar 8:36)—so much more forceful than “It would profit a man nothing if,” etc.

In order to call urgent attention to what He has just said, Christ’s, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22) is used again, with a slight variation, in each of His addresses to the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3. Several notable statements of Paul are prefaced with “This is a faithful saying” (1Ti 1:15; 4:9; 2Ti 2:11; Ti 3:8). When he explains the significance of Melchizedek, he gives point to this principle, “*First* being by interpretation King of righteousness, and *after that* also King of Salem, which is, King of peace” (Heb 7:2 and cf. Jam 3:17). For the purpose of impressiveness, other declarations are introduced with the word “Behold.” “*Behold*, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psa 133:1 and cf. 1Jo 3:1).



# February

## OLD THINGS

1. *The old man*. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom 6:6). Alas, how few of God’s people today *do* “know this” and enjoy the settled peace which accompanies a scriptural apprehension thereof. It is one of those profound doctrinal statements in which this epistle abounds. It has to do with the objective side of things and not the subjective, having reference to a past judicial transaction and not to a present experiential process or future attainment. In the preceding verses, the apostle had affirmed the identification of believers with Christ, their being legally one with Him in His death and resurrection. Here he states a threefold consequence thereof. First, their old man was crucified with Christ—the aorist tense is used, denoting a completed act in the past. According to the righteous judgment of God, when Christ was crucified, all His people were associated with and included in His penal sufferings and death. It is important to note that the verb is in the passive voice, for this crucifixion was accomplished wholly outside of themselves in the person of their Head. Nowhere in Scripture are Christians exhorted to crucify themselves, for it is a form of death which cannot be self-inflicted. What is required from them is that they reckon or account themselves to be dead indeed unto sin (Rom 6:11), and act accordingly—denying self, mortifying their lusts, taking up their cross, and following the holy example which Christ has left them.

Most of the commentators regard the “old man” as synonymous with our corruptions, but against this there are weighty objections. It fails to discriminate between the person himself and his depraved nature—a difference which Paul was most careful to preserve throughout (Rom 7:15-25). Moreover, the “old man” is distinguished from the “body of sin” in the next clause; so too in “the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Eph 4:22). No, “our old man” is what we were from the very beginning of our existence, before divine grace found us, namely *our Adam standing*, our natural selves; and *that* was, in the reckoning of God, executed upon the cross. It was so in order that “the body of sin might be destroyed.” The body of sin is our evil nature, the “flesh” of John 3:6, that which defiled our natural selves. It is called “the body of this death” in Romans 7:24, where the reference is not to the physical body, but to that which corrupts it. Sin is here personified, called a “body” because it is an organized entity, comprising a complete system of unholy dispositions, diffusing its pernicious influence through all the faculties of our being. Again, sin is here designated a “body” in keeping with the previous clause, where “crucifixion” is in view: in Colossians 3:5, some of its hideous “members” are described. But what is meant by “that the body of sin might be *destroyed*”? Not annihilated, but annulled.

Because of the believer's federal union with Christ, he was "co-crucified," for such is the literal meaning of the Greek. God's *design* in that arrangement was that his sin, root and branch, should be made an end of in His sight; that is, as He is considered in His official character as the Judge. The object of this was that his sin should be done away with entirely. In the original, it is the strongest possible word: the same as in "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1Co 15:26). That body of sin and death, which is such a grief unto the Christian, is, by virtue of his co-crucifixion with Christ, as much destroyed in the eyes of the divine law as death will be destroyed when it is swallowed up in victory. In 1 Corinthians 1:28, the same Greek word is rendered "bring to nought," in Galatians 3:17, "make...of none effect," in 11 Timothy 1:10, "abolished," in 11 Corinthians 3:14, "done away." The *effect* of this is "that henceforth we should not serve sin," or more literally "be slaves to sin." The full wages of sin have been paid, and therefore the believer is freed from his old master. The body of sin can no longer be the ruler of those who died in and with Christ, for in that death the scepter of the tyrant was taken away. Sin still puts in its claims, but it has no authority to enforce them. Christ alone has the right to govern us. Having been made free from sin, we have become servants to God (Rom 6:22). To Him alone we are to yield ourselves, refusing sin's solicitations.

Now concerning *our apprehension thereof*, "Knowing this," says the apostle. The only way we can do so is by divine revelation. We know nothing about our co-crucifixion with Christ by actual experience. There is not a saint on earth whose own history informs him that his whole body of sin has been brought to naught, made of none effect, abolished, done away. And from his daily inward conflicts, it appears very much to the contrary that he has been liberated from sin. Nevertheless, these things are so, though not as matters of perception but of reception—by believing them to be so because God affirms them, setting to our seal that He is true (Joh 3:33). Thus "*knowing* that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more" (Rom 6:9), we know that not by our feelings or through our senses, but by the sure testimony of God. So it is with the three things stated in Rom 6:6. It is in no wise a matter of practical acquaintance, for neither the work of Christ for us nor the work of the Spirit in us has effected any improvement or change in our sinful nature. Every believer died (legally) with Christ on the cross, for he was federally in Him as represented by Him. The condemning sentence of the Law was executed upon him. Again, "We *know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have [so infallibly certain is it]...an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2Co 5:1). And again, "*Know ye not* that ye shall judge angels?" (1Co 6:3). Those are certainties of faith!

"Lie not one to another, seeing that *ye have* put off the "old man" with his deeds" (Col 3:9). This presents quite another aspect of our subject, though one that is closely related to the former, growing out of it. As the result of Christ's work for His people, the Holy Spirit is sent to them, and one of the effects of His regenerating them is that they are brought to loathe themselves and their former manner of life. At conversion, they put off the old man by renouncing the world, the flesh and the devil, and by resolving to live a new life unto the glory of their new Master. Their language then is, "O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but [henceforth] by thee only will we make mention of thy name" (Isa 26:13). They are thoroughly ashamed of themselves for having served such evil tyrants, and now determine, by grace, to render submission unto God alone. Now, says the apostle, lie not one to another, and eschew whatever is inconsistent with and contradictory to the profession you have made. Refuse to yield obedience to any of the dictates of your old self.

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph 4:22). That is the final reference to the "old man", and it gives

completeness to the others. The first is a doctrinal statement treating of the legal aspect. The second is a factual reference to what we did at our conversion. This is a practical exhortation bidding us to shun everything incompatible with the resolutions we made when we first gave ourselves unto the Lord. We are to abandon our previous ways as a worn-out filthy garment that is thrown away. That outward conduct which issues from our old self must be eschewed, and inward desires after forbidden things sternly denied. All behavior that conflicts with a Christian profession is to be studiously avoided, all carnal affections unsparingly mortified.

2. *Old leaven*. “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye *are* unleavened” (1Co 5:7). Taken by itself, that verse appears to present a paradox, for what occasion is there to purge out leaven if they already be “unleavened”?—if unleavened, what old leaven could be purged out? Yet in the light of the distinctions the Scriptures themselves draw regarding the “old man”, there should be no difficulty in understanding this passage, and though it be couched in typical language, its meaning is easily interpreted. Allusion is made to the Passover feast, when every Israelite was required to seek out all leaven and put it away from his house (Exo 12:15, 19; 13:7). Leaven is the symbol of sin, and the apostle applies the type to the local assembly, calling upon it to cast out everything offensive to God and contrary to His holiness, thus observing a strict discipline (verse 13) and maintaining Gospel purity. The Corinthians had been sadly remiss in this, allowing both moral (verses 1-5) and doctrinal evil (15:12).

The apostle enforced his exhortation for the local church to put matters right by a number of weighty considerations. First, he reminded that that “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (verse 6)—if evil be tolerated, it leads to more ungodliness. The presence of a worldling in their midst would corrupt the believers by his evil example. Second, by their fidelity thus, they would be “a new lump” (verse 7) and not a heterogeneous mixture of regenerate and unregenerate souls. Third, they were “unleavened” (verse 7) in Christ, in their standing before God, and they were obligated to make that good practically in their behavior. Fourth, the sacrifice of Christ their Passover (verse 7) demanded this (see Titus 2:14). Fifth, neither our “feast” of communion with God nor the Lord’s supper can be observed with leavened bread (verse 8).

## EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

### 26. The World Described (2:16)

*“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh,  
and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,  
is not of the Father, but is of the world.”*

The divine precepts ought to be as highly esteemed by us as God’s promises; and if they be not, something is seriously wrong with our hearts. They are as much an integral part of God’s Word, are accorded a place of quite as much prominence, are revealed by the same Spirit, and rest upon the same foundation. They proceed from the self-same love, and are designed equally for our good. When God gave His commandments unto Israel, it was that, by their obedience, “it

might be well with them, and with their children” (Deu 5:29). The preceptive part of the Gospel is designed to be our director in the path of filial obedience, the rule of our duty, and the standard at which our love is ever to aim. If it be true that God is glorified by our faith as we trust Him to fulfill His pledges, it is none the less a fact that He is honoured by our submission as we cheerfully keep His statutes. And if it be true that our hearts are strengthened and our lives enriched by laying hold of and feeding upon God’s promises, it is equally the case that we are greatly the gainers by cherishing and heeding His precepts. “His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good” (Deu 10:13). Walking according to God’s Law is the only way to true happiness (Psa 119:1).

What has just been pointed out receives illustration in connection with our observing the precept of 1 John 2:15. It is both our wisdom and our welfare to comply with the prohibition, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world,” for, as a whole and in all its parts, it is the deadly enemy of God’s children. One of the distinctive properties of the Bible is that all its precepts are directed unto our affections. They are not intended to fashion the mere external, but are meant to mould the inner man. Satan is well aware of that, and therefore he is ever seeking to turn our affections away from God and wed them to the world. The very fact that we are enjoined, “Love not the world” intimates that its supreme assaults are upon the heart. It is only by heeding this commandment that we shall be delivered from the world’s fatal snares. It is therefore a matter of the deepest practical moment that we walk in separation from this deadly menace to spirituality, for in proportion as we fail to do so will there be a forfeiting of God’s smile and the loss of peace of conscience. Any measure of love of the world will stunt our growth, deprive us of joy in the Holy Spirit, undermine our assurance, and bring down upon us the chastening rod of God.

That is God’s design in regeneration: “I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes” (Eze 36:27). But though the Christian has renounced the world, with its God-defying and self-pleasing ways, yet for the enjoyment of communion with God in Christ, and to avoid the grieving of His Spirit, he needs to be continually on his guard that the world does not again possess his heart, for not only is it all around him, but its dominating principle (the “flesh”) is still within him—a deputy to do its evil work. By nature we were wedded to the world, thoroughly entangled in its vanities, and naught but love to God and heavenly things delivers the heart from its thralldom. It is indeed a most humbling thing that believers should be told to “love not the world,” yet they require that injunction, and ought to turn the same into earnest prayer, daily seeking grace that they may be divinely enabled to decline its temptations and to mortify their desires after its carnal attractions, remembering that by the cross of Christ the world is (legally) crucified unto them and they unto the world (Gal 6:14). If we diligently endeavour to cultivate a spirit of contentment with the temporal portion, which God has given us, however small a one it be, then we shall be delivered from lusting after the husks which the swine feed on.

It is altogether unreasonable for any man to look for satisfaction in anything which this world has to offer him, for how can material and transient things meet the needs of a soul that has been made for eternity? No real, still less any lasting, good is to be found in this world. Abundant proof of that is supplied by the book of Ecclesiastes. There we have placed upon imperishable record the experiences of one who was permitted to gratify every lust of the flesh. The resources at his command were practically limitless. He was a king, and not a poor one, but possessed of abundant means, so that he was able to procure everything that money could purchase. He surrounded himself with every conceivable luxury, form of pleasure, and object of beauty. His palace was filled unstintingly with everything the senses could crave. And what was the outcome?



Was he able to say, “All is very good, I can now rest in the enjoyment of what I have acquired?” Very far from it. After he had taken his fill of all its pleasures, drunk deeply from all this world’s streams, he declared that, “all is vanity and vexation of spirit.” And, my reader, if Solomon could find no satisfaction in all his worldly possessions and pursuits, none who comes after him will ever do so.

Since God’s commandments are designed for our good, a careless neglect of them cannot but be harmful. In proportion, as we imbibe the spirit of the world, our breathings after God are stifled and the soul becomes dull in holy duties. As one cannot handle pitch without soiling oneself, neither can a believer take a deep interest in the politics of the world without suffering loss spiritually. Conversely, the more we delight ourselves in the Lord, the less relish shall we have for the things on which the unregenerate set their hearts. The two things work in inverse ratio: love to God weans the soul from love to the world. Now the outstanding evidence of love is obedience: a fixed resolve to please Christ in all things. As He declared, “If a man love me, he will keep my words” (Joh 14:23). Then how fervently should we pray for more love to Him (Eph 3:17-18; Phi 1:9). How we should meditate daily upon His manifold perfections and feast on His excellency. How diligently we should cultivate a closer and more constant communion with Him. How we should keep short accounts with God, and make a practice of promptly confessing every known sin. How we should discipline ourselves and love the creature in subordination to Him.

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (verse 16). As the opening “For” indicates, that is said by way of explanation and amplification of the previous verse, which is an instance of the gracious condescension of our God. We ought ever to give a ready and cheerful obedience to the divine precepts on the bare authority of their Author, without His advancing any reasons for them, and whether or not we can perceive the wisdom and benevolence of the same. Sufficient for us to act on the merely revealed will of the Most High. It is not for us to ask the why or the wherefore, but to comply with His demands without demur or delay. But sometimes it pleases the Lord to elucidate, as He expounded His parables unto the apostles. Such is the case here: in support of the prohibition of His “love not the world,” He adds that all that pertains to it is evil, corrupt, and therefore to set our affections upon it is quite incompatible with devotion to God; equally so does love for such a world make clear demonstration that the love of the Father is not in such a person.

Here are the contents and sum of the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It is clear that the apostle is not referring to the natural world, which is full of the glorious handiwork of its Creator; but to the corrupt world of sense and sin, all in it which is esteemed by its carnal citizens, which shapes their thoughts, moves their affections, directs and consumes their energies. Those evil propensities and principles are said to be “in the world,” yet it is evident that they are principally in the subject rather than in the object. They are said to be “in the world” because the world gets into the heart, incorporates itself in the affections, and occupies its throne. As faith and God’s promises should be “mixed” (Heb 4:2), so temptations twine themselves around men’s lusts. Thus we do not have to go very far in order to frame a Scriptural definition of what constitutes the corrupt “world”: it is not something outside us, but within ourselves. It is not that which our natural hand can touch or our natural eyes see, but that which fallen man carries in his own bosom. The world is simply the aggregate of all the hearts of unregenerate men that now dwell upon the earth. The external world only carries into practice the principles acting in its subjects, putting into operation the sin, which is ever working in them.

The things that are both in and of the world are divided into three classes, according to the three dominant inclinations of depraved human nature. “The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the

eyes, and the pride of life” are the three harpies of man’s polluted soul to which the things of the world minister. Those are the prolific wombs from which issue all our sinful acts: the roots which convey life and sap unto that which appears openly above the ground; the branches on which grow all the evil fruits which abound in human life. Those are the “strongholds” of Satan, which command all about them. They are the mighty conquerors of all mankind. It was so at the beginning, for it was through those avenues that the serpent attacked and overcame Eve. The inspired account is very brief, but its language corresponds exactly to what is here before us. First, we are told that, “the woman saw that the tree was good for food”: there was “the lust of the flesh” at work. Second, “and that it was pleasant to the eyes”: there was “the lust of the eyes” operating. Third, “and a tree to be desired to make one wise”; there was “the pride of life” active, and yielding to the same, she disobeyed her Maker and took of the fruit.

Let us now take a separate look at each of these evil propensities: “evil” we say, for sin has so vitiated the whole of man’s being that though the objects that God has provided for his needs be wholesome, yet the affection with which men crave them is impure.

When the term “*flesh*” is employed in the Scriptures with a moral force, it is commonly used in the larger sense, as taking the whole of that corrupt nature which we inherited from Adam and bring with us into this world. So in its wider signification “the lusts of the flesh” is an expression which usually takes in all the works of our corrupt nature, whether in the understanding, by vain imaginations and evil thoughts; in the affections, by inordinate longing or unlawful inclinations; or in the will, by perversity and stubbornness. But here, since they are distinguished from the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, the “lusts of the flesh” are to be taken more strictly and narrowly for the sensual appetite: the immoderate craving for soft and sumptuous living, the intemperate use of pleasures, meats and drinks, all such things as gratify the body. While it be true that in the catalogue given in Galatians 5:19-21, the horrible products of the flesh are headed by different forms of immorality, yet they are by no means confined thereto.

“*The lusts of the flesh*,” then, include the giving way to any form of intemperance, as well as uncleanness: the craving for and responding to any of the things which excite the irregularities and inordinate hankerings of the animal appetites, as in the case of Esau, who made a god of his belly. They comprehend every form of pampering the body, whether it be a feeding of it more than is required for its natural sustenance, or spending more time in sleep than is necessary. When God created man, He endowed him with an appetite for food, for marriage, for the beauties of Eden; but sin perverts those appetites and carries them to excess, so that their gratification becomes, only too often, gluttony, uncleanness, covetousness. Everything that pleases either the body or the mind, and gives us pleasure distinct from God Himself, may be included therein. Though men differ considerably in their constitutions, interests, pursuits, habits, and objects of desire, yet from first to last it all comes to the same thing; it is not of the Spirit or of grace; whatever be craved, whether something gross or refined, it is for the pleasing of carnal self. We have had but two common fathers, Adam and Noah, and both fell by indulging their fleshly appetites: Adam by eating, Noah by drinking.

“*And the lust of the eyes*”; that is the second main avenue by which the world gains entrance into the heart. We contract far more sin through our visive<sup>4</sup> organs than any of us are aware of, for they are the inlets to the mind, setting objects before the fancy which leave an impression and taint which are very difficult to get rid of. It is not so much the object beheld as the pleasure felt in seeing it, and the longing to possess the same. This then is the spring of wantonness,

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<sup>4</sup> **visive** – visual; pertaining to vision.

covetousness, and avarice. But as from the lust of the flesh proceed not only the gluttony, drunkenness, and immorality which the baser and more brutish part of mankind is taken up with, but also the inordinate love of pleasure, vain company, and carnal delights with which the more refined are so often bewitched, so the lust of the eyes is not to be restricted to an evil gazing upon unlawful objects, but from it spring all forms of earthly-mindedness, and immoderate yearnings for the acquisition of a thousand things, such as costly apparel, jewels, elaborate home furnishings, sight-seeing, etc. In the mental realm, it creates a curiosity to pry into the unseen and tamper with things which pertain to the darkness rather than to the light.

Scripture abounds in solemn examples of those who fell into grievous and fatal sins through indulging the lusts of the eyes: Lot's wife (Gen 19:26), Shechem (Gen 34:2), Potiphar's wife (Gen 39:7), Achan (Jos 7:21), Samson (Jdg 16:1), David (2Sa 11:2). Like children, we can scarcely see a pleasant object without wanting to possess it: Ahab, not content with his palace gardens, fell sick for Naboth's vineyard (1Ki 21:4). What need is there, then, for us to pray, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way" (Psa 119:37). That is a request for restraining grace, that we may be enabled to look away from whatever entices us to evil. It is by our optics being fastened upon the world's attractions that the heart is infected with the love of them, and thereby alienated from divine things. But prayer is not sufficient: there must also be a walking circumspectly and cautiously. If we pray "lead us not into temptation," we are also required to watch that we do not enter into it (Mat 26:41). The more we are engaged with the beauties of the Lord of glory, the more will our hearts be delivered from the glittering toys of the world, and the less envy shall we have when beholding "the prosperity of the wicked" (Psa 73:3).

*"And the pride of life,"* which is the last of the evil triad. The word for "life" here is not *zoe*, which expresses essential being, but *bios*, which has to do more with the eternal life of man as pertaining to the natural world. The pride of life consists of vying with and outvying one another; in every possible way. It gives rise to a conceit of ourselves and a contempt of our neighbours, producing a spirit of self-superiority and arrogance. It grasps after power, seeks the chief places in the world, coveting positions of elevation, authority and influence, so that one may have dominion over his fellows. It may assume the extreme form of the tyrannical dictator, but it is just as truly active in the woman who aspires to be the mistress of a few servants. It thirsts after admiration, adulation, and applause. It strives after the honours and dignities of the world, craves a position in society which will convey prestige and repute. It therefore seeks a variety of situations and circumstances, which have in them an appearance of happiness and satisfaction in self-advancement. It loves pomp and parade, is fond of flattering titles and a glittering show. It covets a name or renown, eagerly pursues popularity, so that one may be distinguished above others.

This "pride of life" expresses itself in many ways. It evidences itself in an ostentatious display, like the strutting of a peacock, so that there may be an outshining of our neighbours. It induces many to attempt the keeping up of an appearance which they can ill afford. It leads to much hypocrisy, a pretending to be and have what is possessed not: seen in facial make-up, the wearing of imitation jewelry, etc. It causes people to become the slaves of fashion and to be in bondage to the foolish conventions of the world, as, for example, extravagant and expensive funerals far beyond their means. Nor is this affectation of repute, lust for power and love of ostentation by any means confined unto those who have the largest incomes and most opportunity for gratifying themselves. It works just as powerfully in the poor and humble as it does in the rich and exalted. The peasant may be loud in his condemnation of the greed of the capitalist and denounce his prodigalities, but place him in the same position of affluence and influence, and

often he proves to be worse than those whom he formerly censured: it is only the force of his present circumstances which prevents him from making the show he would like to.

The “pride of life” includes much more than either the lust of the flesh or the lust of the eyes. They are restricted either by their end—the satisfying of our carnal desires, particularly those of the body—or by their instruments—the gratifying of the senses. But pride is not thus restricted. Man is ever prone to be puffed up by conceit of his own excellence: his strength, beauty, wisdom, talents, graces, and achievements. It is, then, accurately designed, for it spreads through all the enjoyments and comforts of life: the entire span of our mortal existence, from the cradle to the grave, being its sphere. As Thomas Manton (1620-1677) remarked, “He ascribes a universal and unlimited influence, and calls it ‘the pride of life’ because it taints every action, it serves itself of every enjoyment, it mingles with other lusts. Other vices destroy only their contraries: covetousness destroys liberality, drunkenness sobriety; but pride destroys them all. There is nothing so low but it yields fuel to pride: the hair, which is but an excrement, is often hung as a bush and ensign of vanity. And there is nothing so high and sacred but pride can abase it; like mistletoe, it grows on any tree, but most upon the best.”

It will therefore be evident that these springs of evil are set forth in a climactic order: sensuality, covetousness, pride. Little as the majority may suppose, the last one is more heinous than the others. Sensuality is the corruption of the lower part of man’s being, an unlawful gratifying of his bodily appetites; but pride is the corruption of the higher part of his nature—the lifting up of his understanding and spirit. By sensuality man sinks to the level of the beasts, but by pride he rears up against God, and enters into fellowship with the devil, for “being lifted up with pride” was his condemnation (1Ti 3:6; and cf. Isa 14:12-14). It was bad enough for the conceited king of Babylon to exclaim, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?” (Dan 4:30), but it was far worse when the haughty monarch of Egypt asked, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?” (Exo 5:2). Thus does this abominable pride inflate puny creatures of the dust and cause them to exalt themselves against the Most High.

## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

### 78. Dividing the Land

“And these are the countries which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for inheritance to them. By lot was their inheritance, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes and for the half tribe” (Jos 14:1-2). Joshua was now old and stricken in years, and before the time came when no man can work (Joh 9:4), the Lord had bidden him engage in the most important task of superintending the apportioning of Israel’s heritage (13:1, 6-7). Invested with divine authority to act as Israel’s head, manifestly enjoying the favour of the Lord, possessing the full confidence of the people as their tried and faithful leader, none other was so well suited to perform this particular work. But like all

the other duties which he had discharged, this one called also for the exercise of *faith*, for Joshua was now required to assign the entire country of Canaan which lay on the western side of Jordan—not only those portions of it which Israel had already conquered and taken possession of, but also the extensive sections which were still occupied by the Canaanites. This called for the most implicit confidence in the Lord—that He would grant the tribes possession thereof.

The land of Canaan had already been conquered, so far as its standing armies had been completely routed, its principal strongholds destroyed, and its kings slain. Yet much of its actual territory was still in the hands of its original inhabitants, who remained to be dispossessed. It is important to distinguish between the work which had been done by Joshua and that which still remained for Israel to do. He had overthrown the ruling powers, captured their forts, and subdued the Canaanites to such an extent as had given Israel firm foothold in the country. But he had not exterminated the population in every portion of it, yea, powerful nations still dwelt in parts thereof, as is clear from Judges 2:20-23 and 3:1-4, so that much was still demanded from Israel. Therein we behold again the accuracy of the type. The antitypical Joshua has secured for His people an inalienable title to the heavenly Canaan, yet formidable foes have to be overcome and much hard fighting done by them before they enter into their eternal rest. The same is true of the *present enjoyment* thereof. Faith and hope encounter much opposition ere there is an experiential participation of the goodly heritage which Christ has obtained for them.

The method appointed for the dividing of the land is deeply interesting and instructive. Two distinct principles were to operate, yet the giving place to the one appears to rule out the other. The first had been laid down by the Lord through Moses, “Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names. To many thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to few thou shalt give the less inheritance: to every one shall his inheritance be given according to those that were numbered of him” (Num 26:53-54—repeated in 33:54). There was the general rule which was to be followed in the dividing of Canaan and the quartering of the people—the size of the section allocated was to be determined by the numerical strength of the tribe to which it was given. Yet immediately after Numbers 26:54, a second law was named, “Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot: according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. According to *the lot* shall the possession thereof be divided between many and few.” That is to say, the disposition of the inheritance was to be determined by the sovereign will of God, for the lot was regulated by Him and made known His pleasure.

Those two principles seem to be mutually incompatible, and we are not acquainted with any attempt to show the agreement of the one with the other. It is the age-old problem of the conjunction of the divine and human elements. In this instance, the human by the dimensions of the several tribes, the divine by God’s determining their respective portions. Yet, in the case now before us, no real difficulty is presented. The larger tribes would still obtain the biggest sections, but the “lot” specified the *particular* situation in Canaan which was to be theirs. Neither Joshua, Eleazar, nor the heads of the tribes were free to dispose of the land according to their own ideas or desires. The final locations were reserved to the providence of God, to whose imperial will all must acquiesce, howsoever contrary to their thoughts and wishes. Such an arrangement not only accorded unto God His proper place in the transaction, but it also precluded the exercise of any spirit of partiality or favouritism on the part of Israel’s leaders, and at the same time served effectually to close the mouths of the people from murmuring.

The more those two apparently conflicting principles be pondered, the more shall we admire the wisdom of Him who appointed the same. Obviously, it was most equitable and advisable that the larger tribes should be accorded more extensive quarters than the lesser ones, for their

requirements would be the greater. Yet, fallen human nature being what it is, it is equally evident that had Israel been left entirely unto themselves, the weaker tribes would have been deprived of their rightful portions. For if not entirely denied a separate heritage, they would most probably have been obliged to submit unto having the least desirable sections of the land. Nor would there have been any redress, for in such a case (numerical) might would be right. It was therefore necessary for there to be a divine supervision, not only in fixing the exact boundaries of each allotment, but also in determining their several locations, so that the mountainous sections and the fertile valleys should be fairly distributed. This is one of many examples where we see how the divine legislation protected the welfare of the weak, and how the Lord ever manifested a concern for the poor and needy.

Side by side with Joshua 14:1-2 should be placed Leviticus 25:23-28, "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land. If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold. And if the man have none to redeem it, and himself be able to redeem it; then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold it; that it may return unto his possession. But if he be not able to restore it to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it until the year of jubile: and in the jubile it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession." That was the divine law respecting the real estate of the Hebrews and the transferring of the same. A law by which the rights of rich and poor alike were fully and equitably safeguarded. In cases of need, property might be sold conditionally, but not absolutely so that the same should never again return to its original owner.

The above passages set forth a remarkable and unique *law of property*, displaying a wisdom wherein righteousness and mercy were blessedly intermingled, encouraging as it did individual enterprise, and yet also curbing greed. That disposition and arrangement was the very reverse of "state ownership," for the land was portioned out to the twelve tribes, and within the territory of each tribe the land was divided among its families. If hardship and poverty required a family to mortgage or sell its property, thereby an opportunity was offered unto the thrifty and ambitious to enlarge their holdings. But in the jubilee year, that property reverted to its seller, and thus the cupidity of "capitalists" was restrained, and thereby were they prevented from taking undue advantage of the distress of others by a permanent acquirement of their estates. Thus, the Bible not only teaches the right of the individual to own his own house (cf. Joh 19:27) and possess real estate (Act 4:34), but, by clear and necessary implication, condemns state ownership, which is a manifest violation of the rights and liberties of the individual. How many-sided and far-reaching is the teaching of Holy Writ!

"The Israelites had acquired the land by conquest, but they were not allowed to seize upon what they could, nor to have it all in common, nor to share it out by consent or arbitration; but, with solemn appeal to God Himself, to divide by lot; for Canaan was His land, and Israel were His people. This was likewise the readiest way of satisfying all parties, and preventing discontent and discord" (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). Yet it should be pointed out that the basic law that operated here has also obtained all through human history. The Lord God is the Proprietor as well as the Governor of both heaven and earth, the sovereign Disposer of all the affairs of the children of men. He is the One who controls the courses of empires and determines the lives of dynasties, and has also decided the limits of each person's territory. That principle is clearly enunciated in Deuteronomy 32:8, "When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he

separated the sons of Adam, he *set the bounds* of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.” And none of those nations ever has or will exceed those “bounds” which the Almighty originally prescribed.

As truly as the divine “lot” assigned the particular parts of Palestine which the different tribes of Israel should possess, so has God predestined the precise portions of the earth which each nation shall occupy. “When He gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment” (Pro 8:29), He gave a similar edict unto the nations. And military leaders impelled by the lust of conquest, and aggressive dictators aspiring to world dominion, have discovered that, like the restless sea (which is the scriptural symbol of the nations: Dan 7:2 and cf. Rev 17:15), God has set a bound which they “could not pass,” “and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it” (Jer 5:22 and cf. Job 38:11). Men like Napoleon, the Kaiser, and Hitler might be dissatisfied with the allotments of providence, chafe against the restraints it had placed upon their greed, rage, and roar against their neighbours, and attempt to acquire their divinely-given portions, but vain were their efforts. Thus will any present or future aspirant yet find out.

Deuteronomy 32:8 informs us that God had before His mind the children of Israel when He divided to the nations their inheritance, for, as the apostle told his saints, “All things are for *your sakes*” (2Co 4:15). Thus, there was a partial reference to the seven nations whose place and portion were assigned them in Canaan, so that the Hebrews found it in a high state of cultivation, provided with towns and houses, all prepared for their use! In like manner, the favoured land in which the writer and the reader live, with all its natural and national advantages, and the temporal provisions we enjoy therein, is as much the special appointment and gift of God as Canaan was to Israel, and as truly demands our gratitude. God has the sole disposing of this life and the interests thereof, as truly as He has of the life to come. No man has a foot of land more than God has laid out for him in His all-wise providence. So whatever of this world’s goods he obtains, let him bear in mind, “Thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is *he* that giveth thee power to get wealth” (Deu 8: 18). This world is not governed by blind chance, but by divine wisdom. However possessions come to us, they are from God as the first cause.

God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and *the bounds* of their habitation” (Act 17:26). As Augustus Toplady (1740-1778) remarked thereon, “The very places which people inhabit are here positively averred to be determined and fore-appointed by God. And it is very right it should be so, else some places would be overstocked with inhabitants, and others deserted....Whereas by God’s having fore-appointed the bounds of our habitations, we are properly sifted over the face of the earth, so as to answer all the social and high purposes of divine wisdom.” God has appointed where each person shall reside, the particular country in which he should be born, and the very city, town, village, and house in which we shall dwell, and how long he shall remain there—for our times are in His hand (Psa 31:15). A striking illustration of that is seen in connection with both the birthplace and the subsequent abode of the Saviour. It was ordained that He should be born at Bethlehem, and though circumstances appeared to prevent, God set in motion a Roman census throughout the whole of its empire, requiring Joseph and Mary to journey unto Bethlehem (Luk 2:1-6). Later, they resided at the appointed Nazareth (Mat 2:23).

The distribution of Canaan was *by lot*. To ascertain precisely what it consisted of and how the mind of God was made known therein, Scripture has to be carefully compared with Scripture, and even then we cannot be quite certain of the exact method followed. The first time (which is always of most importance) the lot is mentioned is in Leviticus 16:8, “And Aaron shall cast lots

upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat”, i.e., to determine which of them should be used for the Godward side of the atonement (propitiation) and which the manward (the removal of sins). Thus, the first occurrence of “the lot” associates it with Israel’s high priest, and shows that it was employed in determining the will of God. So too “Eleazar the priest” is expressly mentioned both in Numbers 34:17 and Joshua 14:1, in connection with the transaction we are here considering. Likewise, when the claim was made by the daughters of Zelophehad to a portion of Canaan, their case was determined before Eleazar the priest, Joshua, and the princes of the tribes (Jos 17:3-6), because the use of the lot was there involved, as the word “fell,” or more literally “came forth” (verse 5) indicates.

Personally, we incline strongly to the view taken by the author of *The Companion Bible* (unprocurable today) that God’s will in “the lot” was obtained by means of the mysterious “Urim and Thummim,” which were probably two precious stones, for there was no commandment given to “make” *them*, and which were “put in the breastplate” of the high priest (Exo 28:30). Apparently they were “put” in a bag in “the ephod” or robe of the high priest, which bag was formed by doubling a part of the garment—note “doubled” in Exodus 28:16, and “inward” (verse 26). In Proverbs 16:33, we are told, “The lot is cast into the lap [Hebrew “bosom,” which is put for the clothing covering it—cf. Exodus 4:6-7]; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.” Thus, “the lot” was for the purpose of giving a judgment or infallible decision, and the breastplate is designated “the breastplate of judgment” (Exo 28:15), because by it God’s judgment or verdict was given when the same was needed. Compare 1 Samuel 28:6, where the Lord refused to oblige the apostate Saul.

Thus, it seems that when the lot was needed the high priest placed his hand in the bag or pocket behind his breastplate, and drew forth either the Urim or the Thummim, the one signifying Yes, and the other No. For in Joshua 18:11, we are told that the lot “came up,” in 19:1, that it “came forth,” and in 19:17, that it “came out.” Joshua 19:51 informs us that this important transaction took place at the entrance to the house of God, “These are the inheritances, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, divided for an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.” This casts light upon a number of passages treating of incidents in the later history of Israel. Thus, when they were uncertain as to whether or not they should go up against Benjamin again, they came to the house of God and inquired of the Lord, and it was Phinehas the high priest who obtained answer for them (Jdg 20:26-28). In Ezra 2:61-63, no verdict could be given unless the high priest were present, with his breastplate of judgment, with “the lot,” Urim and Thummim, which would give JEHOVAH’s decision—guilty or innocent.

It is to be duly noted that, in addition to Eleazar the priest and Joshua himself, “the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel” (14:1) were also present when the official distribution of the land was made. This was in obedience to the divine injunction given through Moses that “one prince of every tribe” (Num 34:18) should be taken to serve as commissioners on this occasion. They were entrusted with the oversight, to be witnesses that everything had been conducted fairly and properly in the distribution of the land according to the size of the tribes and in the casting of the lot. Thus would they protect the rights of the tribes, preclude all suspicion that any partiality had been shown, and be qualified authoritatively to determine any controversy which might later arise. “Public affairs should be so managed, as not only to give their right to all, but, if possible, to give satisfaction to all that they have right done them” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). It is very striking to note that God not only selected those commissioners during the lifetime of Moses, but actually *named* them all (Num 34:19-29), which thereby guaranteed their



preservation from death during the long interval, either from natural causes or from the fighting in Canaan.

# DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

## 10. Its Evidences, Part 2

The depravity of the Gentiles may not excite surprise, since their religions, instead of restraining it, furnished a stimulus to the most horrible vices, in the examples of their profligate gods. But were the Jews any better? In considering their case, we shall not only turn from the general to the particular, but also have before us that people which were designed by God to be a *specimen* of human nature. The divine Being singled out and separated them from all other nations, showered upon them His benefits, strengthened them with many encouragements, wrought miracles on their behalf, awed them with the most fearful threatenings, chastised them severely and frequently, and inspired His servants to give us an accurate account of their response. And what a wretched response it was! Excepting the conduct of a few individuals among them, which, being the effect of divine grace, makes nothing against what we are here demonstrating—in fact, only serves to intensify the sad contrast—the entire history of the Jews was nothing but a series of rebellions and continued departures from the living God. No other nation so highly favoured and richly blessed by heaven, and none made such a wretched return unto the divine goodness.

Provided with a Law which was drawn up and proclaimed by God Himself, which was enforced by the most winsome and also the most awesome sanctions, within a few days of its reception, the whole nation was engaged in obscenely worshipping a golden calf. Unto them were vouchsafed the divine oracles and ordinances, but they were neither appreciated nor heeded. In the wilderness, they greatly provoked the Holy One by their murmurings, their lustings after the flesh-pots of Egypt (Exo 16:2-3) when supplied with “angels’ food” (Psa 78:25), their prolonged idolatry (Act 7:42-43), and their unbelief (Heb 3:18). After they received for an inheritance the land of Canaan, they soon evinced their base ingratitude, so that the Lord had to say to His sorrowing servant, “They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1Sa 8:7). So averse were they to God and His ways that they hated, persecuted, and slew the messengers which He sent to reclaim them from their wickedness. “They kept not the covenant of God, and *refused* to walk in his law” (Psa 78:10). They declared, “I have loved strangers, and after them will I go” (Jer 2:25).

After furnishing proof in Romans 1 of the total depravity of the Gentile world, the apostle turned to the case of privileged Israel, and from their own Scriptures demonstrated that they were equally polluted, equally beneath the curse of God. Asking the question, “What then? are we better than they?” he answered, “No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin” (Rom 3:9). So too in 1 Corinthians 1, where the utmost scorn is thrown upon that which is highly esteemed among men, the Jew is placed upon the same level

as the Gentile. There we are shown how God views the arrogant pretensions of the intellectual of this world. When he asks “Where is the wise?” (Rom 1:9) reference is made to the Grecian philosophers, who dignified themselves with that title. His very question is a pouring contempt on their proud claims. With all your boasted knowledge, have you discovered the true and living God? They are challenged to come forth with their schemes of religion. After all that you have taught others, what have you accomplished? Have you found out the way to eternal felicity? Have you learned how guilty sinners may have access to a holy God? So far from being wise men, God declares that such sages as Pythagoras and Plato were fools.

Then Paul asks, “Where is the scribe?” (1Co 1:20), who was the wise man, the esteemed teacher, among the Jews. He too was at just as great a distance from and just as ignorant of the true God. So far from possessing any true knowledge of Him, he was a bitter enemy to the same when it was proclaimed by His incarnate Son. Though the scribes enjoyed the inestimable advantage of possessing the Old Testament Scriptures, they were, in general, as ignorant of God’s salvation as were the heathen philosophers. Instead of pointing to the death of the promised Messiah as the grand sacrifice for sin, they taught their disciples to depend upon the laws and ceremonies of Moses, and traditions of human invention. When Christ was manifested before them they were, therefore, so far from being the first to receive Him that they were His most bitter persecutors. Because He appeared before them in the form of a servant (Phi 2:7), that suited not their proud hearts. Though He was “full of grace and truth” (Joh 1:14), they saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him (Isa 53:3). Though He announced glad tidings, they refused to hearken thereto. When Christ performed miracles of mercy before them, they would not believe in Him. Though He sought only their good, they returned Him naught but evil. Their language was, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luk 19:14).

The general neglect and even contempt which the Lord Jesus met with among the people affords a very humbling view of what our fallen human nature is, but the awful depths of human depravity were the most plainly evidenced by the scribes and Pharisees, the priests and elders. Though well acquainted with the prophets, and professing to wait for the Messiah, yet with desperate and merciless malignity, they sought His destruction. The whole course of their conduct shows that they acted *against* their convictions that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. Certainly they had full knowledge of His innocence of all which they charged against Him. This is evident from the plain intimation of the One who read their hearts, and who knew that they were saying within themselves, “This is the heir, come, let us kill him” (Mat 21:38). They were as untiring as they were unscrupulous in their malice. They, or their agents, dogged His steps from place to place, hoping that, in His more unguarded intercourse with His disciples, they might more readily entrap Him, or find something in His words or actions which they could distort into a ground of accusation. They seized every opportunity to poison the minds of the public against Him, and, not content with ordinary aspersions of His character, gave it out that He was ministering under the immediate inspiration of Satan.

Whence did such wicked treatment of the Son of God proceed? Whence but from the vile corruptions of their own hearts? “They hated me without a cause” (Joh 15:25), declared the Lord of glory. There was nothing whatever in either His character or His conduct which merited their vile contempt and enmity. They loved the darkness, and therefore hated the light (Joh 3:19). They were infatuated by their evil lusts and delighted to gratify the same. So too with their deluded followers, who gave a ready ear to false prophets who said, “Peace, peace” (Jer 6:14) to them, flattered them, and encouraged them in their carnality. Consequently, they could not tolerate that which was disagreeable to their depraved tastes and condemned their sinful ways, and therefore

did “the people” as well as their chief priests and rulers cry out, “Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas” (Luk 23:13, 18). After they had hounded Him to a criminal’s death, their ill will pursued Him to the grave, for they came to Pilate and demanded that he secure His sepulcher (Mat 27:64). When their effort was proved to be in vain, the high Sanhedrin of Israel bribed the soldiers who had attempted to guard the tomb, and with premeditated deliberation put a fearful lie into their mouths (Matt 28:11-15).

Nor did the enmity of Christ’s enemies abate after He departed from this scene and returned to heaven. When His ambassadors went forth to preach His Gospel, they were arrested and forbidden to teach in the name of Jesus, and then released under threat of punishment (Act 4). Upon the apostles’ refusal to comply, they were again thrown into prison and beaten (Act 5:40). Stephen, they stoned to death, James was beheaded, and many others were scattered abroad to escape persecution. Except where God was pleased to lay His restraining hand upon them, and those in whom He wrought a miracle of grace, Jews and Gentiles alike despised the Gospel, and willfully opposed its progress. In some cases, their hatred of the truth was less openly displayed than in others, yet it was none the less real. It has been the same ever since. However earnestly and winsomely the Gospel be preached, it gains not those who hear it. For the most part, they are like those of our Lord’s day—they “made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise” (Mat 22:5). The great majority are too unconcerned to seek after even a doctrinal knowledge of the truth. There are many who regard this sottishness of the unsaved as mere indifference, but actually it is something much worse than that, namely dislike of the heart for the things of God, direct antagonism to Him.

Their hostility is made evident by the way in which they treat the people of God. The closer the believer walks with his Lord, the more will he grate upon and be ill-treated by those who are strangers to Him. But “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake” (Mat 5:10). As one pointed out, “It is a strong proof of human depravity that men’s curses and Christ’s blessings should meet on the same persons. Who would have thought a man could be persecuted and reviled, and have all manner of evil said of him for *righteousness’* sake?” But do the ungodly really hate justice and integrity, and love those who defraud and wrong them? No, they do not dislike righteousness as it respects *their own* interests. It is only that species of it which owns the rights of God. If the saints would be content with doing justly and loving mercy, and could cease walking humbly with God, they might go through the world not only in peace, but with the approbation of the unregenerate, but “all that will *live godly* in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2Ti 3:12), because such a life reproves the ungodliness of the wicked. If compassion moves the Christian to warn his sinful neighbours of their danger, he is likely to be insulted for his pains. His best actions will be ascribed to the worst motives. Yet, so far from being cast down by such treatment, the disciple should rejoice that he is counted worthy to suffer a little for his Master’s sake.

The depravity of men appears in their disowning of the divine Law set over them. It is the right of God to be the acknowledged Ruler of His creatures, yet they are never so well pleased as when they invade His prerogative, break His laws, and contradict His revealed will. How little is it realized that it is all one to repudiate His scepter and to repudiate His being. When we disown His authority, we disown His Godhead. There is in the natural man an averseness to having any acquaintance with the rule under which his Maker has placed him. “Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit should we have, if we pray to him?” (Job 21:14-15). That is seen in their unwillingness to use the means for obtaining a knowledge of His will. However

eager they be in their quest for all other kinds of knowledge, however diligent in studying the formation, constitution, and ways of creatures, they refuse to acquaint themselves with their Creator. When made aware of some part of His will, they endeavour to shake it off. They do not “like to retain God in their knowledge” (Rom 1:28). If they succeed not, they have no pleasure in the consideration of such knowledge, but do their utmost to dismiss it from their minds.

If there be a class of the unregenerate who are exceptions to the general rule, those who attend church, make a profession of religion, and become “Bible students,” they are motivated by pride of intellect and reputation. They are ashamed to be regarded as spiritual ignoramuses, and desire to have a good standing in religious circles. Thereby they secure a cloak of respectability, and often the esteem of God’s own people. Nevertheless, they are graceless. They “hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom 1:18). *They* hold it, but *it* does not grip, influence, and transform them. If they ponder it, it is not with delight. If they take pleasure therein, it is only because their store of information is increased, and they are better equipped to hold their own in a discussion. Their design is to inform their understanding, not to quicken their affection. There is far more hypocrisy than sincerity within the pale of the Church. Judas was a follower of Christ because he “had the bag, and bare what was put therein” (Joh 12:6), and not out of any love for the Saviour. Some have the faith or truth of God “with respect of persons” (Jam 2:1). They receive it not from the Fountain, but from the channel, so that very often the same truth delivered by another is rejected, which, when coming from the mouth (and fancy) of their idol, is regarded as an oracle. That is to make man and not God their rule, for though it be the truth which is acknowledged, yet it is not received in the love of the truth, but rather as what is given out by an admired instrument.

The depravity of human nature is seen in the sad and general *reversion to darkness* of a people after being favoured with the light. Even where God has been made known and His truth proclaimed, if He leaves men to the working of their evil hearts, they quickly fall back into a state of ignorance. Noah and his sons lived for centuries after the flood to acquaint the world with the perfections of God, yet all knowledge of Him soon disappeared. Abram and his father were idolators (Jos 24:2). Even after a man has experienced the new birth and become the subject of immediate divine influence, how much ignorance and error, imperfection and impropriety still remains!—just because he is not completely subject unto the Lord. The backslidings and partial apostasies of genuine Christians are an awful demonstration of the corruption of human nature. Our proneness to fall into error after divine enlightenment is solemnly illustrated by the Galatians. They had been instructed by Paul, and through the power of the Spirit had believed in the Saviour he proclaimed. So rejoiced were they that they received him “as an angel of God” (4:14). Yet in the course of a few years, many of those converts gave such ear to false teachers, and so far renounced their principles, that the apostle had to say of them, “I stand in doubt of you” (4:20). Look at Europe, Asia, Africa, after the preaching of the apostles and those who immediately followed them. Though the light of Christianity illuminated most sections of the Roman empire, it was speedily quenched, and gave place to the darkness. The greater part of the world fell victim to popery and Mohammedanism.

Nothing more forcibly exhibits the sinfulness of man than his *proneness to idolatry*—no other sin so strongly denounced or so severely punished by God. Idols are but the work of men’s hands, and therefore inferior to themselves. How irrational then to *worship them*! Can human madness go farther than for men to imagine they can manufacture gods? Those who have sunk so low as to confide in a block of wood or stone have reached the extreme of idiocy. As Psalm 115:5-8 points out, “They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not....They that make them are like unto them”—as stupid, as incapable of hearing and seeing those things which

belong to their salvation. Romanists and their imitators are no better than Bible-less heathen, for they pervert the spirituality and simplicity of divine worship by childish performances. God requires the worship of the soul, and they offer Him that of the body. He asks for the heart, they give Him the lips. He demands the homage of the understanding, and they mock Him with altars and crucifixes, candles and incense, gorgeous vestments and genuflections.

The corruption of human nature discovers itself *in little children*. As our fathers were wont to say, “That which is bred in the bone comes out in the flesh.” And at what an early date does it do so! If there were any innate goodness in man, it would surely show itself during the days of his infancy, before virtuous principles were corrupted, and evil habits formed by his contact with the world. But do we find infants inclined to all that is pure and excellent, and disinclined to whatever be wrong? Are they meek, tractable, yielding readily to authority? Are they unselfish, magnanimous when another child seizes their toy? Far from it. The unvarying result of growth in human beings is that as soon as they be old enough to exhibit any moral qualities in human action, they display *evil ones*. Long before they are old enough to understand their own wicked tempers, they manifest self-will, greediness, deceitfulness, anger, spite, and revenge. They cry and fret for what is not good for them, and are indignant with their elders on being refused, often attempting to strike them. Those born and brought up in the midst of honesty are guilty of petty pilfering before ever they witness an act of theft. These blemishes are not to be ascribed to ignorance, but to their variance with the divine Law—to which man’s nature was originally conformed—to that horrible change which sin has wrought in human constitution. Human nature is seen to be tainted from the beginning of its existence.

The universal prevalence of *disease and death* witnesses unmistakably to the fall of man. All the pains and disorders of our bodies, whereby our health is impaired and our passage through this world rendered uneasy, are the consequents of our apostasy from God. The Saviour made plain intimation that sickness is the effect of sin when He healed the man with the palsy, saying, “Thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mat 9:2), as the Psalmist also linked together God’s pardoning the iniquities of His people and healing their diseases (103:3). “There is one event that happeneth to all” (Ecc 2:14). Yes, but why should it? Why should there be wasting away and then dissolution? Philosophy offers no explanation. Science can furnish no satisfactory answer, for to say that disease results from the decay of nature only pushes the inquiry farther back. Disease and death are *abnormalities*. Man is created by the eternal God, endowed with a never-dying soul. Why, then, should he not continue to live here for ever? The answer is, “Because of the fall—death is the wages of sin” (Rom 6:23).

*Man’s ingratitude* unto his gracious Benefactor is yet another evidence of his sad condition. The Israelites were a woeful sample of all mankind in this respect. Though the Lord delivered them from the house of bondage (Exo 20:2), miraculously conducted them through the Red Sea (Exo 14:29-30), led them safely across the wilderness (Exo 13:22), they appreciated it not. Though He screened them with a cloud from the heat of the sun, gave them light by night in a pillar of fire (Exo 13:22), fed them with bread from heaven (Exo 15:4), caused streams to flow in the sandy desert (Exo 17:6), and brought them into the possession of a land flowing with milk and honey (Exo 3:8), they were continually murmuring and repining. And *we* are no better. The mercies of God are received as a matter of course. The hand that so bountifully ministers to their needs is not acknowledged or even recognized by men. None is satisfied with the place and portion Providence has assigned him. He is ever coveting what he has not. He is a creature given to changes—stricken with a malady which Solomon termed “the wandering of the desires” (Ecc 6:9).

“Every dog that snaps at me, every horse that lifts up its heel against me, proves that I am a fallen creature. The brute creation had no enmity against man before the fall. Creation rendered a willing homage to Adam (Gen 2:19). Eve no more dreaded the serpent than we would a fly. But when man shook off allegiance from his God, the beasts by divine permission shook off allegiance from man” (John Berridge, 1716-1793, *The Christian World Unmasked*). What a proof of his degradation that the sluggard is exhorted to “go to the ant” (Pro 6:6) and learn from a creature so much lower in the scale of being! Consider *the necessity* of human laws, fenced with punishments and terrors to restrain men’s lusts. Yet despite the vast and costly apparatus of police forces, law courts, and prisons, what little success attends their efforts to repress human wickedness! Neither education, legislation, nor religion is sufficient.

Finally, take the unvarying *experience of the saints*. It is part of the Spirit’s office-work to open blind eyes, to discover unto souls their wretchedness, and make them sensible of their dire need of Christ. And when He thus brings a sinner to realize his ruined condition by imparting an experiential knowledge of sin, his comeliness is at once turned into corruption, and he cries, “Behold, I am vile” (Job 40:4). Though grace has entered his heart, his native depravity has not been expelled. Though sin no longer has dominion over him, it rages and often prevails against him. There is a ceaseless warfare within between the flesh and the spirit. There is no need for us to enlarge thereon, for every Christian groans within himself, and because of the plague of his heart cries, “O wretched man that I am” (Rom 7:24). Wretched because he lives not as he earnestly longs to do, and because he does so often the very things he hates, groaning daily over evil imaginations, wandering thoughts, unbelief, pride, coldness, pretence.

# INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

## Part 19

26. *The origin of words*. An enormous amount of time, research and study has been devoted thereto, and men of great erudition have embodied the results of their labours in volumes which are massive and expensive. Yet in the judgment of the writer, they are far from possessing that value which has often been attributed to them, nor does he consider they are nearly as indispensable to the preacher as many have affirmed. Undoubtedly they contain considerable information of interest to etymologists, but as a means for interpreting the Scriptures, *lexicons* are greatly overrated. A knowledge of the derivation of the words used in the original Scriptures cannot be essential, for it is unobtainable to the vast majority of God’s people. Moreover, the attempts to arrive at such derivations are often not at all uniform, for the best Hebraists are far from being agreed as to the particular roots from which various words in the Old Testament are taken. To us, it seems very unsatisfactory, yea, profane, to turn to heathen poets and philosophers to discover how certain Greek words were used before they were given a place in the New Testament. But what is still more to the point, such a method breaks down before the Holy Spirit’s actual employment of various terms.

In view of what was said under the eighteenth canon of exegesis, we do not propose to write much upon this one. Instead, we will confine ourselves to a single example, which illustrates the closing sentence of the preceding paragraph, and which will at the same time give the lie to an error which is very widespread today. Many of those who deny that the wicked will be punished everlastingly appeal to the fact that the Greek adjective *aionios* simply signifies “age lasting,” and that *eis ton aiona* (Jude 13) and *eis aionas aionon* (Rev 14:11) mean “to the age” and “to the ages of ages” and “for ever” and “for ever and ever.” The simple reply is, Granted, yet that is nothing to the point at issue. True, those Greek expressions are but *time terms*, for the sufficient reason that the minds of the ancients were incapable of rising to the concept of *eternity*. Therefore, the language employed by those who were destitute of a written revelation from God makes nothing either pro or con concerning the endlessness of the bliss of the redeemed or of the misery of the lost. In order to ascertain *that*, we must observe how the terms are used in Holy Writ.

The connections in which the Holy Spirit has employed the word *aionios* leave no room whatever for any uncertainty of its meaning in the mind of an impartial investigator. That word occurs not only in such expressions as “eternal destruction” (2Th 1:9), “everlasting fire” (Mat 25:41), “everlasting punishment” (Mat 25:46), but also in “life eternal” (Mat 25:46), “eternal salvation” (Heb 5:9), “eternal glory” (1Pe 5:10), and most assuredly *they are timeless*. Still more decisively, it is linked with the subsistence of deity, “the everlasting God” (Rom 16:26). Again, the force and scope of the word are clearly seen in the fact that it is antithetical to what is of limited duration, “the things which are seen are *temporal*; but the things which are not seen are *eternal*” (2Co 4:18). Now it is obvious that if the temporal things lasted for ever, there could be no contrast between them and the things which are eternal. Equally certain is it that if eternal things be only “age long,” they differ not essentially from temporal ones. The contrast between the temporal and the eternal is as real and as great as between the things “seen and unseen.” Again in Philemon 1:15, *aionios* (rendered “for ever”) is set over against “for a season,” showing that the one is the very opposite of the other—“receive him for ever” manifestly signifies *never* banish or turn him away.

Before leaving this subject, it should be pointed out that the absolute hopelessness of the condition of the lost rests not only on the fact that their punishment is said to be eternal, but on other collateral considerations which are equally final. There is not a single instance recorded in Scripture of a sinner being saved after death, nor any passage holding out any promise of such. On the other hand, there are many to the contrary. “He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that *without remedy*” (Pro 29:1), which would not be the case if, after “ages” in purifying fire, he was ultimately admitted into heaven. To His enemies, Christ said, “ye...shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come” (Joh 8:21)—death would seal their doom. That is equally certain from those fearful words of His, “the resurrection of damnation” (Joh 5:29), which excludes every ray of hope for their recovery in the next life. For the apostate, “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins” (Heb 10:26). “For he shall have judgment *without mercy*, that hath showed no mercy” (Jam 2:13). “Whose *end* is destruction” (Phi 3:19). Therefore is it written at the close of Scripture, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still” (Rev 22:11)—as the tree falls, so will it for ever lie.

27. *The law of comparison and contrast.* While this rule be much less important to the expositor than many of the others, it is of deep interest, and though it be little known, yet this principle is accorded a prominent place in the Word. And in view of what has been termed “the pair of opposites” which confront us in every sphere, it should occasion us no surprise to find this

canon receiving such frequent illustration and exemplification in the Scriptures, and that in several ways. God and the devil, time and eternity, day and night, male and female, good and evil, heaven and hell, are set one over against the other. “In the beginning God created the heaven *and* the earth” (Gen 1:1), and the earth has its two hemispheres, the northern and the southern. So also, there are the Old and New Testaments, the Jew and the Gentile, and after the days of Solomon the former were split into two kingdoms. While throughout all Christendom, we find the genuine possessor and the graceless professor. Whatever be the explanation, we are faced everywhere with this mysterious duality—the visible and the invisible, spirit and matter, land and sea, centrifugal and centripetal forces at work, life and death.

As pointed out on a previous occasion, truth itself is ever *twofold*, and hence the Word of God is itself likened unto a two-edged sword (Heb 4:12). Not only is it, first, a revelation from God, and, second, addressed to human responsibility, but a great many passages in it have a twofold force and meaning, a literal and a spiritual. Many of its prophecies possess a double fulfilment, a major and a minor, while promise and precept, or privilege and corresponding obligation are ever combined. Cases of *pairs* are numerous. The two great lights (Gen 1:16); two of every sort entering the ark (Gen 6:19); the two tables on which the Law was written; the two birds (Lev 14:4-7); the two goats (Lev 16:7); the two tenth deals of fine flour and the two loaves (Lev 23:13, 17); the repeated miracle of water from the smitten rock (Exo 17, Num 20), as Christ also duplicated the feeding of a great multitude with a few loaves and fishes (Mat 14, 15); the two signs to Gideon (Jdg 6); the two olive trees (Zec 4); the two masters (Mat 6:24); the two foundations (Mat 7:24-27); the two debtors (Luk 7:41); the two sons (Luk 15:11); the two men who went into the temple to pray (Luk 18:10); the two false witnesses against Christ (Mat 26:60); and the two thieves crucified with Him (Mat 27:38); the two angels (Act 1:10); the two “immutable things” of Hebrews (6:18); the two beasts (Rev 13).

As Christ sent forth His apostles in pairs (Mar 6:7), so all through the Bible, two individuals are more or less closely associated. In a few instances, the one complementing the other, but in the majority, there being a marked contrast between them. Thus, we have Cain and Abel, Enoch and Noah, Abraham and Lot, Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Moses and Aaron, Caleb and Joshua, Naomi and Ruth, Samuel and Saul, David and Jonathan, Elijah and Elisha, Nehemiah and Ezra, Martha and Mary, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod, Paul and Barnabas. Sometimes a series of marked antitheses meet together in the life of a single individual. Notably was this the case with Moses. “He was the child of a slave, the son of a princess. He was born in a hut, and lived in a palace. He was educated in the court, and dwelt in the desert. He was the mightiest of warriors, and the meekest of men. He had the wisdom of Egypt, and the faith of a child. He was backward in speech, and talked with God. He had the rod of the shepherd, and the power of the Infinite. He was the giver of the law, and the forerunner of grace. He died alone on mount Nebo, and appeared with Christ in Judaea. No man assisted at his funeral, yet God buried him” (I. M. Haldeman, 1845-1933).

A. T. Pierson (1837-1911) pointed out that another series of striking paradoxes is found in that remarkable prophecy of the Messiah in Isaiah 53. Though the Son of God, yet His report was not believed. He appeared unto God as “a tender plant” (Isa 53:2), but unto men as “a root out of dry ground” (Isa 53:2). JEHOVAH’s Servant, in whom His soul delighted, but in the esteem of the Jews, possessed of no form or comeliness. Appointed by the Father and anointed by the Spirit, yet despised and rejected of men. Sorely wounded and chastised by sinners, yet believing sinners healed by His stripes. No iniquity found in Him, but the iniquities of many were upon Him. Himself the Judge of all, yet brought before the judgment bar of human creatures. Without



generation, yet possessing a numerous seed. Cut off out of the land of the living, yet alive for evermore. He made His grave with the wicked, nevertheless He was with the rich in His death. Though counted unrighteous, He makes many righteous. He was spoiled by the strong, yet He spoiled the strong, delivering a multitude of captives out of his hand. He was numbered with and mocked by transgressors, but made intercession for them.

It is indeed remarkable to find the twofoldness of things confronting us so frequently in connection with the plan of redemption. Based upon the work of the great federal heads, the first Adam and the last Adam, with the fundamental covenants connected with them—the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. The last Adam, with His two distinct natures, constituting Him the God-man Mediator. Two different genealogies are given of Him, in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. There are His two separate advents—the first in deep humiliation, the second in great glory. The salvation He has provided for His people is twofold—objective and subjective or legal and vital, the one which He did *for* them, and the other which He works *in* them—a righteousness imputed to them, and a righteousness imparted. The Christian life is a strange duality—the principles of sin and grace ever opposing one another. The two ordinances Christ gave to His churches—baptism, and the Lord’s supper.

There are many points of contrast between the first two books of the Bible. In the former, we have the history of a family; in the latter, the history of a nation. In the one, the descendants of Abraham are but few in number; in the other, they have increased to hundreds of thousands. In Genesis, the Hebrews are welcomed and honoured in Egypt; whereas in Exodus, they are hated and shunned. In the former, we read of a Pharaoh who says unto Joseph, “God hath showed thee all this” (41:39); but in the latter, another Pharaoh says unto Moses, “I know not the Lord” (5:2). In Genesis, we hear of a “lamb” promised (22:8); in Exodus, of the “lamb” slain and its blood sprinkled. In the former, we have recorded the entrance of Israel into Egypt; in the latter, the exodus of them is described. In the one, we behold the patriarchs sojourning in the land which flowed with milk and honey; in the other, their descendants are wanderers in the wilderness. Genesis closes with Joseph in a coffin, while Exodus ends with the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle.

It is both interesting and instructive to compare the supernatural passages of Israel through the Red Sea and the Jordan. There are at least twelve details of resemblance between them, which we will leave the reader to work out for himself. Here we will consider their points of dissimilarity. First, the one terminated Israel’s exodus from the house of bondage, the other initiated their entrance into the land of promise. Second, the former miracle was wrought in order that they might escape from the Egyptians, the latter to enable them to approach and conquer the Canaanites. Third, in connection with the one, the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind (Exo 14:21), but with reference to the other, no means whatever were employed—to demonstrate that He is not tied unto such, but employs or dispenses with them as He pleases. Fourth, the earlier miracle was performed at night-time (14:21), the latter in broad daylight. Fifth, at the Red Sea multitudes were slain, for the Lord made the waters to return upon the Egyptians so that they “covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them” (14:28), whereas at the Jordan not a single soul perished.

Sixth, the one was wrought for a people who just previously had been full of unbelief and murmuring (Exo 14:11), the other for a people who were believing and obedient (Jos 2:24; 3:1). Seventh, with the sole exception of Caleb and Joshua, all the adults who benefited from the former miracle died in the wilderness; whereas the great majority of those who were favoured to

share in the latter “possessed their possessions.” Eighth, the waters of the Red Sea were “divided” (Exo 14:21), those of the Jordan were made to “stand upon an heap” (Jos 3:13). Ninth, in the former, the believer’s judicial death unto sin was typed out; in the latter, his legal oneness with Christ in His resurrection, followed by a practical entrance into his inheritance. Tenth, consequently, there was no “sanctify yourselves” before the former, but such a call was an imperative requirement for the latter (Jos 3:5). Eleventh, the response made by Israel’s enemies unto the Lord’s interposition for His people at the Red Sea was, “I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them” (Exo 15:9); but in the latter, “It came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites...heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan...their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more” (Jos 5:1). Twelfth, after the former, “Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore” (Exo 14:30); after the latter, a cairn of twelve stones memorialized the event (Jos 4:20-22).

Many examples of this principle are to be found by observing closely the details of different incidents which the Holy Spirit has placed *side by side* in the Word. For instance, how sudden and strange is the transition which confronts us as we pass from 1 Kings 18 to 19. It is as though the sun were shining brilliantly out of a clear sky, and the next moment, without any warning, black clouds draped the heavens. The contrasts presented in those chapters are sharp and startling. In the former, we behold the prophet of Gilead at his best; in the latter, we see him at his worst. At the close of the one, “the hand of the LORD was on Elijah” as he ran before Ahab’s chariot; at the beginning of the other, the fear of man was upon him, and he “went for his life.” There he was concerned only for the glory of JEHOVAH, here he is occupied only with self. There he was strong in faith, and the helper of his people; here he gives way to unbelief, and is the deserter of his nation. In the one, he boldly confronts the four hundred prophets of Baal undaunted; here he flees panic-stricken from the threats of a single woman. From the mountain top, he betakes himself to the wilderness, and from supplicating the Lord that He would vindicate His great name to begging Him to take away his life. Who would have imagined such a tragic sequel? How forcibly does the contrast exhibit and exemplify the frailty and fickleness of the human heart even in a saint!

The work of Elijah and Elisha formed two parts of one whole, the one supplementing the other, and though there are manifest parallels between them, there are also marked contrasts. Both of them were prophets, both dwelt in Samaria, both were confronted with much the same situation. The falling of Elijah’s mantle upon Elisha intimated that the latter was the successor of the former, and that he was called upon to continue his mission. The first miracle performed by Elisha was identical with the last one wrought by his master—the smiting of the waters of the Jordan with the mantle, so that they parted asunder for him (2Ki 2:8, 14). At the beginning of his ministry, Elijah had said unto king Ahab, “As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand” (1Ki 17:1), and when Elisha came into the presence of Ahab’s son he also declared, “As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand” (2Ki 3:14). As Elijah was entertained by the woman of Zarephath, and rewarded her by restoring her son to life (1Ki 17:23), so Elisha was entertained by a woman at Shunem and rewarded her by restoring her son to life (2Ki 4).

Striking as are the points of agreement between the two prophets, the contrasts in their careers and work are just as vivid. The one appeared suddenly and dramatically upon the stage of public action, without a word being told us concerning his origin or how he had been previously engaged; but of the other, the name of his father is recorded, and an account is given of his occupation at the time he received his call into God’s service. The first miracle of Elijah was the shutting up of the heavens, so that for the space of three and a half years there was neither dew

nor rain according to his word; whereas the first public act of Elisha was to heal the springs of water (2Ki 2:21-22) and to provide abundance of water for the people (3:20). The principal difference between them is seen in the character of the miracles wrought by and connected with them. The majority of those performed by the former were associated with death and destruction, but the great majority of those attributed to Elisha were works of healing and restoration. The one was more the prophet of judgment, the other of grace. The former was marked by loneliness, dwelling apart from the apostate masses; the latter seems to have spent most of his time in the company of the prophets, presiding over their schools. The one was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire, the other fell sick in old age and died a natural death (22:9).



# March

## OLD THINGS

1. *Old sins*. “But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins” (2Pe 1:9). Those words occur in a passage of deep importance practically. Verses 5-7 contain an exhortation for the Christian to give all diligence to the cultivation of his graces, and verses 8 and 9 describe the results of a compliance or non-compliance therewith. There is no remaining stationary in the spiritual life. If we do not advance, we backslide. The “these things” in verses 8 and 9 are the seven graces enumerated in 5-7. To “lack” them is not necessarily to be totally devoid of the same, but to be careless and remiss concerning them—as *not to use* the grace already bestowed is, in the language of Scripture, not having it (Luk 8:18; Mat 25:29). I only possess as much truth as really possesses me—influences and regulates me. Regeneration imposes an obligation to cultivate our spiritual life to the utmost possible extent, to exercise the greatest diligence in striving after holiness and fruitfulness. If we fail to do so, then our growth will quickly be arrested. As yet, there may be nothing wrong in the outward life, but there is an inward torpor and non-enjoyment of God and the things of God, and sad will be the consequences.

“He that lacketh these things is blind.” Not absolutely so, as is the case with the unregenerate, but relatively, as is indicated in the clause immediately following. Clearness or dimness of spiritual vision is inseparably connected with a holy or unholy life. As our Lord declared, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Joh 8:12). To follow Christ is to commit ourselves unreservedly unto His guidance, both in doctrine and in practice, to be regulated by the example He has left us, to yield to His authority and be governed by His precepts. By so doing, we have “the light of life”—not only an illuminated path, perception of our duty, but joy of soul. Or, keeping more closely to the language of the context, clearness or dimness of spiritual vision is determined by the extent to which we heed or ignore the exhortation of verses 5-7. There is a mist over divine and eternal things when faith is not in exercise, and we become near-sighted. This is clear from the contrast presented between “cannot see afar off,” and “These all died in faith, not having received the [fulfilment of the] promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them” (Heb 11:13). Just as our Lord said of believing and obedient Abraham, he “rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it [thousands of years beforehand], and was glad” (Joh 8:56). He enjoyed “the light of life” (Joh 8:12).

“And hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” That statement clearly implies that the Lord’s people ought not to forget such a favour, that there is a danger of their so doing, yea,

that if a certain course be followed such will be the outcome. If they yield to, instead of mortify, their lusts, the understanding will be darkened, the conscience will become calloused, the affections cold. The “forgotten” here, like the “blindness” of the first clause, is not to be understood absolutely, but relatively, for the divine forgiveness of sins is a blissful experience which is never totally erased from consciousness while memory is retained. What then is signified? This—There is a *practical* “forgetting.” Neglect of the means of grace and carelessness of our conduct are utterly incompatible with a heart realization of the awful costliness of that sacrifice by which alone sin can be purged. Hence, the closeness of the connection between the two things. If I turn again to folly (Psa 85:8) and fashion my ways according to the former lusts (1Pe 1:14), I shall be purblind, deficient in discernment, dim of vision, with no clear sight of heaven and things to come, in the sense that they have any power to move and mould me. Likewise, Calvary and its pardoning mercy will no longer engage my thoughts. Such a one needs to repent, return to Christ, and beg Him to anoint his eyes with eye-salve that he may see clearly again (Rev 3:18).

But, alas, our lot is cast in a day when sin is regarded lightly, and even many professing Christians refer to their early lives with little or no apparent sense of shame and self-aborrence. Yet this is scarcely to be wondered at, for there are preachers (styling themselves “Bible teachers”) who tell the Lord’s people that God remembers their sins and iniquities no more, and that *they* should not do so. But that by no means follows. Though God has forgiven me, I can never forgive myself for my past wickedness. Yea, if I grow in grace, I shall have a deeper realization of its enormity. Sins *are to be* called to mind, for my humbling, my watchfulness against a repetition thereof, my gratitude for the amazing grace that cleansed one so foul. “Thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed” (Eze 36:31). So too the New Testament calls upon us to remember what we were “in time past” (Eph 2:11-12), that repentance may be deepened by a renewed sense of the same. If we do not, God is likely to suffer the devil to terrify the conscience by reviving the burden of old sins. “Remember not the sins of my youth,” prayed David (Psa 25:7), which was not only an acknowledgment of the same, but a suitable petition when the chastening rod of God be upon us. Poor Job was made to possess the iniquities of his youth (Job 13:26).

4. *Old bottles.* “And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish” (Luk 5:37). The container must be suited to the contents. The bottles here alluded to were of skin—bladders—and when new wine fermented, they would burst. It was an emblematical representation of the impossibility of a conjunction between the new covenant and the old one, which was ready to vanish away (Heb 8:13). Christ had come to inaugurate a better economy than the Mosaic, and Judaism was quite unable to contain the blessings and privileges of Christianity. The untenability of such a fusion of them is shown in Galatians. But our Lord’s figure has also an *individual* application and illustrates the necessity of regeneration. The heart must be renewed before it is fitted to receive spiritual things. Grace cannot be acceptable to a self-righteous person, nor the humbling principles of the Gospel to pride. The pure milk of the Word (1Pe 2:2) is repulsive to those who crave the things of this world. Love has no room in a heart filled with enmity. Comfort is for those who mourn. Holiness is not suited to the carnal man, nor can spiritual duties be performed by those who are unspiritual.

5. *Old things.* “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2Co 5:17). Probably there is not a verse in the New Testament less understood than that, nor one which has occasioned the saints so much anguish, through their misapprehension of it. It is commonly applied to regeneration, but Christian experience uniformly refutes such a view, for it finds to its

sorrow that those words describe neither all things without nor all things within them, the godliest having to lament, “When I would do good, evil is present with me” (Rom 7:21). The believer discovers that evil thoughts and imaginations *still* beset him, that old inclinations and temptations are still present, that sinful lusts and desires constantly harass, and, though he prays against and resists them, he still yields to old habits. But 11 Corinthians 5:17 describes not an inward change, but a *dispensational one*—the old covenant giving way to the new, Judaism being displaced by Christianity. The “middle wall of partition” (Eph 2:14) between Jew and Gentile has passed away. So too have circumcision, the pascal feast, the Levitical priesthood, the seventh-day Sabbath. “All things are become new” (2Co 5:17), baptism, the Lord’s supper, Christ’s priesthood and the Lord’s day taking their places.

6. *Olden times*. “Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? For thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this” (Ecc 7:10)—the Hebrew word for “former” is rendered “old time” in 11 Samuel 20:18. In view of those plain words, how many of our readers can plead guiltless? We wonder what percentage of them definitely realized there was such a prohibition in God’s Word. Anyone who has read extensively knows that in every century and each generation men have spoken of “the good old days,” and referred to their own as “hard” or “evil” times. In most instances, it was owing to ignorance of the past and a spirit of peevishness in the present. Human nature has been the same all through history. In every age, the mercies of God have far outnumbered His judgments. It is an undervaluing of our blessings, proneness to murmur against divine providence, which make us draw odious comparisons. Here too let us forget the things which are behind and press forward unto those before (Phi 3:12-14).

7. *Old age*. This is something which is contemplated with dismay by the majority of human beings, for they realize it will put a period to indulging in carnal pleasures. But such should be far from the case with the believer, for each year that passes brings him that much nearer an entrance into heaven. Yes, but it also means increasing infirmities, and perhaps total helplessness. By no means always so, for many retain their faculties to the end. Yet even so, has not God promised, “Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you” (Isa 46:4)? Say with the Psalmist, “My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” (73:26). And remember 11 Corinthians 4:16.

# EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

## 27. The World Doomed (2:17)

*“And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”*

“Love not the world” (2:15): either its policies or its pleasures, its maxims or its methods, its trends or its ends. Refuse all intimacy with its subjects. That prohibition is enforced, first, by the solemn consideration, “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” The great

Searcher of hearts cannot be deceived: if I am living for the enjoyment of the world and seeking to win its favour, then I am waging warfare against heaven, bidding open defiance to the Lord of hosts (Jam 4:4). Anyone who makes the world his portion or supreme good is dead in sin. It is impossible to keep God's commandments and to be on good terms with His open enemies.

*“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”* (2:16). This is the second reason why we are not to love the world: because the principles, which operate therein, and the food which it provides for them to feed upon, are essentially evil. We are forbidden to set our affection upon things, which gratify the carnal nature, which pander to a disordered imagination, and which minister unto pride. The world supplies an elaborate menu for its subjects. There are stalls and shows in Vanity Fair<sup>5</sup> designed by its prince to appeal unto all tastes and temperaments.

It should be pointed out that those three propensities of fallen human nature have had a corporate embodiment in that monstrous system which God has suffered for so long to devour both the souls and bodies of millions of mankind. We refer to “the mother of harlots,” which for the last thousand years has had the effrontery to term herself “The Holy Catholic Church” and “The Bride of Christ.” If there has been any religious organization outstandingly characterized by these three evils, it is undoubtedly the Papacy. What but “the lust of the flesh,” in its grossest form, has marked her gluttonous prelates, the “indulgences” which they sell to their poor dupes, and the moral filth which has obtained in her convents and monasteries—as converted nuns and monks have frequently testified? What are her imposing cathedrals, her elaborate ritual, her gorgeous vestments and her spectacular processions but so many alluring appeals to the “lust of the eyes”? And what are the flattering titles assumed by her dignitaries, the Pope’s usurpation of the alone prerogatives of Christ, and his claim to rule over kings, but clear evidences of “the pride of life”? And the worldlier other allegedly “Christian” denominations become, and the closer they draw to Rome, the more conspicuous are the same elements and features in them.

In glorious contrast with what has been before us above, let the child of God ponder and feast upon the blessed ways of Immanuel, and bow in admiration and adoration before Him who differed as much from them as does the light from darkness. When about to descend to this earth, He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant” (Phi 2:7). He was born not in a palace, but in a cattle shed. During the years that He remained in this scene, He disdained its pomp, and sought not His happiness in it. Yet the unworldliness of Christ was not that of the hermit, but of One whose ministry was upon the stage of public action, among all classes of people. When He selected the twelve apostles, who were to be His most intimate companions, and later His ambassadors, He chose not the mighty, the noble, or the wise of this world, but humble fishermen and a despised tax-gatherer. So far was He from seeking the limelight that, after He had healed the sick, again and again He bade one and another, “See thou tell no man” (Mat 8:4; 9:30; 12:16). When His brethren after the flesh said, “If thou do these things, show thyself to the world,” He refused their request, and later went up to the feast at Jerusalem “not openly, but as it were in secret” (Joh 7:4, 10)—unannounced, unobtrusively.

After the Lord Jesus Christ had performed many mighty works, and the same had been noised abroad, Simon and his fellows said unto Him, “All men seek for thee,” but He replied, “Let us go into the next towns” (Mar 1:37-38): rather than receive the plaudits of the crowd, He moved on. Instead of courting popularity, He ever shunned it. Said He, “I receive not honour from men” (Joh 5:41). In Mark 7:17, we are told, “And when he was entered into the house from the people” (and

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<sup>5</sup> **Vanity Fair** – the town in Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678) that was given over to worldly lusts, governed by the devil, and presented Christian with many difficult temptations and trials.

cf. 3:19; 9:28, 33)—He went about doing His Father’s business quietly and unostentatiously. Upon His transfiguration, He charged those who beheld it, “Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead” (Mat 17:9). When it became necessary to make a public presentation of His royal claims, He entered Jerusalem not in a chariot, but seated upon an ass—the King of meekness. He averred, “the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (Joh 14:30). There was no lust of the flesh, no lust of the eyes, no pride of life working within the Lord Jesus; and therefore naught to which the corrupt things of the world could appeal. Not only so, but positively there was everything in Him to repel them, for He was “the Holy One,” against whom all the shafts of the devil were aimed in vain.

Having explained at some length what is signified by the three evils announced in verse 16, let us return to the apostle’s principal designs in our passage, which were to warn the Lord’s people, and to expose graceless professors for in neither the Old Testament nor the New does God own anyone as a lover of Him save he who keeps His commandments and walks in separation from the world. The Church and the world are sharply distinguished entities, their members two opposing companies. Therefore does God say to the former, “Walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind” (Eph 4:17): instead, they are required to keep themselves “unspotted from the world” (Jam 1:27), “hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 23), witnessing against the world (Heb 11:7). The world makes its appeals to all of the bodily senses, but its main object is to capture the heart, for until that citadel be won all its arts and devices have failed; but the moment the heart is taken, man becomes the world’s captive, even though (to borrow the language of another) “he be bound in the silken fetters of love.” Hence the supreme importance of our complying with the precept, “Keep thy heart with all diligence” (Pro 4:23), for it is the throne where either Christ or Satan rules.

Solomon tells us that “a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecc 4:12), nevertheless the grace of God can and does effectually deliver from the love of pleasure, riches, honours, as appears with more or less clearness among the regenerate. A striking case in point is that of Moses, for we read of his “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin [the lust of the flesh] for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt [the lust of the eyes]...By faith he forsook Egypt,” abandoning his position there as “the son of Pharaoh’s daughter,” thereby disdaining the pride of life (Heb 11:24-27). Note well, my reader, the repeated “by faith” in those verses, for only so far as that grace be healthy and active will the saint be impervious to both the delights and the terrors of the world: “this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1Jo 5:4). Faith occupies the soul with invisible and eternal realities, and as we are engaged with them the things of time and sense lose their hold upon the heart. A sight of “the King in His beauty” and a sense of His dying love are the surest means of breaking their power.

*“I thirst, but not as once I did,  
The vain delights of earth to share:  
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid  
That I should seek my pleasures there.”*

As the Christian desires to ascertain whether or not he is growing in grace, let him frequently measure himself by this standard: Am I becoming less worldly? He may be innocent of all forms of intemperance and of a spirit of covetousness, he may not envy the prosperity of the wicked or join with them in their vanities, but is he indifferent to their opinion, caring not whether they smile or frown upon him? Is the reader afraid of being called “peculiar” because he ignores its fashions and defies its conventions? Nothing is more pitiful than to see a citizen of heaven in



bondage to the whims of Satan's children: certain it is that if his daily life does not offend them, he is not being faithful to his Master. We shall become less worldly only as our love for God in Christ increases and becomes more vigorous, and therefore, as it is more important to act grace than to be assured that we have it, we should set ourselves with all our might to strengthen our love to the Lord, and then shall we know that we love Him. The example which Christ has left us should make it easier to deny ungodly and worldly lusts. How fully did He manifest His contempt of the world and all the glory thereof! Let us not affect a greater eminence in it than He had. If He was "a Man of sorrows" in this scene, does it become any follower of His to be addicted to its pleasures? If they called Him "Beelzebub" should we compromise in order to escape "bearing His reproach"?

*"Is not of the Father, but is of the world."* This is the third dissuasive against setting our affections thereon. Observe, first, that the apostle did not say "is not of God," but "is not of the Father," just as in the foregoing verse he had said, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." As the devil is opposed to Christ, the flesh hostile to the Spirit, so the world is antagonistic to the Father and hates His children (3:13). "All that is in the world...is not of the Father." The things of the world are termed "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" because they are the objects of them: just as the "doctrine of Christ" (2Jo 1:9) is called "the faith" (Gal 1:23; Jude 3), because it is the object of faith. Those three principles are the springs of action in its citizens; all that takes place in this mundane sphere (as considered apart from the Church and the operations of the Spirit) issues from them: every motive-power at work within the ungodly may be traced thereto. In its turn, the world caters fully for and to them. For the first there are carnal delights to entice the soul from the strictness and severity of the Christian profession. For the second there are all kinds of material profits and illicit gains to allure. For the third there are preferments and applause, which the natural man is so fond of. Those sensible objects to which the old nature is so inclined are ever present, seeking to divert the heart from God and heavenly-mindedness.

*"All that is in the world...is not of the Father."* They are not of His creation, for at the beginning He pronounced all things, including our first parents, "very good." No, as Christ declared of the field wherein tares were sown after He had sown it with wheat, "an enemy hath done this." The idolatrous desire after its objects attached not nor pertained to them originally, but resulted from the fall. Nor are they of His infusion: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away [from the path of rectitude] of his own lusts" (Jam 1:13-14). All such evil lusting is the outcome of indwelling sin. Nor are they of His preceptive will. He has not provided them for any such purposes, nor prescribed them to be so misused. And certainly such perversity of them is not of His approbation. No, rather are they "of the world" as it "lieth in the wicked one" (5:19), which does not, in either its prince or its subjects, respect God's laws, acknowledge His claims, or seek to glorify Him. Such unlawful cravings are the effects of man's apostasy<sup>6</sup> and subjection to Satan, who now makes whatsoever is in the world to be his baits to seduce men into further sin. Thus, loyalty to God and regard for the welfare of our souls require that such a world be renounced by us, and every inordinate longing after it mortified.

*"And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof"* (verse 17). Here is still another reason why God's people are not to love the world, an argument drawn from the vain and vanishing state of mundane things and man's enjoyment of them. Those words may be understood two ways: relatively and absolutely, in regard both to ourselves and itself. In themselves, and in the pleasure

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<sup>6</sup> **apostasy** – the state of abandoning the faith one had believed in.

which the ungodly derive from them, the things of the world are only transitory and can afford no lasting satisfaction. “The fashion of this world passeth away” (1Co 7:31). There is a “fashion” or outward form, which in its incidentals alters in each age and generation, after which its deluded votaries order their lives, being carried along hither and thither by the ebb and flow of its tides. Its customs and habits, its styles and modes, its pleasures and amusements, are ever varying. Yet it is by this very means that the multitudes are more and more deceived. The objects they sought so eagerly yesterday fulfilled not their expectations, so with equal earnestness they pursue the same or other objects today, assured that the attaining of them will rejoice them; only to find them broken cisterns which hold no water.

“*And the world passeth away.*” It is but an amusing pageant: its alluring shows and sights are like a revolving stage, with its scenes changing rapidly, one set of actors soon following another. How frequently do houses and estates change hands. How many a monarchy has been overturned in this century, how many a kingdom had its boundaries altered, how many of its proud cities reduced to rubble. How frequently do riches take to themselves wings and fly away. “Change and decay in all around I see.” Its beauty is only transient, vanishing almost as soon as it appears. Its “fashion” is but an appearance, for there is nothing substantial in it. Its pleasures soon pall: the laughter of fools is compared to “the crackling of thorns under a pot” (Ecc 7:6)—a momentary blaze which disappears in smoke. Its honours are evanescent and disappointing. Its smiles are artificial and fickle. “And the lust thereof” John Calvin (1509-1564) pointed out that “lust” is here used metonymically, as signifying the objects coveted, or the things which captivate the desires of men; the things they deem most precious are but a shadowy phantom, which fails them in the hour of need. The carnal joys of the wicked are like the present sufferings of the saints—relatively “but for a moment,” but instead of working for them “a far more exceeding eternal weight of glory” they issue in everlasting shame and woe.

“The world passeth away” also has reference to its citizens, for “all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass” (1Pe 1:24). All mankind is in a perishing condition, hastening to the grave. The tombstones in our cemeteries bear solemn witness to the brevity of life: far more die in infancy and childhood than in old age. No class is exempt, the wealthy equally with the poor being often cut off in the prime of life. “For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass...so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways” (Jam 1:11). The uncertainty and transiency of mortal life is something which worldlings desire to forget, and therefore do they “put far away the evil day” (Amo 6:3), death being feared by them because it will summon them into the presence of their righteous Judge. The shortness and instability of life are set forth in the Scriptures by many comparisons: the wind (Job 7:7), a leaf before the wind (Job 13:25), a shadow (Job 14:2), the flower of the field (Isa 40:6), “vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jam 4:14), so unsubstantial and unreal, so impermanent and soon over, is human life, and all the prosperity, magnificence and enjoyment that may have attended it.

Oh, my reader, at most we have but a little time to spend in this scene, and that little will soon be gone. “Then why set our hearts on worldly enjoyments or why be overwhelmed with earthly cares? Possess what you must shortly leave without allowing yourself to be possessed by it. Why should your hearts be much set on what you must quickly resign?” (S. Brown). Hold loosely all earthly things. Build not your nest in any tree here, for the whole forest is doomed to destruction. Even now the world is under the judgment, the curse, the wrath, of a sin-hating God. That is evident every time we see a funeral, for death is the wages of sin, and daily we behold that grim reaper at work. Neighbours and friends, known and loved by us, are suddenly cut down. Soon the

world will pass away absolutely and finally. It is not eternal: it had a beginning, and it will have an end. God has appointed a day when it shall no longer exist to oppose Him; and when that day arrives “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2Pe 3:10), and all its unsaved inhabitants will be cast into the lake of fire, there to be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev 20:10).

“*But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*” It is not, as might be expected from verse 15, “he that loveth God,” but the fruit and proof thereof which is here named, for obedience to God is love in action. Nor is it simply “he that knoweth and [theoretically] approveth the divine will,” but rather the one who actually performs it. This is the grand design and end of God’s work of grace in the soul: to make its subject the doer of His Word. The saint is here viewed not as an object of God’s everlasting love, nor as one for whom Christ purchased redemption, but rather as one who has been transformed by the renewing of his mind and made an obedient child. This is very searching. As Peter declared, “God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him,” (Act 10:35-36). And as his Master taught, “For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother” (Mat 12:50); “blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it” (Luk 11:28); “they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life” (Joh 5:29). “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life” (Rev 22:14). Such passages as those are almost universally ignored by Antinomians, who are forever crying up grace at the expense of holiness.

“*He that doeth the will of God*”: not grudgingly but heartily; not bits of it, but the whole. Such is the character and conduct of Wisdom’s children—the very opposite of the worldling’s. They willingly submit to God’s authority, seek to please Him in their daily lives, walk in the Law of the Lord. Not flawlessly so, but evangelically, sincerely, so that of his deviations therefrom the believer can honestly say, “That which I do I allow not” (Rom 7:15), condemning himself for, mourning over and penitently confessing the same. There is no such thing as sinless perfection in this life, either in being entirely rid of love for the things of the world or in doing the will of God. But “he that doeth the will of God” is characteristic of a Christian. And such a one “abideth for ever,” which imports far more than personal continuance (for such will be the case with all the unregenerate), namely in the favour of God and shall be eternally blessed. He shall abide for ever in the possession of that substantial good which he has been enabled to make choice of. Such a one is the heir of eternal life, a member of that kingdom which cannot be shaken. Durable riches are his, a crown of glory awaits him, fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore at God’s right hand.

# THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

## 79. Our Inheritance, Part 1

In our last, we virtually confined our attention to a consideration of the method appointed by God for the distribution of Canaan among the tribes of Israel—that of Levi being exempted therefrom. That method was “the lot,” and however casual and contingent the casting thereof might seem to man, it was divinely certain, for “the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD” (Pro 16:33), so that His will was infallibly made known thereby. All important matters of order under the divine theocracy were thus determined. Hence, we find king Saul making request of the Lord God, “give a perfect lot” (1Sa 14:41). The cities in which the sons of Aaron and their families were to dwell were determined by lot (1Ch 6:63), so too were the sacred singers of the divine worship (1Ch 25:7-8). Likewise, in Nehemiah’s day, those who were to reside in Jerusalem were chosen by lot (Neh 11:1). In case of rival claims, the different parties agreed to abide by its decision, and thus, “The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty” (Pro 18:18).

The practical application which is to be made unto ourselves of the above principle is that God does not leave secondary causes to their work as an idle spectator, but interposes and orders all the affairs of our lives. As an old writer quaintly expressed it, “Notwithstanding all our blowing, the fire will not burn without the Lord.” “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Psa 127:1). As the apportioning of Canaan was entirely by divine determination, so are the bounds of our habitation fixed, and in whatever way our position and portion in this world be assigned or acquired by us, we should regard the same as coming from the Lord, and be thankful for and contented with it. One of the secrets of tranquility of mind and happiness of heart is for us to be grateful and joyful for what God *has* so graciously given us, instead of lusting after and repining over those things which He wisely withholds. “Godliness with contentment is great gain...and having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1Ti 6:6, 8).

As the portion which JEHOVAH appointed, promised, and gave unto Abraham and his descendants, the land of Canaan has, all through this Christian era, been rightly regarded as figuring the heavenly Canaan, unto which the members of Christ are now journeying as they pass through this scene of sin and trial. Rightly, so we say, for in the first place, the New Testament refers often to the everlasting bliss of God’s people as *an inheritance* (Eph 1:13-14). The evangelical commission which Paul received from the Lord unto the Gentiles was “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Act 26:18). And therefore did he bid the Colossians give “thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col 1:12). In Hebrews 9:15, he termed it the “eternal inheritance”; while Peter assured the saints that they had been

begotten “to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1Pe 1:4).

In the second place, Canaan was given to Israel *on the ground of the covenant* which JEHOVAH made with Abraham (Exo 6:4; Psa 105:9-11). In like manner, our heritage of blessing and glory is bestowed upon us in consequence of the everlasting covenant of grace. God and the Mediator agreed together in counsel for the accomplishment of a common end—to further the manifested glory of God and to secure the salvation of His people. In Zechariah 6:13, we read, “And the counsel of peace shall be between them both,” the reference being to JEHOVAH and the Man, whose name is The BRANCH, of the previous verse. That “counsel of peace” signifies the compact between Them. Or the fulfilment of certain conditions by the Mediator, God stipulated to reward Him and His seed. That everlasting covenant is the foundation of all the good which God does to His people (Luk 1:68-72; Heb 13:20-21). His promises unto them were made to their Surety, on whose behalf He transacted. A remarkable proof of this is found in Titus 1:2, “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, *promised* [not simply “purposed”] before the world began”—promised Christ that He would bestow eternal life (another name for the “inheritance”—Mat 25:34) upon all His seed.

In the third place, the everlasting portion of Christians is not only an “inheritance,” but *an allotted one*. This is taught plainly in Ephesians 1:11, though a careful comparison of other passages is required in order to discern the real meaning and force of that verse. Since most of the Lord’s people are unacquainted with the same, it will be necessary for us to enter into some detail. In verses 3-9, the apostle had spoken of election, of adoption to glory (or an inheritance), of redemption, and of vocation. Then in verse 10, he stated that the design of the whole of the foregoing was that God should head up or gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven (the angels) and (the redeemed) which are on earth. In verses 11-13, this is amplified and explained. First, he refers to Jewish believers, and says, “In whom [Christ, the Head] also *we* have obtained an inheritance,” or a part in that grand “gathering together” into one in Christ. Then in verse 13, he alludes to the Gentiles, “In whom *ye also* trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation,” for it is not until his conversion that any soul actually obtains either an interest in or meetness for the inheritance.

The “we have obtained an inheritance” is a single word—a compound one—in the original, and is derived from *kleros*, concerning which that eminent Greek scholar and exegete Charles Hodge (1797-1878) said, “The word *kleros* means to cast lots, to distribute by lot, to choose by lot, and, in the middle voice, to obtain by lot or inheritance or simply to obtain.” Our own study has confirmed that, first, *kleros* signifies a part or portion in a thing, to be a partaker with others therein, and it is so rendered in Acts 1:17, 25. Thus, the saints have a part in that gathering together of all things in Christ. Second, *kleros* signifies an inheritance, and is so rendered in Hebrews 1:4—“heritage” in 1 Peter 5:3. Third, *kleros* signifies a lot, being so translated seven times: Matthew 27:35, etc.; Acts 1:26. Thus, by combining those three meanings, we get a part or portion, which part or portion is an inheritance, and this inheritance comes to us by lot, as did that of the Hebrews, “Ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance” (Num 33:54, and see Eze 45:1), and therefore it is called “the lot of our inheritance” (Num 36:3).

It is also to be observed that the verbal noun of Ephesians 1:11 (for a verb it is) is a *passive* one, importing that the inheritance has been *bestowed upon* us, and is not something actively acquired by us. The word is used in the passive voice when we say a man is *disinherited*, but we have no English word that answers thereto to say a man is *inherited*, so we supply a word and say he is *endowed with* an inheritance. The Christian’s inheritance is not something he has earned by

his own efforts, nor is it even sought by him, but is conferred upon him gratuitously. We obtained an inheritance in Christ, were made joint heirs with Him, before we were aware of it. In some cases, this is much more evident than in others, as with those who are utterly unconcerned about their souls' eternal welfare being suddenly and quite unexpectedly apprehended by Christ—like Saul of Tarsus. Yet in reality, it is so in *every* case, for Christ took the initiative in seeking out and working upon the ones who became anxious seekers after Him, for did not God first quicken the dead in sins, none would ever make a movement towards Him. Yet they know no more about that quickening than a man asleep would of obtaining an inheritance then bequeathed to him.

Thus it turns out under the preaching of the Gospel and those who hear the same. The lot falls on some and passes by others. One may attend out of idle curiosity and be arrested by God the first sermon he hears. As Zacchaeus, being little, climbed up into a tree, that he might get a glimpse of the miracle-worker who was passing that way, yet Christ said unto him, "Make haste, and come down...This day is salvation come to this house" (Luk 19:1-10). While regular attenders are left to themselves. "Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage" (Mat 22:9). Every saint is divinely ordained, yet to human perception things are carried out casually, as if grace comes to them by lot—even as Saul merely went forth to seek his father's asses, but before he arrived back home had been anointed king of Israel (1Sa 9:3-10:27). The hearers of Christ's forerunner went to view a novelty, as they would go to a show (Luk 7:24-25), yet under his call to repentance, many of their hearts were turned to God.

The above remarks receive definite confirmation in 11 Peter 1:1, where the apostle addresses himself to "them that have *obtained* like precious faith with us." For the Greek word there used also signifies "to obtain by lot" (Young's Concordance), being the same one as is rendered "*his lot was to burn incense*" (Luk 1:9). By using that term, Peter would remind his readers that if they had really believed to the saving of their souls, they were indebted for their faith not at all to their own superior sagacity but solely to the sovereign dispositions of divine grace. In the distribution of His favours, that blessed portion had fallen to their share. Thus 11 Peter 1:1 is one of many verses which teach us that saving faith is a *gift* from God, and not a product of the creature's will. All room for boasting is excluded (1Co 4:7). It is the divine lot which makes believer differ from unbeliever!

It is not simply predestination which gives a soul a right to the divine inheritance, but a divine work—a work of grace on the heart—which is the effect of predestination. So teaches the apostle in Ephesians 1:12-14. It was *after* they heard the Gospel, "after that ye believed," that they were sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, "which is the earnest of our inheritance." It is not until we are converted that we obtain a personal interest in the inheritance. This is clear from Acts 26:18, for Christ sent forth Paul to preach in order to turn men "from darkness unto light...that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified [set apart from unbelievers] by faith that is in me." Simon Magus was told frankly, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter." And why? Because he was an impenitent and unpardoned soul (Act 8:21-22). We have to be made meet by the gracious operations of the Spirit before we become partakers of the inheritance (Col 1:12). Likewise does 1 Peter 1:3-4 expressly inform us that we must be begotten of God ere we have a saving and experiential interest in the heavenly inheritance.

After stating that those who are converted have obtained an inheritance or "part" in the gathering together into one of all things in Christ, the apostle then traced this unspeakable blessing back to *its source*, "being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph 1:11). God has sent forth the Gospel on no uncertain mission, but whenever and by whomsoever it be preached, it shall not return unto Him

void (Isa 55:11), but accomplish that which He pleases and prosper in the thing whereto He sent it—all the forces of evil being powerless to prevent it. It is not left to human caprice, the wills of those who hear it, and though it comes to men by “lot” (which to the eye of man appears to be wholly a matter of chance), yet that lot is directed by God’s eternal predestination. And though the favoured ones on which the lot falls be by nature as alienated from God and as dead in sin as those whom the lot passes by, nevertheless their effectual calling and conversion is accomplished by Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will.

Many of God’s people rejoice and give thanks unto Him for His bringing them from death unto life, working repentance and faith in them, and granting them a saving interest in Christ; but fail to perceive that those acts of the divine mercy are the consequents and fruits of God’s eternal choice and foreordination of them unto eternal life and glory (Act 13:48; 2Th 2:13-14). The order of the divine procedure is clearly stated in Romans 8, “For whom he did foreknow, he also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn [chief] among many brethren” (verse 29). Foreknowledge there is the knowledge of approbation, as in “The LORD knoweth the way of the righteous” (Psa 1:6), “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amo 3:2, and see Rom 11:2). The distinction between foreknowledge and predestination is this—the divine foreknowledge is of the *persons* selected and approved. The predestination is the appointing of the *blessings* designed them. The next verse shows how that grand purpose of God is accomplished, “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom 8:30).

Thus, God’s electing grace and sovereign purpose are the ground and root of all that follows. Many other passages teach the same thing. “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: *therefore* with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer 31:3). All of God’s dealings with His people in time are the outworking of His decrees concerning them in eternity past. “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2Th 2:13). He who determined the end also appointed and provided the means thereto. “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works [either actual or foreseen, for we have no good ones except those which He produces in and through us], but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2Ti 1:9). Now observe how strong and emphatic is the language of Ephesians 1:11, “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” Not only predestinated to that inheritance, but according to divine purpose, which expresses the certainty and immutability thereof; and that the decree of Him who effectually works all things after the contrivance of His own pleasure, none being able to withstand Him.

In the fourth place, the allotment of Israel’s inheritance was conveyed through the exercise of *the priest’s office*. “And these are the countries which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for inheritance to them” (Jos 14:1). Since a solemn appeal was to be made unto God for the knowledge of His will, the presence of the high priest with his Urim and Thummim was necessary. Accordingly, Eleazar, the son and successor of Aaron (Deu 10:6), is here mentioned, and that *before* Joshua. By thus giving him the precedence, signal honour was placed upon the priesthood. Therein we behold once more the beauty and the accuracy of the type, though ours is an age of such spiritual ignorance that few today perceive this. The careful student of the New Testament will have observed that the priesthood of Christ is

there given a prominence which is accorded unto neither His prophetic nor His kingly office. Nor is that in the least surprising, for it was the very end of His incarnation “that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Heb 2:17).

There was obviously no necessity for the assumption of human nature by the Son of God if the only results to be achieved thereby were the publication of truths undiscoverable by the efforts of human reason and the promulgation of laws invested with the authority of God, for prophets and apostles were quite competent (by divine endowment) to perform such offices. But the mediation of Christ rendered it requisite and fitting that it should assume the peculiar form of *priesthood*, so that His death might be not only a satisfaction unto justice, but a sweet-smelling sacrifice—a free-will offering unto God. It is most important to recognize that Christ’s redemptive work was a priestly one. This has been denied by Socinians, and it is sad to find some who believe in Christ’s deity adopting the vain reasoning of “Unitarians” concerning the sacerdotal nature of the Saviour’s oblation. The New Testament represents Christ not only as priest, but as the great High Priest of His people, and if the character, purpose and scope of that office be interpreted in the light of the Old Testament types (as it must be), there is no room left for doubt as to the meaning of the antitype.

Now, it is in the epistle to the Hebrews that the functions of Christ’s priesthood are most fully made known. There we are shown that both Aaron and Melchizedek were needed to foreshadow completely its various aspects. The design of God in appointing Aaron was to typify the person and work of Christ, as is clear from “as was Aaron...so also Christ” (Heb 5:4-5)—an unmistakable parallel. Hebrews 2:17 makes it quite plain that Christ acted as Priest here on earth, for He made “reconciliation for the sins of the people”—as Aaron was priest *before* he entered the holiest, so also was Christ. Hebrews 7:26 exhibits the qualifications and excellencies which fitted Christ to discharge this office, describing what He was here when brought into contact with sin and sinners. “Such an high priest became us”—was requisite for and suited to fallen creatures—none other could expiate our sins, procure acceptance with God, or purchase eternal redemption. Hebrews 8:3; 9:11-15, 25-28; 10:10-12 also prove that Christ discharged His priestly office *on earth*, offering Himself as a sacrifice to God. Conclusive proof of this was furnished by God’s rending of the veil, thereby setting aside the whole system of the Levitical order, His priestly oblation having superseded theirs.

As might well be expected from their relative positions in the Sacred Canon, Hebrews takes us farther than Romans (wonderful as that epistle is) in the revelation of God’s manifold wisdom and the unveiling of His amazing grace. In Romans, the scene is laid in the law court; in Hebrews, within the temple. In the former, the righteousness of God is displayed; in the latter, His holiness shines forth. In the one, justification is the outstanding provision of the Gospel; in the other, sanctification is the product of Christ’s sacrifice. In Romans, Christ is seen as the covenant Head and federal Representative of His people; in Hebrews, as their great High Priest. In the former, believers obtain a secure standing before God’s throne; in the latter, they are privileged to draw nigh as worshippers before the mercy seat. As both Aaron and Melchizedek were needed to set forth the sacrificial and royal functions of Christ’s priesthood, so both Phinehas and Joshua were required (Jos 14:1) to exhibit Him as the Bestower of our inheritance—the Lamb-Lion of Revelation 5:5-6. As Priest (and Lamb), Christ *purchased* the “eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:11-15), as the antitypical Joshua (and Lion), His *power* conducts the heirs into it.



# THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

## 11. Its Corollaries, Part 1

In the introductory article of this series, we intimated that we should endeavour to show that our present subject is one of immense doctrinal importance and of great practical value. In view of all that has been advanced in our subsequent discussions, that fact should be clearly apparent. The teaching of Scripture thereon supplies us with a divinely accurate diagnosis of man's present condition. It shows us, as nothing else can or does, why the entire course of human history has been what it is, and explains why all the remedial methods and measures of man's wit to effect any radical improvement in society are thorough failures. It accounts for the fact that man in the twentieth century is essentially the same as in the first, that the like moral features pertain to white and black, yellow and red races, that no change of environment or "living condition" can transform a sinner into a saint—the removing of thistles and nettles from stony ground and transplanting them into the most fertile soil and lovely surroundings will not cause them to bear fragrant flowers or edible fruit. Human nature is fundamentally the same whether men live in mansions or hovels. Man does what he does because of what he is.

The deep importance of this doctrine of man's total depravity also appears in the close bearing which it has upon other aspects of the truth, and the light which it tends to cast upon them. Reject what is revealed in Genesis 3, and the remainder of the Bible becomes entirely meaningless, but accept what is there recorded, and everything else becomes intelligible and is seen to be in its proper place. The whole scheme of redemption manifestly proceeds in view of the ruination of their race by our first parents—our defection in Adam and our recovery by Christ plainly stand or fall together. It is just because he is a sinner that man needs a Saviour, and being so great a sinner, none but a divine Saviour is sufficient for him. Since sin has corrupted the whole of his constitution, vitiating and debasing all his faculties, man is utterly incapable of doing anything to raise himself out of the horrible pit into which the fall has plunged him. Sooner will the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots (Jer 13:23) than those who are at enmity with God evolve any love to Him or do that which is pleasing in His sight. If then such a one is to be made fit to dwell for ever with the thrice Holy One, then obviously a miracle of grace must be wrought in him.

Equally real and great is the practical value of this doctrine. Nothing else is so well calculated to humble the proud heart of the creature and bring him into the dust before his Maker, crying "Behold, I am vile" (Job 40:4). Nothing else is so well calculated to demonstrate the utter futility of the sinner's attempting to appease God and obtain His approbation by any efforts of his own, or to gain an acceptance with Him by his own performances. As well might a murderer standing in the dock seek to win the judge's favour by means of his smiles and flatteries. Nothing is so well calculated to convince us that, since our hearts be rotten to the core, our very righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isa 64:6). And nothing else will so deeply impress upon the heart of a believer his entire dependence upon the Lord as a feeling sense of what he is by nature. That God must

work in him both to will and to do of His good pleasure if ever he is to perform His bidding, that nothing but daily supplies of grace can preserve him in the narrow and upward way. But let us now proceed to particularize what has just been summarized.

Since the entire being of the natural man be under the dominion of sin, it follows that *his will is in bondage thereto*. Anyone who denies that fact evinces that he does not understand or believe in the total depravity of man, for in effect he is asserting that one of the most important of his faculties has not been debased by the fall. But as the whole of man's body is corrupt, so his entire soul is inclined unto evil only, and so long as he remains in the state of nature, his will is in captivity thereto. The power of the will can only extend itself to things within its own province and cannot act above it—all actions and powers of action are limited by the nature and capacity of their agent. As creatures below man cannot put forth a rational act, neither can those who lack a holy principle (which all do till born again) put forth any spiritual action. Before divine grace works upon and within the heart, man's will is enslaved by sin, he is "in the bond of iniquity" (Act 8:23), the servant of those lusts and pleasures which he chooses and delights in. Christ must make us free (Joh 8:36) before there is or can be any deliverance from our moral captivity.

The Lord Jesus declared, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant ["bondman"] of sin" (Joh 8:34)—sin is his master, ordering all his actions. Nevertheless, he voluntarily assents thereto, that is why it is termed "the will of *the flesh*" (Joh 1:13), for it is defiled. It is "without strength" (Rom 5:6) unto that which is good. Since the tree itself be corrupt, no good fruit will be borne by it. Romans 8:7 not only declares that the carnal mind is enmity against God and that it is not subject to the law of God, but adds, "neither indeed can be," which would not be the case were the will of fallen man free, or had power unto good. Even when the understanding is convinced and sees the truth, the will obstinately opposes and rejects it. Rightly did G. H. Bishop (of the Dutch Reformed Church) say, "Man can no more turn to God than the dead can sit up in their coffins. He can no more originate a right desire than he can create a universe. God the Holy Spirit alone, by sovereign, special interference, calls dead sinners to life and creates within them 'the desires of their hearts'—the first faint fluttering of a breath toward holiness."

Some may reply, "But my own experience refutes what you have said. I am clearly conscious of the fact that my will accepted the offer of the Gospel. That I freely came to Christ as a lost sinner and accepted Him as my own Saviour." Fully admitting that, if you go a little *farther back*, you will find that your very experience confirms what we have written above. Previous to conversion, your will was opposed to God, and you refused to come to Christ. Though the time arrived when that was reversed, *who* produced or caused that change—you or God? In every conscious act he performs, man necessarily wills. In repenting, he wills, in believing, he wills, in turning from his evil ways and in turning unto God in Christ, he wills. But does the sinner make himself willing, or does God? The question at issue is—Does salvation *begin* by self-movement or divine? Scripture is plain on the matter. God alters the bent or bias of the will, by communicating a principle of grace and holiness. A supreme will overcomes man's. He who said, "Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen 1:3) says, Let rebellion and opposition cease, and it does so. "So then it is not of him that willeth [originally], nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom 9:16). As He loved us before we loved Him (1Jo 4:19), so His will goes before ours in conversion.

Because the natural man is dead in trespasses and sins, *he is quite insensible of his wretched plight*. This is indeed one of the most terrible elements in the fatal malady which has smitten him; that he is so morally paralysed as to be quite unaware of his desperate state. At this juncture, it is necessary to point out that there is a difference between being totally ignorant of our condition

and being quite insensible thereof. The unregenerate may acquire a theoretical knowledge of man's total depravity, yet they are still without any feeling sense of the same. They may hold the theological belief that sin is the transgression of the divine Law, but they have no inward horror and anguish over their vileness. That deadly insensibility is in all sinners, and at all times. Their natural emotions may be stirred as they listen to a portrayal of the sufferings of Christ on the cross—like they shed tears over some particularly touching incident recorded in the newspapers, or a pathetic episode acted on the stage—but they weep not over their awful enmity against God, nor mourn because of their contrariety to His holiness. They are quite incapable of so doing, for they have a *stony heart* (Eze 36:26) Godward, and realize not that His wrath abides upon them.

This it is which explains why sinners generally are so secure and happy. It has always appeared strange, as well as grievous, to the saints to see the ungodly so unconcerned and light-hearted, though under sentence of death. Job understood not how the wicked could “take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ,” spending “their days in mirth, and in a moment go down to the grave” (Job 21:12-13, margin). The Psalmist was perplexed when he “saw the prosperity of the wicked” and observed that they were “not in [soul] trouble as other men” (Psa 73:3, 5). Amos was astonished at the sinners in Zion, who “put far away the evil day,” and who lay upon beds of ivory...eat the lambs out of the flock...invent to themselves instruments of musick...drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments” (Amo 6:1-6), but were thoroughly unconcerned about their souls. Though natural men differ from one another in so many respects, in *this* they are very much alike. They generally live as though there be no God to whom they must yet render an account, and who will pass sentence of eternal damnation upon them. Such stupidity in rational and immortal creatures can be explained only on the ground of their insensibility. They have eyes, but see not; ears, but hear not; hearts, but perceive not. Thus, it is not at all strange that those who neither discern nor *feel* their danger should *fear* none.

Those who deny the moral insensibility of sinners are but proclaiming their own insensibility, for they repudiate not only what Scripture maintains, but that which universal observation confirms. Nothing but their crass stupidity can account for the conduct of the great majority of mankind, who are saying peace and safety while exposed to instant and eternal destruction. They are completely unconcerned that their hearts are desperately wicked, their understandings darkened, and their wills in bondage to evil. They are unaware of Satan's malignant dominion over them, and know not that he is perpetually causing them to sin. The devil employs a multitude of devices to ensnare them. He knows how to take full advantage of their sottishness, yet though they be led captive by him from day to day, they perceive not his wiles and influence. Even though they recognize the objects which he employs to seduce them, they realize not his seducing power. They are ignorant that they are continually walking in the paths of the destroyer, who is leading them blindfold to hell. They know not, or if they do, they care not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God, and that to follow a multitude to do evil is the direct road to endless woe. Hence it is that they are not sensible of stumbling at one another. They are united in their disaffection to God, and in their love of sin. They join hand in hand, all lead and are led. Their very numbers inspire them with courage and resolution, and encourage them to walk together in the path of ruin.

In view of all that has been advanced, it is crystal clear that *fallen man is in a lost and perishing condition*. He is obnoxious to God, alienated from His life (Eph 4:18), cast out of His favour (Gen 3:24), cut off from communion with Him (Eph 2:12). He is given up to the devil, to be led captive by him as he pleases. He is dead in trespasses and sins, and that means (among

other things) that he is utterly powerless where spiritual things be concerned, quite unable to do anything in regard of them, yet he is powerful with respect to that which is carnal and devilish. Entirely averse to all that is good and holy, his will desperately set against the truth, but prone to and in love with his iniquities as to regard them as his benefactors (Hos 2:5, 12). His heart is so calloused that the mercies of God melt him not, nor do His threatenings and judgments awe him. Instead of the divine goodness leading him to repentance, it leads him to deeper impenitence, unbelief and presumption, for since he sees the sun shining and the rain falling on the evil and on the good, and God suffering all things to come alike to the one as to the other, he concludes that He will treat them all alike in the next world.

Man's plight is very much worse than is generally recognized, even in those sections of Christendom which are still regarded as being orthodox. Quite recently we read a piece entitled "Individual Salvation" wherein things were thus presented. "Imagine a situation in which an island is affected by some calamity, say a raging fire, and that the only escape is by means of a bridge to the mainland. The bridge is swiftly erected. Once erected it offers the possibility of escape, of salvation, for the entire island—but only a possibility. The concrete realization of the possibility is a matter for each individual man, woman, and child. The bridge does not offer automatic salvation, but simply the opportunity. If some individual citizen deems that the fire will die down, and that he proposes to remain in the conflagration, the possibility of escape by the bridge is nullified. It is true that he can be carried by force over the bridge to safety. But God does not effect the soul's salvation by compulsion. Unless the individual wills acceptance, he perishes." Then, after quoting John 3:16, the writer added, "The individual must himself decide to cross the bridge."

How far below the desperateness of the sinner's case and situation does such an illustration fall! It ignores the fact that sin has such a stupefying effect upon the whole soul of the natural man that he is oblivious to his peril and insensible of his dire need. It loses sight of the fact that the sinner is not only in gross darkness, but has no desire to be enlightened. That he is stricken with a deadly malady, and is quite unwilling to be healed. He is highly displeased if someone tells him of his awful danger, resenting anything which disturbs his false peace and comfort. Sinners could not bear to hear the plain preaching of either God's prophets or His incarnate Son. They stoned the former and crucified the latter. So it is now. They refuse to give a hearing unto one who declares them to be *totally* depraved. Even though mentally convinced of the urgency of his situation, the sinner has no eyes to see "the bridge," and if another offered to lead him, it would be of no avail, for he is "without strength" (Rom 5:6). True, God does not effect the soul's salvation by compulsion, but He *does* by a miracle of grace—Making His people willing in the day of His power (Psa 110:3), imparting life, light, and strength to them.

Since man be totally depraved, *how great is his need of salvation!* The guilt of Adam's transgression is charged to his account, the polluted nature of our first parents transmitted to him, he is shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, and enters this world a child of wrath, estranged from God from his mother's womb (Psa 58:3). Born with a heart that is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer 17:9), from earliest childhood, he pursues a course of self-will and self-pleasing, treasuring up to himself wrath against the day of wrath (Rom 2:5). His iniquities are more in number than the hairs of his head (Psa 40:12) and his "trespass" [or "guiltiness"] is grown up unto the heavens" (Ezr 9:6). He lies beneath the death sentence of the Law, and that curse cannot be removed until full satisfaction has been rendered to it, and such satisfaction the guilty culprit is utterly powerless to render. Nor can any of his fellows, no, not his nearest and dearest relatives, discharge his incalculable debt. "None of them can by any means redeem his

brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, for the redemption of their soul is precious” (Psa 49:7-8), or “costly” as the same word is rendered in 1 Kings 7:9-10. And the sinner is a moral bankrupt, with no good thing to his credit, without a penny to discharge his liabilities.

Manifest it is that such a one is utterly unfit for heaven, and even if he were permitted to enter it, he would at once desire to depart therefrom, for he would be entirely out of his element, having nothing whatever in common with the ineffable holiness of its atmosphere and society. Not only so, he is already ripe for hell, fit only for the company of the damned. Thus, the natural man is in a perishing condition. Not only does he need delivering from the curse of the Law, the wrath of God, and the captivity of the devil, but he requires *saving from himself*—from the guilt, the dominion, and the pollution of his sins. He needs to be saved from his hard, impenitent, and unbelieving heart, from his love of the world, from his self-righteousness. Divine justice requires not only that he be clear of any accusation the Law can bring against him, but that he possess a perfect obedience which constitutes him righteous before the Law, and thus has a title to the reward of endless felicity. But his righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isa 64:6), and the wearer of them a moral leper. His plight is desperate beyond the power of words to express. There is but a step betwixt him and death, and beyond that lies “the blackness of darkness for ever” (Jude 1:13).

It is equally evident that the lost sinner is *incapable of contributing anything toward his salvation*. Can a foul and filthy fountain send forth clean and pure waters? Neither can a polluted creature offer anything which is acceptable unto the Holy One. “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD” (Pro 15:8), as He made clear at the beginning, when He had not respect unto Cain and his offering. Instead of a pleasing service to God, it is an insulting provocation, for it lacks that principle without which it is impossible to please Him (Heb 11:6). The supplications of the unregenerate are rejected by Him. “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 1:15). And why? Because such “praying” is the howling of those in pain (Hos 7:14) rather than the breathings of loving devotion; or the wishings and cravings of those who would have their lusts gratified (Jam 4:3) rather than their souls ministered unto; or bold presumptions for things unwarranted by the divine promises—they would have mercy without holiness, sins forgiven without forsaking them; or but the perfunctory exercises of those who have a form of godliness but are strangers to its power (2Ti 3:5). Likewise are their fastings rejected (Isa 58:3-7; Zec 7:5).

“We can no more be voluntarily serviceable to God while our serpentine nature and devilish habits remain in us, than we can suppose that the devil can be willing to glorify God while the nature he contracted by his fall works powerfully in him. Our nature and will must be changed, that our actions may regard God as our end, that we may delightfully meditate on Him, and draw the motives of our obedience from love” (Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680). The imperative necessity of that radical change in the soul, a change so great and complete as to be like unto a second birth, was expressed by Christ when He declared, “Ye must be born again” (Joh 3:3) having prefaced the same by stating, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God....Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:3, 5, 7). There must be a spiritual and supernatural principle in us before we can live a spiritual and supernatural life. The new birth is indispensable, yet what can one who is dead in sin do to effect it? As Nicodemus asked, “How can a man be born when he is old?” (John 3:4). “Ye must be born again” at once reveals the utter futility of all self-effort. Such a demand withers all fleshly pretensions and bars the gates of heaven against all the unregenerate. It is designed to crush pride and make man realize his helplessness.

As the sinner cannot regenerate himself, neither can he produce any evangelical repentance, for “godly sorrow worketh repentance” (2Co 7:10), and of godliness, he has not a spark. Until he be born again, he can neither hate sin nor abhor himself. Nor is he capable of exercising faith—how can he confide in One to whom he is a total stranger, trust in One whom he regards as his enemy, love One with whom he is at enmity? The obstacles in the way to salvation are absolutely insurmountable by any efforts of the sinner. He might as easily turn back the tide as deliver his soul. That solemn fact was shown by Christ when, in answer to His disciples’ question, “Who then can be saved,” He averred, “with men this is *impossible*” (Mat 19:26). What a shattering word was that to all creature sufficiency! How it should bring the sinner to despair of saving himself!

# INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

## Part 20

In our last, we pointed out that different aspects of truth are frequently emphasized in the Scriptures by placing two incidents in juxtaposition in order to give point to various differences between them. We gave several illustrations from the Old Testament of *the law of comparison and contrast*. Let us now show that the same principle holds good in the New Testament. Consider, first, the striking antitheses between what is recorded in Luke 18:35-42 and 19:1-9. That which is narrated in the former occurred as Christ approached Jericho (the city of the curse—Jos 6:26), whereas the latter took place after He had passed through it. The subject of the first was a blind beggar; that of the second was “chief of the publicans.” Bartimaeus occupied a lowly place, for he “sat by the way side”; Zacchaeus assumed an elevated position, for he “climbed up into a sycamore tree.” The one was intent on seeking alms from the passers-by; the other was determined to “see Him”—Christ. Bartimaeus took the initiative and cried, “Son of David, have mercy on me”; Christ took the initiative with Zacchaeus, bidding him, “Come down.” The former supplicated for his sight; of the latter, Christ made a peremptory request, “To day I must abide at thy house.” The multitude rebuked Bartimaeus for crying to Christ; all “murmured” at Christ for going to be the guest of Zacchaeus.

There is a striking series of contrasts between what is found in the opening verses of John 3 and John 4. What is recorded in the former, occurred in Jerusalem; in the latter, the scene is laid in Samaria. In the one, we have “a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus”; in the other, an unnamed woman. He was a person of distinction, a “master of Israel”; she was of the lower classes, for she came to the well “to draw water.” He was a favoured Jew; she was a despised Samaritan—a semi-heathen. Nicodemus was a man of high reputation, a member of the Sanhedrin; the one with whom Christ dealt in John 4 was a woman of dissolute habits. Nicodemus came unto Jesus; Christ waited for the woman at the well, and she had no thought of meeting her Saviour. The former incident took place “by night”; the latter, at midday. To the self-righteous Pharisee, Christ said, “Ye must be born again”; to the sinner of the Gentiles, He told of

“the gift of God.” Nothing is said of how the former interview ended—apparently Nicodemus was, at that time, unconvinced; the latter went forth and bore testimony unto Christ.

By comparing together what is recorded in the earliest parts of John 12 and 13, some interesting and instructive contrasts are revealed. In the former, we read that “they made him a supper”; in the latter, there is a supper which He appointed. There, He is seated at the table; here, He arose from it. There, He is honoured; here, He performs the office of a menial. In the one, we behold Mary at the feet of the Saviour; in the other, we see the Son of God stooping to attend to the feet of His disciples. The feet speak of *the walk*. Christ’s feet were anointed with costly ointment; those of the apostles were washed with water. As Christ passed through this world, He contracted no pollution. He left it as He entered—“holy, harmless, undefiled” (Heb 7:26). That His feet were anointed with the fragrant spikenard tells us of the sweet savour which ever ascended from Him to the Father, perfectly glorifying Him in every step of His path. In sharp contrast with His, the walk of the disciples was defiled, and the grime of the way needed to be removed if they were to have “part” or communion with Him (Joh 13:8). His feet were anointed *before* theirs were washed, for in all things He must have the “pre-eminence” (Col 1:18). In connection with the former, Judas complained; in the latter, Peter demurred. Interpretatively, the one had Christ’s burial in view (Joh 12:7); the other adumbrated an important part of His present ministry on high (Joh 13:1).

Many illustrations of this principle are found in connection with words and expressions that are used *only twice* in the Scriptures, and startling are the contrasts between them. *Apognigo* occurs only in Luke 8:7, 33. The one having reference to the seed being choked by thorns; the other where the demon-possessed swine were choked in the sea. In Luke 2:1-5, *apographe* is employed in connection with the Firstborn Himself being enrolled on earth, whereas in Hebrews 12:23, it refers to the Church of the Firstborn enrolled in heaven. *Apokueo* is used in James 1:15, 18, of lust bringing forth sin, and of the Father begetting us with the Word of truth. *Apolausis* is applied to the things which God has given us to enjoy lawfully (1Ti 6:17), and to the refusal of Moses to enjoy the unlawful pleasures of sin (Heb 11:25). *Anthrakia* is found only in John 18:18, where Peter joined Christ’s enemies before “a fire of coals,” and in 21:9, where the disciples fed before one in the presence of Christ. *Choramakros* is the “far country” into which the prodigal took his journey (Luk 15:13), and a very different one to which Christ went at His ascension (Luk 19:12). *Panoplia* is used of the enemy’s “armour” (Luk 11:22), and of the armour Christ has provided for the saints (Eph 6:11, 13).

There are two references unto “the king’s dale”. In the one, Melchizedek brought forth that which symbolized Christ (Gen 14:17-18); in the other, Absalom erected a monument unto himself (2Sa 18:18). What a marked (and probably designed) contrast there is between the expressions, “There *fell* of the people that day about three thousand men” (Exo 32:28), and, “The same day there were *added* unto them about three thousand souls” (Act 2:41)—the only occasions where “about three thousand” is used in Scripture. Similar too is this example, “There were with him [David] about four hundred men” (1Sa 22:2), and there “rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves” (Act 5:36). In 1 Samuel 28:24, we read of the “fat calf” of the witch of Endor. In Luke 15:23, we are told of “the fatted calf” which was killed for the prodigal son! *Katischuo* occurs only in “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”—the Church (Mat 16:18), and “the voice of them and of the chief priests prevailed” (Luk 23:23) with Pilate against Christ, to consent unto His crucifixion.

How much we miss through failing to heed carefully that word, “comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1Co 2:13). If we spent more time in prayerfully meditating upon the Scriptures,

we should oftener have occasion to say with David, “I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil” (Psa 119:162). It is not to the hurried nor to the cursory reader that its treasures are revealed. What a startling and solemn contrast is there between Christ was “numbered with the transgressors” (Mar 15:28), and Judas was “numbered with” the apostles (Act 1:17). *Kataluma* is used only in Luke 2:7, where it is rendered “There was no room for them in the *inn*”; and in Luke 22:11, where it is translated “guestchamber”—where the Saviour partook of the passover with His disciples. The woman of Thyatira in Acts 16:14 had her heart opened by the Lord so that she might “take unto her” (which is the meaning of the Greek word rendered “attend”) the message of God’s servant; but the woman of Thyatira in Revelation 2:20 opened her mouth for the purpose of seducing God’s servants! Only twice do we read of the Lord Jesus being *kissed*, and what a contrast—the woman’s kiss of devotion (Luk 7:38), Judas’ kiss of betrayal (Mat 26:49)!

In connection with the interpreting of Scripture, *the value* of this principle of comparing two things or passages and of observing their variations may be still more definitely seen by placing side by side our Lord’s parable of the wedding feast of Matthew 22:1-10 and the parable of the great supper of Luke 14:16-24. The commentators have carelessly assumed that they teach the same thing, but a close examination of them will show that, though they have a number of things in common, they present quite different aspects of truth—illustrating, respectively, the external, general, and powerless call of the Gospel and the internal, particular, and effectual call of God. In the former, it is “servants” (in the plural number) who are engaged, verses 3, 4, 6, 8, 10. Whereas in the latter, it is “that servant” (verse 21), “his servant” (verse 21), “the servant” (verses 22-23). It is to be noted that their commissions are not the same. The servants are instructed to “Call them that were bidden to the wedding” (verse 3), to “tell them” (verse 4), and to “bid to the marriage” (verse 9), and nothing more. Whereas the servant was not only to “Say to them that were bidden, Come” (verse 17), but also to “bring in” (verse 21), and to “compel them to come in” (verse 23).

When those distinctions are duly weighed, it should be quite evident that, whereas in Matthew 22 the “servants” are the ministers of God sent forth to preach the Gospel to every creature, “the servant” of Luke 14 is none other than the Holy Spirit, who by His invincible power and effectual operations quickens God’s elect into newness of life. He alone is able to overcome their natural disrelish for and opposition to divine things, as He alone is competent to “bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” Nor could anyone less truly say of his efforts, “Lord, it is done *as thou hast commanded*” (Luk 14:22). As Christ was the “servant” of the Godhead (Mat 12:18-20) during the days of His flesh, so the blessed Spirit is the “servant” of Christ during this era (Joh 16:14; Act 2:33). This interpretation is further confirmed by the fact that the servants were “entreated spitefully” and even “slain” (Mat 22:6). Moreover, we read of them, “So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all [into the local churches] as many as they found, both *bad* and good” (Mat 22:10), for they were unable to read hearts; but no such statement is made of the Servant, who “brings” (to heaven) those whom He deals with.

Ere leaving this division of our subject, one other example of its importance and value. By making use of the law of contrast, we are able decisively to determine the controversy which Socinians have raised upon that momentous verse, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we [which were destitute of acceptable obedience] might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21). That is one of the profoundest and most comprehensive statements to be found in the Scriptures concerning the atonement, containing as it does a brief epitome of the whole plan of salvation. Enemies of the Gospel insist that the “made sin” ought to be translated “made a sin-offering,” but such is entirely inadmissible, for in that case the



antithesis would require us to render “that we might be made a righteous-offering of God in him”—a manifest absurdity. The contrast which is here drawn fixes the exact meaning of the terms used. Believers are legally constituted righteous in Christ before God, and therefore the contrast *demand*s that Christ was legally constituted sin—guilty in the eyes of God’s Law. The grand truth affirmed in this verse is the exchange of places with the counter imputations thereof. Our sins were reckoned to the account of our Surety, rendering Him judicially guilty; His obedience is reckoned to our account, rendering us judicially righteous before God.

28. *The law of first mention.* Very frequently this is of great help in arriving at the meaning of a word or expression. Since there be but one Speaker throughout the entire Word, and He knew from the beginning all that He was going to say, He has so ordered His utterances as to forecast from the outset whatever was to follow. Thus, by noting its setting and associations, the initial occurrence of anything in the Scriptures usually intimates to us how it will subsequently be employed. In other words, the earliest pronouncement of the Holy Spirit on a subject very frequently indicates, substantially, what is found in the later references thereto. This is of real assistance to the expositor, supplying him with a kind of key to what follows. So far as we are aware, attention was originally directed to this canon of exegesis by Lord Bacon (1600), and for more than forty years, this writer has made use of the same, putting it to the test in scores of instances. And while he has found a few cases where the first mention of a term failed to intimate clearly its future scope, he has never met with one that was out of harmony therewith, and the vast majority of them were valuable in serving to define their significance and scope. This will appear from the illustrations which follow.

The *first prophecy* recorded in Scripture supplies the key to the whole subject of Messianic prediction, furnishing a remarkable outline and forecast of all that was to follow. Said the Lord God to the serpent, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen 3:15). First, it is to be noted that those words were not addressed to Adam and Eve, implying that man was not the immediate party in the covenant of recovery, that it depended not upon anything of, by, or from *him*. Second, that this divine pronouncement was made after the fall, and from this point onwards, prophecy is always consequent upon human failure, coming in not during the normal state of affairs, but only when ruin has begun and judgment is impending—the next prophecy was through Enoch (Jude 1:14-15) just before the flood! In the prophecy of Genesis 3:15, it was revealed that all human hope was to centre in a Coming One. It made known that the Coming One should be man, the woman’s “seed,” and therefore of supernatural birth. It announced that He would be the object of Satan’s enmity. It foretold that He should be temporarily humiliated—bruised in His heel. It also proclaimed His ultimate victory, for He should bruise the serpent’s head, and therefore must be more than man. It intimated the age-long strife there would be between the two seeds—the children of the devil and those united unto Christ.

And the Lord said unto Cain, “What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground” (Gen 4:10). That is the first time that all-important word “blood” is mentioned in the Scriptures, and like all the initial occurrences of fundamental terms, it well repays the most careful attention and meditation. Profoundly important is this reference, foreshadowing as it does some of the most essential and outstanding features of the atonement of Christ. Abel was a shepherd (Gen 4:2) and was hated, though without cause, by his brother (1Jo 3:12). He did not die a natural death, but met with a violent end, as the good Shepherd was crucified and slain by wicked hands (Act 2:23). In the light of those facts, how deeply significant are the words “the voice of thy brother’s blood *crieth unto me*.” That is the all-important but

inexpressibly blessed thing in connection with the blood of Christ—it is *vocal Godwards*! It is “the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb 12:24), for it satisfied every demand of God and procured inestimable blessing for His people. The next mention of “blood” is in Genesis 9:4, where we learn that *life* is in the blood. The third reference is Exodus 12:13, where it delivers from the avenging angel. Put the three together and we have a complete outline of all the subsequent teaching of Scripture upon the blood. They treat, respectively, of death, life, salvation.



# April

## IDENTIFICATION OF THE GODLY

The natural man is wrapped up in himself and his own interests, and so long as things go well with him and his affairs prosper, he is well-pleased. He cares nothing about the cause of Christ, the success of His Gospel, or the good of His redeemed. Consequently, he is quite unmoved when God is dishonoured and Zion languishes. But it is far otherwise with the regenerate. A miracle of grace has been wrought within them, for the stony heart of enmity against God has been taken out of them, and a heart of flesh which loves Him has been given to them. They have a tender sympathy with and a deep regard for the interests and concernments of their best Beloved—far more so than for anything which pertains immediately to themselves—and, therefore, are they deeply grieved over anything which grieves and dishonours Him, whether it be in themselves or in others. It cannot be otherwise, for since the self-same Spirit which is in Christ dwells within them, then what He loves they love, and what He hates they hate. Even in the natural, we find that members of the same body are so animated by one and the same life that “whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it” (1Co 12:26). Much more so is this the case between Christ and the members of His mystical body, for the bonds between them are more intimate and vital.

Now Christ Himself is not impervious to the troubles and miseries of His people. So far from it, we are told that “in all their affliction he was afflicted” (Isa 63:9). Those words most blessedly express His love for His redeemed, His sympathy with and tender concern for them. Their groans and cries in Egypt moved Him to deliver them, and when they were assaulted by Pharaoh and his hosts at the Red Sea, He bared His mighty arm on their behalf. The New Testament saints are informed, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb 4:15). So much to the contrary that, when Saul of Tarsus was harrying His sheep, the good Shepherd exclaimed, “Why persecutes thou *me*?” (Act 9:4), while they, in turn, declare, “The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me” (Psa 69:9), for though that was pre-eminently so of the Saviour Himself, yet in their measure it is true of the saved too. Since the Spirit of God indwells them, they cannot be without a tender and afflicted sense of the contempts and dishonours that are done to Christ. Those are, as the Psalmist said, as it were a sword in their bones (Psa 42:10), piercing them to the very quick.

The hearts of the regenerate are all cast in the same mould, the glory of God being very dear unto each of them. One cannot esteem God as his King and not be pained when he beholds others flouting His authority and trampling His laws beneath their feet. Lot was troubled by the evil behavior of those around him, and “In seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds” (2Pe 2:7-8). Moses reminded the Israelites how that when they

were guilty of worshipping the golden calf, “I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins” (Deu 9:18), so much was he affected by their idolatrous conduct. How deeply was Joshua grieved when his soldiers brought reproach upon the name of JEHOVAH by their defeat at Ai (Jos 7:6-9)! When the wife of Phinehas received tidings of the death of her father-in-law and of her husband, and learned that the ark of God had been captured by the Philistines, she was overwhelmed, and with her dying breath said, “The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken” (1Sa 4:19-22), feeling the loss of the latter more than of the former.

When God informed His servant that because of Saul’s public disregard of His commandment, it repented Him that He had set up Saul to be king. We are told that, “It grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night” (1Sa 15:11). David averred, “Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law” (Psa 119:53). When Ezra was informed of the priests and Levites doing according to the abominations of the heathen, so that “the holy seed” had mingled themselves with the idolatrous Gentiles, he said, “And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished....And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness” (Ezr 9:3-5). Jeremiah was so deeply affected by the hard-heartedness of the people in his day that, after announcing a fearful threat from the Lord, he declared, “But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD’s flock is carried away captive” (Jer 13:17).

“And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (Eze 9:4). This chapter contains a vision of the destruction of the idolatrous Jews and the presence of a godly remnant among them. The former were flagrant transgressors of the divine law, and thereby treated the glorious majesty of God with contempt, denied His propriety in them, and were guilty of shameful ingratitude for all His mercies. The fact that those outrageous sins were committed in Jerusalem was particularly offensive to God. Such conduct was a sore grief unto the pious minority. They had a high regard for the honour and glory of God, and this would not suffer them to be the unconcerned spectators of impiety and iniquity. Who can prevent himself sorrowing over that which is in direct opposition to the One he most loves? Believers love and pant after holiness, and unless they be temporarily stupefied by Satan, they can scarcely bear themselves for what they find contrary to it in their own breasts, and, therefore, they cannot be indifferent to the unholiness of others, but must mourn over the same.

As the pious remnant in Israel beheld the wickedness of their fellows, they “sighed and cried”. Sighed in themselves as those who were in pain and distress. Cried unto God as those who were in deadly earnest. Though they wept and prayed in secret, those mourners in Zion were taken notice of by the Lord. Hated and scorned by the reprobate, they were esteemed by the Most High. Clear proof of this was here made, for God gave orders that those sorrowing ones would first have a mark set upon them, before His vengeance was executed upon the wicked. In the midst of His wrath, God ever remembers mercy (Hab 3:2) unto His own. The deluge came not until Noah and his family were safe in the ark (Gen 7:16-17); the angel was instructed to secure Lot before Sodom was fired (Gen 19:16). And so it was here. The setting of that “mark” upon them signified at least four things. First, it was the sign of distinction, setting them apart from the ungodly. Second, it was the pledge of God’s owning of them, showing they were His peculiar people. Third, it was designed to give them assurance, a token of good from God, so that they might

know for themselves that they were numbered among the living in Jerusalem. Fourth, it was a director unto the destroyer to pass by them—as the angel of death when slaying the firstborn of the Egyptians passed over the houses of the Hebrews which bore the mark of the lamb’s blood (Exo 12:23; Rev 7:3).

Here, then, is another mark by which the godly may be identified, a plain one which distinguishes the regenerate from the unregenerate. They are those who, when in their right minds, say with David, “I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word” (Psa 119:158). Such a grief the divinely quickened soul feels when he is sensible of his own vile corruptions, and such he must feel as he beholds the dishonour done to God by those bearing His name. Christ Himself, though full of compassion and tenderness, yet “looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts” (Mar 3:5). And those selfsame emotions are stirred within His redeemed when they see the hedge broken down between the churches and the world, when the goats are permitted and encouraged to herd with the sheep, when hirelings take the place of divinely called and qualified pastors, when the public worship of God is corrupted, false doctrine tolerated, and souls fatally deceived thereby. They will be “sorrowful for the solemn assembly” (Zep 3:18).

But it may be asked, “Are there not those with a mere head knowledge of the truth, who are concerned about the present state of the cause of Christ, who deplore the inroads of infidelity and Romanism, and are distressed over the widespread desecration of the Sabbath?” Undoubtedly, yet while they may *talk about* such things, they do not sigh and cry over them in secret. It is only when their *own* interests are injured that they are deeply affected. In like manner, graceless professors may be sorrowful when they see their own church or denomination decaying, but they suffer no loss of sleep by grieving over the general dishonour done to the name of Christ. Those who have a feeling sense of the same give evidence of a new, of the divine, nature within them. Their language is, “My soul is among lions” (Psa 57:4); “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech” (Psa 120:5). As one has well remarked, “Our joys and our sorrows are the pulse of the soul.” If a Christian joins with the angels in rejoicing over the repentance of sinners, he also has fellowship with Him who wept over Jerusalem because of its sins and approaching judgment, by grieving over the hardness of those who repent not. It is a testimony of their love for God that they rejoice when He is glorified and mourn when He is vilified.

## EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

### 28. The Last Time (2:18)

*“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard  
that antichrist shall come, even now are there many  
antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.”*

Why is this verse prefaced with the particular address, “little children?” What is meant by “the last time”? What is signified by “antichrist”? Who are referred to by the “many antichrists”? In

what way did the presence of many antichrists make it evident that the last time had even then begun? Why is this statement brought in at this point? What is the precise importance and value of it unto us today? In seeking to answer these questions and expound our present verse we are mindful of the fact that we shall clash with the teaching many of our readers have sat under, and therefore they will not readily accept a part of what we are about to advance. Moreover, it will differ from the prophetic outlook, which we held personally in the early days of our Christian life. But we must write according to the measure of light God has vouchsafed for us, and request our friends to heed prayerfully the injunction, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1Th 5:21).

Why does our present verse open with the words “little children”? The term ought to have been translated “babes” in order to distinguish it from that which is used in 2:1, 12, etc. There the one employed is a term of endearment, being a general one in its scope, applied to the whole family of God. But the one found in our text is a descriptive and distinguishing one, being used only of the lowest grade of God’s children, namely spiritual infants. It will be remembered that in 2:12, John had employed the comprehensive term “*teknion*” when expressing his tender regard for all the saints. Then in verse 13 he had graded them into three distinct classes: “fathers,” “young men,” and “babes,” designating the last “*paidion*,” which term occurs again in this epistle only in the verse now before us. In verse 14 the “fathers” and in verses 15-17 the “young men” were each addressed a second time. Now in verses 18-27 the “babes” are again written to. Thus we perceive once more what care the apostle devoted to the structure of his epistle, and how particular he was to follow a strict and logical order. In 2:28, the general designation “*teknion*” is again found, to denote a resumption of address to the whole company. Hence it is apparent that, through failure to observe the plan followed in the context, the Revised Version erred in beginning a new paragraph with verse 18.

Not only did the due balancing of this section (the speaking twice to each of the three classes) require that verse 18 should be directed to the “babes,” but in view of its contents there was a peculiar propriety in addressing it to the third and youngest group. It was really a word of warning to them. As the young men are most in danger of being allured and spoilt by “the world,” so the babes are the ones most liable to be beguiled and poisoned by the “antichrists.” It was therefore peculiarly pertinent to put the young converts on their guard, for being more inexperienced and less established in the Faith, they were apt to give ear unto those who were desirous of corrupting them. Though not so pointed, it was indirectly the equivalent of Paul’s exhortation to the Ephesians, “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (4:14). It is sad to see how little taken to heart are those words of Christ, “Take heed what ye hear” (Mar 4:24). Many professing Christians are as careless in this matter as ignorant children playing with sharp and dangerous weapons.

“*Little children, it is the last time.*” The order of words in the Greek expresses it still more emphatically: “Little children [the] last time it is.” The word here translated “time,” *hora*, signifies an indefinite period, be it long or short. It is rendered “season,” “day,” “hour,” “instant.” The Revised Version gives “it is the last hour.” Personally, we prefer “the last time.” By affirming that it is the last time we consider the apostle was announcing that the Jewish economy had passed away—the temple lay in ruins, its priesthood no longer functioned, Jerusalem was trodden down by the Gentiles. Still more definitely, he was averring that this Christian economy is the final one. John Calvin (1509-1564, in his *Institutes*) pointed out, “And for this reason the dispensation under which we live is designated in the Scriptures as ‘the last time,’ ‘these last

times' (1Pe 1:20), 'the last days' (Act 2:17), that no one might deceive himself with a vain expectation of any new doctrine or revelation." This Christian dispensation is the one during which the history of this world will be brought to a close: whether or not it will include within its scope and be terminated by what is known as "the millennium" we are not prepared either to affirm or deny; but this we must believe, that no separate and distinct age will follow the present one.

The coming of God's Son to this earth in human nature introduced the concluding season for this world, in which all its affairs will be wound up. But as Albert Barnes (1798-1870) pertinently remarked, "The apostle does not, however, say that the end of the world would soon occur, nor does he intimate how long this dispensation would be. That period might continue through many ages or centuries, and still be the last dispensation." The concluding era of God's gracious government over men had arrived. "The world's history is divided into two sections. The first is the preparatory, and the second is the final. The incarnation of Christ is the goal of the first, and the starting point of the second. John the Baptist, who closed the first period, might have written, 'It is the first hour.' And yet the life of John the Baptist was synchronous with the life of John the Apostle, who said, 'It is the last hour.' But between those two Johns there stood the milestone that divided the world's history. To pass that way-mark was to pass from the preparatory to the final, from the old to the new, from law to grace, from prophecy to fulfillment. Before Christ one day had been as a thousand years, but now a thousand years were as one day" (Levi Palmer). So mighty and revolutionizing the change effected by the advent of God's Son, that henceforth time is measured more by events than by duration. The birth, death, and resurrection of Christ, and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, were events which represented more than all the previous "hours" or seasons of human history.

The proofs for the Scripturalness of the above assertions are many and decisive. It was "when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman" (Gal 4:4), as it is in this "dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one ["family," 3:15] all things in Christ, both which are in heaven [the holy angels], and which are on earth [redeemed sinners]; even in him" (Eph 1:10). "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1Co 10:11): not the end of the material world, but (as the Greek means) of the ages. All previous ones were but introductory: they furnished the types, this one has the substance. The last of those periods which God has assigned to the duration of this earth is the present order of things: no new administration of it will follow this era. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb 1:1-2). Finality has been reached: God has nothing further to communicate unto mankind. Christ is His ultimate revelation (compare "last of all he sent unto them his Son," Mat 21:37): in Him there is the finishing of the unfolding of God's mind, the conclusion of the making known of His will. There will be nothing higher, nothing further; what God has spoken through Christ will continue unaltered to the end of time.

Another apostle declares that Christ was "foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1Pe 1:20). The Messianic age was at once the consummation of all that preceded it and itself the ultimate divine economy. So also Jude reminded the saints that they had been forewarned how that there should be "mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts" (verse 18), and that this prediction was being fulfilled before their very eyes. Some have wrongly concluded from 1 Peter 1:5, that "the last time" is yet future. There Christians are informed that they are "kept by the power of God

through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” While the “salvation” there mentioned is still future, for it has reference to the completion of their redemption (their resurrection and glorification) when the Lord Jesus shall “appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb 9:28), when the open vision of Him will perfectly conform us unto His holy image (1Jo 3:2); yet that blessed hope will be realized and that glorious event will take place “in the last time” and not in some subsequent age lying beyond the close of this present one.

“John announced ‘that it was the last time’ or the last dispensation, which God intended to introduce on earth, under which He would establish the kingdom of His Son...and this kingdom should continue till all enemies were put under His feet” (T. Scott).<sup>7</sup>

As indicated above, this Christian dispensation is designated “the last time” for two reasons: first, in relation to former times, which were introductory, paving the way for it; second, in relation unto the remainder of human history, for at the end of it the curtain will fall. There is nothing in the expression itself to determine the length thereof, nothing to intimate that it might not last longer than any previous one or be even more protracted than all others put together. Certainly Christ gave no intimation that His absence would be a brief one. Instead, He foretold that “while the Bridegroom tarried” all would slumber and sleep. He spoke of His departure as “travelling into a far country,” and said that “after a long time” He would return and reckon with His servants (Mat 25:14, 19).

“Since then nineteen centuries have dragged their weary round, but compared to what happened in John’s day, they would not make one hour. And time’s hour glass may yet contain other centuries, or millenniums, or even half an eternity, but compared to what took place in the first century of the Christian era, they can only be as moments or minutes. It is the last hour (or time), although its moments may be centuries, and its minutes millenniums” (Levi Palmer).

We shall give here only the briefest of answers to the third question, reserving our fuller remarks thereon for verse 22 (D.V.).<sup>8</sup> Suffice it now to say that an “antichrist” is an antagonist of Christ and a corrupter of His doctrine. From those words “ye have heard that antichrist shall come,” it is clear that the saints of those days, even the youngest of them, were taught to expect that, so far from Christianity making a speedy and complete conquest of the world, there would be fierce opposition against it; that the servants and followers of Christ would be no more acceptable to the unregenerate than was their Master. Yet it must not be supposed that they were entertained with a cheap sensationalism under the guise of “expounding prophecy,” but rather were they informed that it was God’s will that the enmity which He put between the serpent’s seed and Christ’s seed would continue until the end. Therefore they must be prepared to encounter false prophets, and persecution if they withstood them. Implicitly, this “ye have heard that antichrist shall come” was a solemn and urgent exhortation unto believers to contend earnestly for the Faith, and to instruct new converts in the duty of watchfulness against deceivers.

Nor is there any need for us to say much upon the “many antichrists” of the apostle’s day, the chief reference being to the Gnostics<sup>9</sup> and to such men as Hymenaeus and Philetus (2Ti 2:17-18). In view of the faithful instruction and warnings, which Christians were then receiving from the ministers of God, there was no excuse for any of them being taken unawares and imposed upon.

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<sup>7</sup> **Thomas Scott** (1747-1821) – Anglican minister, born in Lincolnshire, England. He served for some years as parish priest before conversion during correspondence and mentoring from John Newton (1725-1807). He is best known for his *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, his autobiography *The Force of Truth*, and being a founder of the *Church Missionary Society*.

<sup>8</sup> **D.V.** – *Latin* Deo Volenti; “as God wills.”

<sup>9</sup> **Gnostics** – (from Greek *gnosis*, meaning “knowledge”) a group of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century heresies that taught escape from the material world through gaining secret knowledge.



But alas, how sadly were such warnings, generally disregarded is only too evident from history. The Christ-hated doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes (Rev 2:14-15), and the suffering of one who called herself a prophetess to seduce His servants (2:20) were the precursors of many others in the next three hundred years, and by the close of the sixth century almost the whole of Christendom was as completely deceived as though God had given no warning against the anti-christ, and for almost a thousand years there followed what are known as the “dark ages.” Concerning antichrist, Calvin remarked, “They who suppose that he would be only one man are indeed greatly mistaken,” and then pointed out that such influential heretics as Cerinthus, Marcion, Ebion, etc., “were members of that kingdom which the devil afterward raised up [in the papacy] in opposition to Christ.”

The question, In what way did the presence of many antichrists make it evident that “the last time” had even then begun? also admits of a short and simple answer. As increasing infirmities and failing faculties are sure signs that old age is upon us, so the presence of antichrists was proof that the true Christ had come, and since He had ushered in the final era for this earth, naught remained but the judgment of God—His long-sufferance alone postponing the same. The outstanding characteristic of all former ages was the rejection of the truth, not only in man’s refusal to be subject to God’s Law but particularly that revelation which He had made through the prophets concerning His Son; whereas the most prominent feature of this dispensation is the reception of error, especially seen in the corrupting of the Gospel. As the presence of counterfeit money argues the existence of the genuine, so those who set up themselves against the person and kingdom of Christ are tacit but real witnesses unto the same. The fact, that those false prophets received such a welcome and favourable hearing in John’s day was proof that, to use the language of 1 Peter 4:7, “the end of all things is at hand.”

As to why John brought in 2:18 at this point in his epistle, several reasons may be suggested. First of all, it gave point to his preceding statement. In verse 17 he had said, “the world passeth away,” and now he declares, “it is the last time”—its harvest was ready for the sickle. Thus, second, it was a note of imminency and urgency. In the whole context John had made it clear that the world in which believers are left as witnesses for Christ is a very evil one, and here they are informed that it has entered upon the final stage of its history. It must be “the last time,” for the lowest depths of human depravity have been exhibited in the world’s treatment of God’s Son: the climax of its sinfulness appeared in His precious blood being despised and trampled upon by man’s unbelief. Moreover, the presence of the “many antichrists” was a fearful omen that the final catastrophe was impending, for their evil activities made unmistakably plain the determined and continued antagonism of the world unto Christianity. How evident it is that our present verse, so far from beginning a new paragraph, is a continuation of what went before. In verse 16 we behold how the “darkness,” mentioned in verses 9 and 11, had corrupted the world; here we see the darkness opposing the truth.

Third, verse 18 was brought in for the special benefit of babes in Christ, who are less suspicious of false prophets, and not yet able to say of Satan “we are not ignorant of his devices” (2Co 2:11). Therefore they needed to beware of teachers of error lest they make shipwreck of the Faith, for the words of such “will eat as doth a canker” (2Ti 2:17). The very name “antichrists” should awaken the deepest horror and concern, for it imports that they are opposed to Christ and all who adhere to Him, ready to rob them of every blessing enjoyed in Him. The fact that there were many of them intimated that on every side were deadly enemies unto faith and holiness. Of this they “had heard.” No truth, which was profitable had been kept from them; everything the apostles had heard from the lips of Christ they faithfully committed to their converts. It therefore

behoved them to make a proper use of such instruction, especially since so much contrary to sound doctrine was prevailing. Finally, since this era is the completion of all previous ones, great are the privileges and obligations of the saints.

The practical importance and value of verse 18 for us today lies, principally, in our noting and taking to heart its moral connection with verses 15-17, where a number of reasons are advanced why we must not love the world, while here we are warned against antichrists. There is a far more intimate relation between the state of our hearts and the receptivity or repulsion of our minds to error than is commonly supposed. Yet that relation is not far to seek nor difficult to understand. The doctrine of Scripture “is according to godliness” (1Ti 6:3), and therefore just so far as the heart be in a sound and healthy state will the holy and searching truth of God be acceptable to it. As John points out a little later concerning the false prophets, “They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them” (4:5). Such charlatans quote (and misquote) sufficient of the Bible to deceive the unwary, but they are careful to omit everything unpalatable to the unregenerate, which rebukes carnality or calls to a closer walking with God. They deliberately tone down the truth and prophesy “smooth things.” And “the world heareth them,” because their rotten hearts fully accord with such preaching.

As we pointed out in a previous article, the world is the sphere where the darkness reigns, and therefore the more a believer comes under its influence the less spiritual perception will he have and the less ability to “try things that differ” (Phi 1:10). It is in God’s light that we see light (Psa 36:9), and morally speaking we are far from Him when our affections be set upon things on earth. It is only so long as the sheep follow Christ (walk according to His example, in obedience to His commandments) that “a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him” (Joh 10:4-5). In proportion as the soul finds its satisfaction in Christ will the world repel it; but when the heart grows cold unto Him, the things of the world appeal to it. The first century supplies numerous examples of that sad fact, and not a few wonder how it was possible for so many of the early churches to be corrupted (Rev 2:14-15, 20); the explanation is found in “thou hast left thy first love” (2:4). When a soul or church does that, the door is open for the entry of every possible abomination.

We have an illustration in the case of Isaac of a believer being deceived when his heart is not right with God. How came it that he was tricked by so clumsy a device as Jacob’s? He knew that the voice was Jacob’s; were then his neck and hands a surer test? Surely not! Then how are we to account for his being imposed upon in a way that no man of the world, with common sense, would be? The answer is, because he was out of communion with the Lord, and when that be the case with any saint he is likely to be deceived by the grossest of shams. It is quite clear from the preceding record that the eye of faith in Isaac was as dim as his natural ones, otherwise he would have discerned the sinfulness and madness of trying to fight against the Most High. He was displeased at God’s appointment regarding his two sons, that the elder should serve the younger (Gen 25:23). He deliberately sought to turn the purpose of God into another channel, and in his intention gave to Esau the blessing, which God had said should be Jacob’s. It was the flesh and not the Spirit which was dominating him, and that dulled even his natural judgment.

First, Isaac had done wrong in making Esau his favourite, and that because of the venison he provided for him (25:28). Second, he condoned Esau’s act in marrying a Hittite (26:34), for as 27:1 indicates, he continued to show partiality unto him. Third, in his old age and as death drew near, he yielded to the lusts of the flesh, determining to gratify his carnal appetite by eating of his savoury meat. No wonder his judgment was blinded. But later, when he was made conscious of his failure to recognize Jacob and of his attempt to set aside God’s choice, he “trembled very

exceedingly” (27:33). Then it was that his slumbering faith awoke, and the scales fell from his eyes. Now he bowed to the divine will, and in spite of natural prejudice said of the one who had tricked him, “yea, and he shall be blessed.”

Now as the allowing of carnality dulls the judgment of a believer, so does the entry into his heart of a spirit of worldliness; consequently he is likely not only to be imposed upon by natural things, but to mistake error for truth. “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine” (Joh 7:17). In order to spiritual perception there must be a steadfast refusal to follow the ways of the world. Error always flourishes most in the soil of worldliness, and it is there that the antichrists meet with success.

## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

### 80. Our Inheritance, Part 2

In our last, we pointed out some of the principal respects in which the distribution of the land of Canaan unto the tribes of Israel adumbrated the blessings and glory which the spiritual Israel obtain in and by Christ. We saw that, in the first place, our eternal portion is distinctly termed an “inheritance” (1Pe 1:4). Second, that our inheritance is bestowed upon us on the ground of a covenant (Luk 1:72). Third, that our inheritance too is an allotted one (Eph 1:11), and that the very faith which is necessary to give us a personal and saving interest therein is bestowed upon us by divine lot (1Pe 1:2). Fourth, that our glorious heritage is conveyed to us by the exercise of Christ’s priesthood (Heb 9:11-15). Continuing to ponder the analogies between type and antitype, we note, in the fifth place, that responsible princes of Israel’s tribes attended when Canaan was divided, for there were present with Eleazar the priest and Joshua “the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel” (Jos 14:1). Nothing is told us of the particular part they played in that important transaction, but it appears that they were appointed to act as overseers or supervisors on that occasion.

“And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mat 19:28). That, in our opinion, is what answers to and corresponds with that particular detail in Joshua 14:1. If “the saints shall judge the world,” yea, “judge angels” (1Co 6:2-3), we need not be surprised to learn that the twelve shall sit upon thrones judging the tribes of Israel. The apostles were closest to Christ and shared most in His humiliation, and, therefore, in the day of His manifested glory, they will be distinguished from and honoured above all their brethren. Since they were so fiercely persecuted by the Jews, they will be Christ’s assessors in their judgment. A further dignity is bestowed upon them by the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb being in the twelve foundations of the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:12). In each instance—Joshua 14:1; Matthew 19:28; 1 Corinthians 6:2-3—the bare fact is

stated without any explanation or amplification, and, therefore, any attempt to speculate thereon is not only useless, but impious.

In the sixth place, our inheritance is *a reward*. As we have so frequently pointed out in these articles, while Canaan was the land of promise, Israel had to *fight* for it. Even Jacob spoke of one portion therein, “which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow” (Gen 48:22). It was bequeathed unto Abraham and his seed, nevertheless it became theirs only by their own prowess. Notwithstanding its being theirs by divine donation, in a subordinate but very real sense, their actual entrance into and possession thereof was the result of their own efforts. Whether or not we can perceive the “consistency” and congruity of those different principles, they are the plain facts of the case. Nor should they present any difficulty to us, for they are complementary to each other, and not contradictory. God’s sovereignty lies at the foundation of all things, yet in His dealings with men—His own people not excepted—He ever treats with them as moral agents, enforces their accountability, and causes them to reap as they have sown, whether it was evil or good seed.

Now what pertained to the bestowment and acquirement of the earthly Canaan holds good in connection with the heavenly Canaan. It could not be otherwise, for God made the type to shadow forth accurately the antitype. Therefore we read, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive *the reward of the inheritance*: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col 3:23-24). Nothing can be more free or a matter of bounty than an inheritance. Then since it be an inheritance, with what propriety term it a “reward”? If a reward, how can it be, at the same time, an “inheritance”? The two things seem to be quite incompatible, especially since the inheritance is also designated “the purchased possession” (Eph 1:14)—bought with the blood of Christ. Yet such language is no more antithetical than that of the Saviour when He exhorted the Jews to “labour not for the meat which perisheth, but *for* that meat which endureth unto everlasting life,” and then added, “which the Son of man shall *give* unto you” (Joh 6:27), nor that of His apostle, who declared, “For we which have believed *do enter* into rest,” and then enjoined, “Let us labour therefore *to enter* into that rest” (Heb 4:3, 11).

There is much in the Scriptures which appears to the infidel to be contradictory—as that “the LORD our God is one LORD” (Deu 6:4), yet is three distinct persons. That “His mercy endureth for ever” (Psa 136:1), yet that He will send many of His creatures to everlasting punishment. That Christ should affirm, “I and my Father are one” (Joh 10:30), yet also declared, “My Father is greater than I” (Joh 14:28). And though the Christian perceives the perfect harmony of those statements, yet there are some things which greatly puzzle him. As for instance, that since God has predestinated everything which comes to pass, what room is left for free agency and the discharge of human responsibility? If the fall has deprived men of all spiritual strength, how can they be justly held blameworthy for failing to perform spiritual duties? If Christ died for the elect only, how can He be freely offered to every creature? If the believer be Christ’s “free man,” then why is he required to take upon him His yoke? If he has been set at liberty (Gal 5:1), how can he be “under the law” (1Co 9:21)? If he be preserved by God, then how can his own perseverance be necessary in order to the attainment of eternal bliss? If sin does not have dominion over him (Rom 6:14), why do “iniquities prevail against” him so often (Psa 65:3)?

Whatever difficulties may be involved, the fact remains that Scripture has not a little to say about God’s rewarding the obedient and crowning the overcomer. “In keeping of them there is great reward” (Psa 19:11). “To him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward” (Pro 11:18). “Then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Mat 16:27). “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many” (Mat

25:23). “They [the poor] cannot recompense thee: for thou shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just” (Luk 14:14). There are other declarations that God will take special note of the fidelity of His servants, and amply compensate them for the sufferings which they have endured in His behalf. “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven” (Mat 5:11). “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev 2:10). Now all such passages as these must be allowed their obvious and legitimate force, and be given a due place in our hearts and minds.

In a brief and incidental statement on this subject, Calvin beautifully preserved the balance, “The Scripture shows *what* all our works are capable of meriting when it represents them as unable to bear the divine scrutiny, because they are full of impurity. And in the next place, what would be merited by the perfect observance of the Law if this could anywhere be found, when it directs us, ‘when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants’ (Luk 17:10), because we shall not have conferred any favour on God, but only have performed the duties incumbent upon us, for which no thanks are due. Nevertheless, the good works which the Lord has conferred on us, He denominates *our own* to be animated by so great a promise, and to stir up our minds that we ‘be not weary in well doing’ (Gal 6:9), and to be truly grateful for so great an instance of the divine goodness.... Good works, therefore, are pleasing to God and not unprofitable to the authors of them, and they will moreover receive the most ample blessings from God as their reward: not because they merit them, but because the divine goodness has freely appointed them this reward” (*Institutes*, book 3, chapter 5).

If it were “inconsistent” with the divine perfections for God to bestow any *future* rewards on His people, both for Christ’s sake (primarily and meritoriously) and because of their own obedience (according to the terms of the new covenant and the governmental principles of God), then it would be equally so for Him to grant any *present* ones, for no difference in time or place can make any change in the essential nature of things. That He does richly recompense them in this world is clear from many passages. “Great peace have they which love thy law” (Psa 119:165, and cf. Isa 58:13-14). The peace and joy which are the believer’s now flow originally from the mediation of Christ, but subordinately from his own obedience and fidelity—if he pursues a course of disobedience, then peace of conscience will not be his. Those who deny themselves for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s are assured of a grand reward, “an hundredfold now in this time,” as well as “in the world to come eternal life” (Mar 10:30). “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1Ti 4:8).

He who was outstandingly the apostle of grace declared, “I press toward the mark for *the prize* of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phi 3:14). Whatever that “prize” may consist of, the fact remains that the Holy Spirit moved him to use that term. Nevertheless, it is evident that our rewards, whether present or future, are not due to us as a wage is to a hired servant who has properly fulfilled his duty, rather are they entirely a matter of divine bounty. This is clear from the following considerations. First, it is divine grace which alone *produces* our good words, “Thou also hast wrought all our works in us” (Isa 26:12). Second, it is divine grace which *approves* of them, despite their defects, for our gifts or benevolences (Phi 4:18), and our worship are “acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1Pe 2:5). Yea, our prayers are heard by God only because of the “much incense” of Christ’s merits being added to them (Rev 8:3-4). Third, there is no proportion between our performances or sufferings and the “exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2Co 4:17) which they “worketh for us.”

Rewards are in no sense the recognition of personal worthiness, for we can deserve nothing good at the hands of God. Therein they differ radically from the punishment which shall be meted out unto the reprobate. The penalty inflicted on the wicked is an act of strict justice, the paying to them the wages of sin. But the rewarding of the righteous is entirely a matter of divine bounty, and therefore all room for boasting is excluded. It is impossible for any creature to bring God under obligation to him or make Him in any wise his debtor. Nevertheless, He is graciously pleased to recognize, own, and recompense all that is done with an eye to His glory. Promises of reward are among the incentives to industry (Psa 126:6), the encouragements of fidelity (Heb 11:26), and the motives to inspire us in unwearied well doing (Gal 6:9)—it was for “the joy set before him” that the Lord Jesus endured the cross (Heb 12:2). Finally, it is to be pointed out that in signifying His approval of the services of the saints, God, at the same time, is owning the Spirit’s work in them, for they are the “fruits” of His gracious operation.

In the seventh place, there will be *degrees of glory* among the saints when they enter into their final inheritance, though there are those who call this into question. It is objected that, since all believers are clothed with the righteousness of Christ and are equal in that respect, all have title to an equal inheritance. But that does not follow. Varying degrees or measures of grace are bestowed upon one and another of them in this life. But since they all stand in the same relation to God, and are His dear children, will they not enjoy the same honours and dignities? Not necessarily, for even in this world they are not all of the same spiritual stature. Some are babes in Christ, while others are young men and fathers (1Jo 2:12-14), and, no matter how long they be left here, some of the first-mentioned never attain unto the level of the others. Some argue that since all be of *grace*, distinctions could not obtain. All *is* of grace, and every crown will be cast at the feet of Christ, yet it does not follow that they shall be in all respects alike. Paul’s crown of rejoicing will greatly consist in the salvation of those among whom he laboured (1Th 2:19), yet that will not be the case with every inhabitant of heaven.

Others insist that the saint’s title to eternal life is the meritorious work of the Mediator, being “the gift of God...through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:23), and that since all of His redeemed have His obedience imputed to them, that must ensure equality in glory. Not so, for Revelation 14:13 tells us that, from henceforth, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labours, and then adds, “their works do follow them.” Note, *not* “precede” as the ground of their justification, but “follow” as intermediate causes of their felicity. Since the amount of their works varies, so will they contribute to different degrees in augmenting their bliss. But since all be loved with the same love, called by the same calling, and are heirs of the same inheritance, it must be concluded that all will possess it in the same degree. If that reasoning proves anything, it “proves too much,” for in such case all would be on a spiritual equality now. Whereas, it is an incontrovertible fact that God distributes His gifts and graces unevenly among His people.

All of the redeemed will be entirely content and perfectly happy in heaven, rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Yet while every cup of bliss will be full, they will not all be of the same size. All the saints will participate in celestial and eternal felicity, but not on an equality, “Otherwise there would be no suitableness in God’s dispensations....There are higher degrees of glory for those who have done and suffered most” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). This too was definitely foreshadowed in the distribution of Canaan. Joshua did not divide the land into twelve equal parts, for the Lord had given orders, “To many thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to few thou shalt give the less inheritance: to every one shall his inheritance be given according to those that were numbered of him” (Num 26:54), and so it came to pass. That also had a spiritual

significance and application to us. “A believer’s *state* of happiness is determined by his faith, but the *measure* of his happiness in that state depends upon the fruits of faith. Faith alone saves a Christian, but his crown is brighter according as his faith works more abundantly by love” (John Berridge, 1716-1793).

As we have shown above, Scripture repeatedly informs us that the services and sufferings of the saints shall be rewarded in the day to come. Though that reward be not of debt, but of grace, yet it is a “reward”—which could not be if what is enjoyed in the life to come had no relation to and bore no proportion to what was done in this life. As the different portions allotted Israel were determined by the size of their tribes, so that of the saints will be regulated by the number of their good works, in proportion as they use their talents. “Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour” (1Co 3:8)—according to the extent to which he exercised his grace and holiness here. As there are different measures of fruitfulness among believers, some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some a hundredfold (Mar 4:8), so there will be differences of reward. Though an eternity of bliss will be the portion of both the repentant thief and the apostle Paul, it is inconceivable that the latter will receive no more from the hands of Christ than the former. “To deny degrees in glory is to say that God will not suit men’s wages to works” (Thomas Brooks, 1608-1680).

“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly: and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2Co 9:6). “As there is a difference in the kind of crop according to the kind of seed (Gal 6:7-8), so according to the degree. Some well, others better—so some fare well, others better—are more bountifully rewarded. For God will deal more liberally with those who shall accordingly with greater diligence acquit themselves in well doing. There is a proportionate observance” (Thomas Manton 1620-1677). “Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord” (Eph 6:8). “That is, shall be particularly and punctually considered by God for it. He shall receive the same, not for kind, but for quantity and proportion” (Manton). The moral government of God will thus be honoured, and the equity of His procedure manifested. All will be of grace, yet then too shall it be seen that grace works “through righteousness” (Rom 5:21). “Ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col 3:24), who is not only a bountiful Master, but a faithful one. “For God is *not unrighteous* to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Heb 6:10).

It is in His office as moral Governor that the Lord will act in the day to come, and therein He will display not only His benevolence, but His righteousness. It will become Him to exhibit His approbation of holiness, put honour upon virtue, and crown fidelity. “If heavenly bliss bear any relation to the labours and sufferings of the present life on behalf of Christ, which the Scriptures assure us it does, these being diverse, that must also be the same” (Andrew Fuller, 1754-1815). Different degrees of glory accords most with God’s ways in creation, which is everywhere marked by diversity rather than uniformity. There are differences and disparities in everything among men—in wisdom and rank, in abilities and riches. Among the angels also there are “principalities and powers, thrones and dominions.” It accords with God’s dealings with His saints here. He gives the greatest spiritual blessings to those who most eminently glorify Him. Various measures of glory accords too with different degrees of punishment for the wicked (Mat 11:22; Luk 12:47-48; Heb 10:29). “Heavenly bliss will consist in ascribing glory to God and the Lamb: but this can be proportioned only in proportion as we have glory to ascribe. When Paul acknowledges ‘by the grace of God I am what I am’ (1Co 15:10), there is a thousand times more

meaning in the expression, and a thousand times more glory redounds to God, than in the uttering of the same words by some men, even though they be men of real piety” (A. Fuller).

# THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

## 11. Its Corollaries, Part 2

Since man be totally depraved it necessarily follows that if ever he is to be saved it can be only *by divine grace and power*. Grace is a truth which is peculiar to divine revelation. It is a concept to which the unaided powers of the human mind can never reach. Proof of that is found in the fact that where the Bible has not gone, it is quite unknown. But not only is grace taught in God’s Word, it is given great prominence there. Holy Writ declares that salvation is by grace from first to last. It issued from grace, it is received by grace, it is maintained by grace, it is perfected by grace. Divine grace is bestowed upon those who have no merits, and from whom no recompense is demanded. Nay, more, it is given to those who are full of demerit and ill-desert. How thoroughly grace sets aside every thought of worthiness in its object is evident from a single quotation, “Being justified *freely* by his grace” (Rom 3:24). The Greek word is yet more impressive and emphatic, and might be rendered “gratuitously,” “for nothing,” the same term being translated “for nought” in 2 Thessalonians 3:8 and “without a cause” in John 15:25. There being nothing whatever in the beneficiary to attract it, but rather everything to repel it. “None eye pitied thee...to have compassion upon thee...when I passed by thee and saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee...Live” (Eze 16:5-6).

Divine grace is the sinner’s only hope, for it is not searching for good men whom it may approve, but the guilty and lost whom it may save. It comes not to those who have done their best and are quite presentable, but rather to those who have done their worst, and are in rags and tatters. Grace ever draws near to the sinner with his condition fully exposed. Grace recognizes no distinctions either social or moral. The chaste virgin is on the same level as the confirmed harlot, the religious professor with the wildest profligate. Grace is God’s provision for those who are so corrupt that they cannot better their conduct, so averse to God that they cannot turn to Him, so dead that He must open their graves and bring them on to resurrection ground. Unless men be saved by grace, they cannot be saved at all. Equally true is it that the salvation of sinners must be by divine power. Their crass stupidity and insensibility is irremovable by any human means. Nothing but God’s might can dispel the darkness from their minds, take away their hearts of stone, or free their sin-enslaved wills. All the faculties of the natural man are opposed to the offers and operations of divine grace until divine power saves him from himself. None ever yet turned unto God but who was turned by Him.

From all that has been before us, it should be quite apparent that *the sinner lies entirely at God’s disposal*. If He sees fit to leave him in his sins, he is undone for ever—yet God has a perfect right so to do. Had He precipitated the whole race to hell, as He did the fallen angels the day they sinned, it would have been no excess of severity, but simply an act of justice. For they



deserved eternal damnation. In its ultimate analysis, salvation is a matter of God's choice and not of ours, for we are merely clay in His hands to be moulded into a vessel of honour or dishonour entirely as He pleases (Rom 9:21). Sinners are in the sovereign hand of God to save or to destroy them according to His own will. That is His divine prerogative. "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom 9:18). And so far from offering any apology, He bids us observe and ponder that solemn fact, saying, "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand" (Deu 32:39). Such a One is not to be spoken lightly about, but held in the utmost awe.

In the very nature of the case, mercy is not something which can be claimed as a right—least of all from Him whom we have wronged far above all others—but lies entirely at the discretion of the one who is pleased to exercise it. "Because He is a sovereign God, infinitely happy in Himself without us, it is at His option to manifest mercy or not, to save or not, as much as it was His option to make man or not" (Ralph Erskine, 1685-1752). "He doeth according to *his will* in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan 4:35). Therefore He exercises sovereignty in the cause *why* He shows mercy, even because He "will show mercy". Sovereign not only in the ones He saves, but in the time when, the instrument by whom, and the means by which He saves them. Such teaching alone accords to God His proper place, as it likewise cuts away all ground of creature merits and boasting of his free will; and, at the same time, deepens the wonderment and gratitude of the redeemed. God can never act unjustly, but He can and does bestow His favours on whom He pleases, and in so doing exercises His high prerogative. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" (Mat 20:15).

The exemption of any sinner from the everlasting burning is an act of sovereign mercy and free grace, and, therefore, God consults none, but exercises His own mere good pleasure as to those on whom He bestows the same. "Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias...when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian" (Luk 4:25-27). If some are brought to believe in Christ, while others are left in their unbelief, it is sovereign grace alone which makes the one to differ from the other. And if it be right for God to make such a difference in time, it could not be wrong for Him to purpose doing so from eternity. They who balk at sovereign and unconditional election believe in neither the total depravity of man nor the God of the Bible. On the one hand, He hides these things from those who are wise and prudent in their own conceits. On the other, He reveals them to babes (Mat 11:25). There cannot be an election without a rejection, "the one shall be taken, and the other left" (Mat 24:40-41); "the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Rom 11:7); "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom 9:13).

Inasmuch as the sinner's will is enslaved by sin, then *God must overcome his opposition* before he will submit to Him. But both Scripture and observation make it evident that He does not bring all rebels into subjection, but only a favoured few. As Psalm 110:3 declares, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Though "by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph 2:3), equally depraved and guilty, yet even in their unregenerate state "God's people." They are His by sovereign election, His by eternal decree, His by covenant relationship. He loved them with an everlasting love (Jer 31:2), chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4), predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29).

Accordingly, in the day of His power, He quickens them into newness of life, puts the soul into a condition to receive the truth and cordially embrace it. That putting forth of divine power upon and within the vessels of mercy takes place at a definite season, for there is a “set time” for God to show favour unto the members of Zion (Psa 102:13). As the length of Israel’s captivity in Babylon was so divinely fixed that none could any longer detain them when that time had expired, likewise must His elect be delivered from their bondage to sin and Satan when the appointed moment arrives. He who ordered the day of our birth and death (Ecc 3:2) does not leave us to decide the day of our conversion—still less whether we shall be converted or not.

“Thy people shall be willing” (Psa 110:3) unto whom? To do what? Willing unto that to which previously they were completely averse. Willing to submit their intellect wholly to God’s Word, so that they receive with childlike simplicity all that is revealed therein. Willing to lean no more unto their own understanding, but to accept without question the mysteries of the Faith. High imaginations and lofty reasonings against the knowledge of God are now cast down, and every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2Co 10:5). Miracles which infidels scoff at, aspects of truth which Arminians term contradictory, precepts which run counter to the lusts of the flesh, are meekly accepted. Willing to bow to God’s way of salvation, so that they freely abandon their idols, renounce the world, repudiate all merits of their own, and come as empty-handed beggars, acknowledging themselves to be deserving only of hell. Willing to receive Christ as Prophet to instruct, as Priest to atone for their sins, as King to rule over them. Willing to receive Him as their Lord, to take His yoke upon them, to follow the example He has left them. Willing to bear reproach for His sake, to be given the cold shoulder, to be hated and persecuted. Willing to be on the side of the minority, to be cast out of the synagogue if need be, to lay down their very lives rather than deny Him.

Obviously, a miracle of grace must be wrought within them before they will choose what is so contrary to fallen human nature. That wonderful change from unwillingness to willingness is not the result of creature effort, but of divine operation. It is not of self-improvement, but the effect of God’s work in the soul. Thus, we read of “the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power” (Eph 1:19). That forthputting of His power does not violate man’s constitution or responsibility. Instead of destroying the freedom of his will, it liberates it from its native bondage. God’s people are not dragged to Christ, but “drawn” (Joh 6:44), and by “the bands of love” (Hos 11:4). That acting of His power has reference to that blessed time when the effectual inworking of the Spirit delivers the soul from the dominion of sin and Satan, when the influences of grace prevail over the corruptions of the flesh, when the Lord opens the heart to receive His Word (Act 16:14), when the affections are turned from the world to Christ, and the soul gladly gives up itself to Him. It is life-giving and liberating power which delivers from death in sin. It is the communicating of a new disposition which causes its recipient cordially to yield himself to God. It is convincing power which convicts the individual of his wickedness, wretchedness, and need. It is God working in him “both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13).

The Lord made the Egyptian jailer show kindness unto His servant. How? By giving “him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison” (Gen 39:21). When Saul had been anointed king, as he returned to his home, “there went with him a band of men.” And who were they? Men “whose hearts God had touched” (1Sa 10:26). When the appointed time of Israel’s captivity expired, “the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus” to make a gracious decree inviting the Jews to return unto Jerusalem. But a small minority accepted. Who were they, and why did they act differently from their fellows? They were those “whose spirit God had raised, to go” (Ezr 1:1-5).

In like manner, in the day of His power, God gives the antitypical Joseph favour in the eyes of His people who formerly had seen no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. He touches their hearts, so that they willingly submit to follow the One whom He has anointed to be King over them. He raises up their spirit, which previously had been sunk in bondage, so that now they desire a better country (Heb 11:16). Unless He did so, none would be saved. "Except the Lord of Saboath had left us a seed, *we* had been as Sodoma" (Rom 9:29). It is by their willingness to deny self, take up their cross, and follow Christ that God's people are distinguished from the children of the devil. As the Christian looks back to the time of God's power, he sings:

*"O happy day that fixed my choice  
On Thee, my Saviour and my God!  
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,  
And tell its raptures all abroad.  
'Tis done, the great transaction's done,  
I am my Lord's, and He is mine;  
He drew me, and I followed on,  
Charmed to confess His voice divine."*

The vile condition of mankind *heightens the marvel of Christ's mediation*. It was by no means incumbent upon God to recover those who had turned their backs upon Him. As He was not obliged to prevent their defection, neither was He obliged to restore any of those who had revolted. When He permitted the whole human race to offend in Adam, it had been no undue severity on His part had He left them to be buried in the ruins of their fall, and to sink utterly beneath the weight of their iniquities. He might well have reserved all in those chains which they fully deserved, and left them to feed upon the fruits of their evil doings, without lifting a finger for their deliverance. Nay, to go farther back—As God might for ever have left men in their nothingness without bringing them into being, so He could have left them all in their contracted misery. There was no more reason why the Lord should save any of Adam's posterity than there was for Him to bring back the fallen angels to their original obedience and bliss. The blessedness of God Himself had no more been infringed by the eternal destruction of our entire race than it was by the everlasting ruin of devils. It was wholly at His own option whether He provided a Saviour or withheld Him.

There was no reason why God should not have abandoned all mankind. He certainly was not bound in justice to intervene on their behalf, for as the righteous Governor of the world, He might well have proceeded to uphold the majesty of His law by executing its penalty on the disobedient, thereby making them an example of vengeance to all other intelligences in the universe. Nor did His *goodness* oblige Him to rescue His refractory subjects from their misery. For He had previously given full proof of that in their creation, as it is still made manifest in the happiness enjoyed by all His loyal subjects. Nor did any consideration of *His glory* require that He should show them mercy. "The glory of God does not depend upon the manifestation of any particular attribute, but upon the manifestation of them all on proper occasions and in full harmony. He is glorified when He bestows blessings upon the righteous, and is equally glorified when He inflicts punishment upon the wicked" (John Dick, 1764-1833). What would the loss of this world be unto Him in whose sight it is nothing, yea, less than nothing and vanity? The provision of a Saviour was a matter of His free grace, and *grace* is something which none can claim as a right.

God was pleased to act in a manner which will cause both the holy angels and redeemed sinners for ever to marvel and adore. His way of salvation is the wonder of all wonders, whether

we consider the dignity of the Mediator's person, the nature of His work, the things it accomplished, or the beneficiaries thereof. The Saviour was none other than the Lord of glory, the co-equal and beloved of the Father. His work necessitated a journey from heaven to earth, the assumption of human nature, the being made under the Law, and the enduring of unspeakable humiliation. It required Him to become the Man of sorrows, so that the whole of His life in this scene was one of suffering and grief. It involved His becoming the Substitute of His people, so that the iniquity of them all was placed upon Him, and He paid the wages due them. It entailed His laying down His life to ransom them, dying a cruel, shameful and accursed death, during which He was separated from God Himself. So infinitely meritorious and efficacious was Christ's death that it appeased the wrath of God against His people, satisfied every demand of His justice, removed the guilt of their transgressions from them as far as the east is from the west, conquered Satan and spoiled him of his dominion over them, procured the Spirit to quicken and indwell them, opened heaven for them, so that they have access to and fellowship with God, ensured their preservation in time, and fullness of joy for eternity.

And on whose behalf did the Son of God suffer such awful indignities? Not for the fallen angels, whose original habitat was heaven, but for creatures of the earth, who are but breathing dust and animated clay. The best of men compared with Christ are less in His sight than a worm is in ours. Yea, in Job 25:6, He actually terms them worms. It is for the unworthy, the unholy, the unlovely, that such was ordained. Oh, what an amazing thing that the Lord should set His heart upon them! Upon those who in their fallen estate were quite incapable of doing anything to please or honour Him. The objects of His mediation were despicable not only in their beings, but in their actions also. As man is nothing comparatively, so he can do nothing to glorify Christ, though much to provoke and dishonour Him. How can one who is lame and blind, walk or work, or one who is dead, act? Such were His people when He entertained thoughts of mercy toward them. Destitute of any good qualities or fruit, and lacking any spiritual principle or nature to yield the same. And when Christ has bestowed such upon His people, they cannot act, but as they are acted. They cannot stand, except He uphold them. They cannot move, unless He draws them. Christ must work all their works in them (Isa 26:12).

Not only impotent, but poverty-stricken. Man is nothing, can do nothing, and has nothing. He not only has "no money" (Isa 55:1), but is heavily in debt. He is in a famishing condition, feeding on nothing but wind and husks, for such are the vanities and pleasures of this world. He has not so much as to cover his shame, for though he may, like the Laodiceans, imagine himself to be rich and in need of nothing, yet in God's sight he is poor and naked. He cannot rightly say that his soul is his own, for he has given it over to Satan, sold himself to work wickedness. What a marvel that Christ should love such forlorn creatures! But more. Man is not only a bankrupt, but a hideous object. Poverty alone will not hinder love, especially if there be beauty, but who can admire deformity? Yet such is the sinner in the eyes of holiness—full of revolting loathsomeness—no human pen can depict the obnoxiousness of defiled man. Created fair and very good, adorned with the beauty of God's image, but not only is all of that erased, but the horrible image of Satan has displaced it. His light has been turned into darkness, his comeliness into corruption. Instead of sweet savour, there is a stench, and burning instead of beauty (Isa 3:24).

That which makes the soul most unlovely is its being *dead*. When life expires, all beauty expires with it. Abraham loved Sarah dearly while she lived, but when she was dead, he could not endure the sight of her. A dead soul is as repulsive to God as a dead body is to us. But men are not only hateful to Christ, but *haters of Him*. They hate His person, His offices, His precepts.

They hate His very image, and the more resemblance to Him any of His followers have, the more are they detested. Yet, there is not in Christ the least occasion of hatred. He is altogether lovely—divinely glorious, humanly perfect. Nor does He give any cause to be hated. All His administrations are righteous, so that His justice ought to be admired as much as His mercy. It is an unmixed hatred, without any degree of love. Yea, without the slightest inclination or tendency to it. It is a deadly hatred, so that when He was delivered into their hands, they murdered Him. It is an unvarying and inveterate hatred, firmly rooted in their hearts, expressed by continual acts of rebellion against Him. Oh, what a truly amazing thing it is that Christ should voluntarily lay down His life for such creatures! Yet the Spirit tells God’s people, “When we were *enemies*, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Rom 5:10). Behold, what manner of love. Behold, and wonder!

# INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

## Part 21

The first time that centre of man’s moral nature—the heart—is mentioned in the Scriptures, we have an infallible forecast of all later teaching thereon. “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5). Remarkably full is the outline here furnished us. Observe first the words “and God saw,” intimating that He alone is fully conversant with this inward spring from which proceed the issues of life. Second, that it is upon the same His eyes are fixed, “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1Sa 16:7). Third, that what is here said of man’s heart is *explanatory* of his wicked conduct. Since the fount itself be foul, filthy must be the streams flowing therefrom. Fourth, that man’s heart is now radically evil, and that continually, being “deceitful [the Hebrew word is rendered “crooked” in Isaiah 40:4 and “polluted” in Hosea 6:8]...and desperately [incurably] wicked” (Jer 17:9); out of which, as Christ declared, proceed all the abominations committed by fallen man (Mar 7:21-23). Fifth, that the “heart” equals the whole of the inner man, for the marginal rendering of “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart” is “the purposes and desires,” and, thus, it is not only the seat of his thought, but that of his affections and will.

“And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth” (Gen 6:6-7). This is the initial reference to *repentance*, and though its language be indeed metaphorical—for by a figure of speech (anthropopathia) the Lord ascribes to Himself human feelings—yet it contains all the essential elements thereof. First, it is striking to find that this grace is here attributed not to the creature, but to the Creator, telling us that repentance originates not in one whose mind is enmity against God and whose heart is hard as a stone, but is a divine gift (Act 5:31; 11:18; 2Ti 2:25), wrought in him by the Holy Spirit. Second, that repentance has *sin* for its object, for it is the wickedness of men which is here said to make JEHOVAH repent. Third, *its nature* is clearly defined as a change of mind (God’s repenting that He had made man)

and a grief of heart. Fourth, that the genuineness of repentance is evidenced by *reformation*, or an alteration of conduct, a resolve to undo (as far as is humanly possible) that which is sorrowed over—seen in the Lord’s decision to destroy man from off the face of the earth.

In Genesis 15:6, we find the earliest mention of three of the most important words which are used in connection with the sinner’s salvation and most significant and blessed is it to see them here joined together. “And he [Abraham] believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” What a remarkable anticipation was this of the fuller unfolding of the Gospel which is to be found in the Prophets and the New Testament! It records the response made by “the father of all them that believe” (Rom 4:11) unto the amazing promise which JEHOVAH made unto him—that, despite his being so old (almost one hundred years), he should not only beget a son, but ultimately have an innumerable seed, and that from the same should spring the Messiah. As Romans 4:19-20 states, “He considered not his body now dead...he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.” First, here we have the simplest definition of faith to be found in the Bible, “He believed in the LORD.” More literally, “He *amened* JEHOVAH.” That is to say, his heart gave the answering assurance, “It shall be so.” In other words, by implicitly receiving the divine testimony, he “set to his seal that God is true” (Joh 3:33). He realized that it was the word of Him “that cannot lie” (Ti 1:2)

Second, we here learn what was God’s gracious response unto that childlike confidence which so honoured Him. “He counted it to him for righteousness.” The word “counted” means accounted or placed to his credit. The same Hebrew word being translated “imputeth” (Psa 32:2). “Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity”—charges it not against him. It is *not the act* of Abraham’s faith which is here referred to, but the glorious Object to which it looked, namely his promised Seed and Son—his Saviour. Third, we are here taught how a believing sinner is legally constituted just before God. By nature, he has no righteousness of his own, for so long as he be without Christ, his best performances are but as filthy rags in the sight of divine holiness (Isa 64:6). Not only was Abraham destitute of righteousness, but he obtained it not by any efforts of his own. His faith was the sole means or instrument which linked him to a righteousness outside of himself. After citing his case, the apostle went on to say, “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness *without works*” (Rom 4:6), “for with the heart man believeth *unto* righteousness.” (Rom 10:10).

Since the above treats of such a vital aspect of truth, we will link with it and consider briefly Deuteronomy 25:1. “If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall *justify* the righteous, and condemn the wicked.” That is the first occurrence of this important word, and its setting more than hints at its meaning. First, justification is entirely a judicial matter, being the sentence or pronouncement of the Judge of all the earth. Second, it is the opposite of condemnation, and when one is condemned in the law courts he is not made wicked, but adjudged guilty. Third, he is regarded as “righteous,” that is the Law has nothing against him—because in the believer’s case, all its requirements have been fully met by his Surety. We may also consider in this connection, “Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will show to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever” (Exo 14:13). How deeply significant is that first mention of “salvation,” containing as it does all the prime elements of our spiritual deliverance. It was the Lord’s salvation, in which they had no part or hand. Yea, they had to cease from all activity in order to see the same. It consisted of a miraculous deliverance from death. It was a present thing, which they experienced that day. It was complete and eternal, for they would see their enemies again “no more for ever.”

Most suggestive is the initial reference to the *lamb*. “And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” (Gen 22:7-8). How blessed and significant to observe, in the first place, that this conversation was between a loving father and an only begotten son (Heb 11:17). Second, how remarkable to learn that the lamb would not be demanded from man, but supplied by God. Third, still more noteworthy are the words, “God will *provide himself* a lamb,” because it was for the meeting of *His* requirements, the satisfying of His claims. Fourth, the lamb was not here designed for food (for that was not the prime thought), but “for a burnt offering.” Fifth, it was a substitute for the child of promise, for, as verse 13 exhibits, “the ram” (a male lamb in the prime of its strength) was not only provided by God, but was also offered by Abraham “in the stead of his son”! How significant it is to discover that the word *worship* is mentioned for the first time in connection with this scene, “I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and will come again to you” (verse 5). Worship calls for separation from unbelievers, as Abraham left his two young men behind him. It is possible only on resurrection ground (“the third day” verse 4), and it consists of offering unto God our best—our Isaac.

How indicative are the opening words of the Bible, “In the beginning God” (Gen 1:1). Here man is taught the first grand truth which he needs to know—that God is first and foremost, the Author of all things, the source and spring of all good. The first appearance of Satan in Scripture reveals to us his subtle character, the methods he employs, that God’s Word is the chief object of his assaults, and stamps him as the arch-liar. How the first recorded words of the Redeemer, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luk 2:49), summed up His mission and all His subsequent teaching, as well as intimated that such would be neither appreciated nor understood by men. Many other illustrations of this law of first mention might be given, but the above are amply sufficient to exemplify its reality and value. They reveal how important it is to trace things back to their source, and show that God has hung the key on the door for us to make use of. And how they demonstrate the divine authorship of the Bible, displaying as they do that the later books invariably employ terms and phrases with uniform significance and in perfect harmony with their initial mention. What proofs that He who knew the end from the beginning inspired holy men of old in the very words they selected and the use which they made of them.

29. *The law of progress.* Since the Scriptures be the “word of life” (Phi 2:16), they are “quick [living], and powerful” (Heb 4:12). So far from being “a dead book” as the papists blasphemously assert, and “a dead letter” as some Protestants have ignorantly averred, the Bible is instinct with the very life of its Author. This fact is plainly exemplified in the principle of *growth* which marks all its parts and itself as a whole. This can be tested and verified by any competent person who will take the trouble to read the Scriptures systematically, or trace out a subject from start to finish. As this be done, he will perceive that truth is unfolded orderly and gradually, progressively and climactically. That there is presented to us first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. While the first mention of a thing intimates its scope and more or less anticipates what is to follow, the subsequent references amplify the same, each one making its own contribution unto the whole, and thereby we obtain both a clearer and a fuller understanding of the same. The path of truth is like that of the just, it “shineth more and more” (Pro 4:18).

As we pointed out nearly forty years ago, the above-named principle is strikingly and blessedly illustrated in connection with the lamb. In Genesis 22:8, the lamb is *prophesied*, “God will provide Himself a lamb.” In Exodus 12:5, the lamb is clearly *typified*, as “without blemish,” whose blood provided shelter from the destroying angel, and whose flesh was to be the food of God’s people. In Isaiah 53:7, the lamb is definitely *personified*, “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.” In John 1:29, we find the lamb *identified*, as, pointing to Him, Christ’s forerunner

announced, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” In 1 Peter 1:19, mention is made of Him as the lamb that was *crucified*, “But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” In Revelation 5:6, we see the Lamb *glorified*, for the seer of Patmos was privileged to behold in heaven, standing, “a Lamb as it had been slain.” While in Revelation 22:1, we see the Lamb *satisfied*, “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.” With these we may link the progressive scope seen in the validity of Christ’s sacrifice. In Genesis 4:4, for the individual; in Exodus 12:3, for the “house” or family; in Leviticus 16:21, for the nation; in Ephesians 5:25, for the Church or the whole election of grace.

Another example of this law of progress may be seen by tracing out the Messianic prophecies and observing how there is “line upon line” (Isa 28:10) until the picture is complete. The subject is too vast to deal with comprehensively here, but let us look at a single aspect of it, namely those which respect His *birth*. In Genesis 3:15, it was intimated that the destroyer of Satan would be a member of the human race—the woman’s seed. Genesis 9:27 revealed which of the three main divisions of the human race He would descend from, “He [God] shall dwell in the tents of Shem.” In Genesis 22:18, it was made known that He should be an Israelite—Abraham’s seed. Second Samuel 7:12-13 announced that He should be of the tribe of Judah—issuing from David. Isaiah 11:10 defined His ancestry yet more definitely. He would spring from the family of Jesse. Isaiah 49:1 predicted that He would be *named*, and by God Himself, *before* His birth, as indeed He was. While Micah 5:2 specified the very place where He would be born—Bethlehem. Such examples as these not only demonstrate clearly the divine inspiration of the Bible, but evidence that the canon of Scripture, as we now have it, has been superintended by God Himself, for its order is not so much chronological as logical.

There is a steady advance observable in the respective purposes and scope of *the four Gospels*. Obviously, Matthew’s must come first, for its chief design is to present Christ as the Embodiment of the Old Testament promises and the Fulfiller of the prophecies there made concerning the Messiah. For much the same reason, Mark’s comes second. For whereas in the former, Christ is seen *testing* the old covenant people, here He is viewed as *ministering to* them. But Luke’s Gospel has a much wider scope, being far more Gentile in its character. In it, Christ is contemplated in connection with the human race, the Son of man related to yet contrasted with the sons of men. John’s Gospel conducts us to much higher ground, for whereas in the first three He is depicted in human relationships (as the Son of Abraham, the Servant of God, and the perfect Man), here, His divine glory shines forth, and we behold Him as the Son of God in relation to the family of God. This same principle is also exemplified in what is recorded in *their closing chapters*. Matthew takes us no farther than the resurrection of Christ. In Mark 16:19, mention is made of His ascension. In Luke 24:49, promise is given of the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. While John’s Gospel ends with a reference to His second coming!

The predictive announcements which the Saviour made to His disciples of His forthcoming sufferings observe this principle, being *cumulative* in their respective revelations. “From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed” (Mat 16:21). That supplied a general outline—in keeping with the law of first mention. “And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: and they shall kill him” (Mat 17:22-23). Here the additional fact of His being betrayed was mentioned. “And the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him”



(Mat 20:18-19). Here, He enlarged upon the horrible indignities which He would suffer. “Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night” (Mat 26:31). There the perfidy of His own disciples was foretold. How like the Saviour it was to break the sad news to them gradually! What consideration for their feelings!

It is to be noted that in those announcements, as in all the other references which He made to His passion, the Lord spoke only of the *human* side thereof, being entirely silent upon the Godward aspect. In perfect accord with this law of progress, we have to proceed beyond the Gospels (which give a historical account of the external facts) to the Epistles, where the Spirit (sent to guide the apostles into “all truth”) makes known the spiritual design and internal meaning of the Cross. There, we are informed that the death of Christ was both a propitiatory and an expiatory one—a satisfaction unto divine justice, a sacrifice which put away the sins of God’s people. So too, in the Epistles themselves, we find that, while in the earlier ones the *individual* effects and blessings of redemption are more in view, in the latter ones, the individual is no longer prominent, rather is he seen as a part of a greater whole—a member of the body of Christ. True, in the latter ones, the individual is not ignored, but the *proportion* of the two aspects has changed. What is primary in the former becomes secondary in the latter. That is the natural order in the development of truth.



# May

## MARVELS

(As in the English, so in the Hebrew and Greek, “marvels” and “wonders” are synonymous, and therefore throughout this article, we shall render the term uniformly, instead of following the Authorized Version.)

Marvels! We are literally surrounded by them. We are ourselves the subjects of them, both in our beings and in the common experiences of our daily lives, by which we mean that innumerable tokens of the divine handiwork confront us on every hand. To begin with, the reader need look no farther than himself, for in his own body he beholds something which infinitely surpasses the skill of the most curious, delicate, and complicated piece of machinery that was ever invented by man. Good reason has he to say, “I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and marvelously made” (Psa 139:14)—“As anyone must admit, who has with any care examined the structure and texture of the human body. The exact symmetry and just proportion of all its parts, their positions and usefulness. Every bone, muscle, artery, nerve and fibre is nicely framed and placed to answer its designed end. Particularly the eye and ear, the exquisite make of them for sight and sound having filled the most diligent inquirers into nature with amazement” (John Gill, 1697-1771). Justly may we be astonished at these living temples—the composition of every part, the harmony of all together.

There is very much more in the Scriptures upon this subject than might be inferred from the writings of God’s servants and the converse of His people. The following verses from the Psalms may be regarded as representative ones. “I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvelous works” (Psa 9:1). “Many, O LORD my God, are thy marvelous works which thou hast done” (Psa 40:5). “Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth marvelous things” (Psa 72:18). “Thou art great, and doest marvelous things: thou art God alone” (Psa 86:10). “The heavens shall praise thy marvels, O LORD” (Psa 89:5). “Declare his glory among the heathen, his marvels among all people” (Psa 96:3). “Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his marvelous works to be remembered (Psa 111:4). “To him alone who doeth great marvels” (Psa 136:4). In attempting to write upon such passages as these, we take up a theme to which the profoundest mind and ablest pen could do but scant justice.

“The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein” (Psa 111:2). There is something in the divine handiwork surprising and that strikes an awe upon us. God’s actions and productions are like Himself—unique, perfect, wonderful. They demonstrate that He is possessed of omniscience and omnipotence. None of the works that deluded souls have ascribed to their idols can in any wise be compared with the prodigies of the august JEHOVAH.

His *doings* are grand and mighty, as worthy of our best attention as are His *sayings*. They are not few in number, but incalculable. They are not confined to a single sphere, but are equally evident in every realm. They were not performed only before the past generations of our ancestors, but are being done before our own eyes. Note the present tense of the verb in, “For thou art great, and *doest* marvelous things” (Psa 86:10)—they are transpiring before us now. Look upon the bursting buds of spring or the maturing fruits of autumn. Behold the glorious sunset, the star-spangled heavens, the white-mantled trees in winter.

The creation of all things out of nothing, and the bringing of them into their form and order, and especially the formation of man out of the dust of the ground in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-27, 2:7), are altogether beyond our comprehension. The immense universe is full of the glory of its Architect, and the world in which we live is stored with innumerable wonders and beauties which bear witness to God’s attributes. “At the first glance we perceive a majesty and greatness in all the works of God. There is nothing mean or trivial to be anywhere discovered in them. If we have any taste for sublime grandeur and beauty, we shall take peculiar pleasure in investigating the works of creation and providence, and in admiring the discoveries which are made of the divine wisdom, power, and goodness, in every one of them—the minute as well as the immense” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). Yet, how few of the sons of men deem them worthy of their serious attention. As Bishop Horne remarked, “Angels admire and adore, where men will not deign to cast an eye or employ a thought.”

Not only in the heavens and the earth, but we behold “his marvels in *the deep*” (Psa 107:24)—its flux and reflux, the bounds which He has set to it by His decree, the myriad creatures therein and their continued sustenance. The provision which God has made for the countless number of His creatures on land, in sea, and in air, His providential care in nourishing and preserving them all from day to day, should fill us with wonderment and praise. These are such stupendous undertakings as no one else can match. Equally wonderful is the divine *government*. That the sun, moon and stars keep their stations. That cold and heat, summer and winter, seed time and harvest, are as they were from the beginning. That men are endowed with different inclinations and abilities for the common good of all, some desiring and qualified to be farmers or fishermen, others manual labourers or craftsmen, teachers or physicians. Each man has his own distinct talent and calling. That God confines sin within due bounds and makes it work to His glory. If we were attentive in marking the operations of God in the ordinary occasions of life, we should be filled with admiration and awe, for, whatever instruments He may use, God is the great Agent.

But the greatest marvel is the divine work of *redemption*. That transcends all the other doings and deeds of the Almighty. Its design was laid in infinite wisdom and its execution was by infinite power. What an amazing thing that the Holy One should determine to redeem vile sinners, and fix upon the scheme which He did, selecting His own Son to be the Redeemer of some out of every tribe and nation. “O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvelous things: his right hand...hath gotten him the victory” (Psa 98:1). JEHOVAH the Saviour is the subject of that song. He became incarnate, the true Immanuel, God with us. So wonderful was this that a multitude of the heavenly hosts descended and acclaimed the same over the plains of Bethlehem (Luk 2:13-14). The mighty acts which He performed were the works given Him to do as proofs of His Deity and Messiahship. Such miracles as His walking upon the sea (Mat 14:25), stilling the tempest by a word of His lips (Mat 8:24-27), feeding a vast multitude with a few loaves and fishes (Mat 14:16-21), giving sight to the blind (Joh 9:1-7), and raising the dead (Joh 11:1-45), filled the beholders with astonishment. In redemption, His glory shines forth and His grace is displayed in an unprecedented manner, putting away the sins of His people by the sacrifice of

Himself. What a truly amazing thing it was that the Lord of life should expire, that He conquered death by dying, vanquished the opposing powers of darkness, and gained such a triumph as none beside Him could.

The *consequences* of Christ's redemption unto all eternity are equally marvelous. These are the operations of and the fruits produced by the Holy Spirit. The works of the new creation are even more remarkable than those of the old. The finite mind is incapable of comprehending how an adult person can experience a new birth, be delivered from a death in sin, and quickened into newness of life. So, too, the Spirit makes the obstinate willing in the day of His power, slays their enmity, and brings the one-time lion to lie down with the lamb. Equally miraculous is His maintenance of a work of grace within hearts so full of corruption, preserving it despite the hatred and opposition of the world, and all the snares of the devil.

“Blessed be the LORD: for he hath showed me his marvelous *kindness*” (Psa 31:21), which is free, sovereign, discriminating. It is better than life, and passes knowledge. It is set upon men, not angels; some, not all; and they, many of the worst and vilest, and all by nature the children of wrath. That marvelous kindness was displayed by choosing them in Christ, putting them in His hand, making a covenant with Him for them. It is seen in His saving them with an everlasting salvation. The entire life of a Christian is marvelous in his eyes—in the answers he receives to prayer, in being daily loaded with benefits, supported under trials, assisted in his warfare, delivered from perils, solaced in afflictions, in his growth in grace, and foretastes of heaven.

“Thy *testimonies* are marvelous” (Psa 119:129) in revealing to us many things of deepest importance which could not be ascertained from any other source. In the discoveries which the Word makes of the Persons in the Godhead, Their distinctive offices and glorious perfections. In the light it throws on the mysteries of life, and the secrets of eternal happiness. In the unerring guide it provides for us in this dark world. In the doctrines it teaches, the precious promises it contains, the announcements of things to come. In making known how God brings out of the ruins of the fall more glory to Himself and more blessing to us than had our first parents remained in innocency. In declaring to us what had never entered our hearts to conceive of the things God has prepared for them that love Him. The more His Word be studied, believed, obeyed, the more wonderful it becomes.

# EXPOSITION OF JOHN'S FIRST EPISTLE

## 29. Apostates (2:19)

*“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”*

The first of those “perilous times” announced to take place in “the last days”—i.e., the Christian dispensation—had begun. Those “having a form of godliness, but denying the power

thereof...ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” had appeared in John’s day; men of whom it had to be said: “Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith” (2Ti 3:5-8). The Spirit’s prediction in 1 Timothy 4:1 was likewise receiving a fulfillment: “in the latter times [i.e., the present era] some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” Impostors and heretics were rising apace: antichrist had already begun to show himself in the false teachers and seducers, who were his forerunners. It was therefore necessary for the apostle to make reference to a very great evil that had broken out among some of the congregations of the saints, for these apostates had formerly been numbered among and had enjoyed fellowship with them. As Jude also declared, “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness” (verse 4), by coming out in their true colours as the opposers of His Christ.

“*They.*” The opening word of our present verse at once makes it apparent that it is closely related to the preceding one, for the “they” has its antecedent in the “many antichrists” of verse 18. There John reminded the newly converted that they had heard antichrist should come, and that many of his tribe were even then in existence, whereby they might know that the last period of the world’s history had already dawned. It must be “the last time,” for God has nothing further to reveal, and therefore it is naught but His longsuffering that prolongs this final hour. Since it be the concluding season for mankind, no higher privileges will ever be vouchsafed to those on earth, and no other means of grace appointed by God than those that are now in existence. Hence the urgent force of that exhortation, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” (Heb 2:3).

It was most needful that the saints should take notice of what the apostle had alluded to. *First*, to prevent them from being carried away with the error of the wicked, and thereby fall from their own steadfastness. The only safeguard against that was to continue cleaving unto the Lord, and maintain fellowship with Him by walking in separation from the world. It is when the heart departs from its anchorage that it is liable to be “tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:14). When the soul is not at rest, the mind cannot be; instead, it is ever seeking some fresh object to afford it satisfaction. It is the unstable who are always on the wing after some new opinion. King Saul forsook the Lord before he turned to the witch of Endor (1Sa 28:7), as those mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:1 departed from the faith ere they gave heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. A tender conscience is slow and cautious in receiving the truth, and for that reason holds tenaciously to the same when assured it has it. A tender conscience examines carefully and weighs prayerfully whatever is presented to the mind. Not so a conscience which is seared by the world and put to sleep: with such there is no waiting on God for light, but an independence of mind that leans unto its own understanding (Pro 3:6), and a consequent running after novelties and an espousing of error.

“*They went out from us.*” Those antichrists were not men who had from the beginning been open antagonists to the truth, but, instead, professing Christians. They were not those who took their rise from among the rejecters of the Gospel, but rather were such as had avowed their belief in and acceptance of the same. Formerly they had walked with the Lord’s people, and then had deserted them. The Greek is even more emphatic, “From among us they went out”; originally they were members of Christian assemblies. The word rendered “us” (*hemon*) occurs again in 1 John 1:3; 3:16, 20 (rendered “our”), 21; 4:6; 5:14-15. The statement that they went out signifies more than a local and corporeal departure, namely one in affection and doctrine. It was far more

than their forsaking of any particular church for a season, and then walking irregularly; they became leaders of heretical sects contrary to the glory of Christ and the doctrine of His apostles, denying that the Son of God had come in the flesh. They were therefore apostates from the faith, repudiators of the Gospel, though most of them still claimed to be “Christians,” yea, peculiarly enlightened and eminent ones.

Our present verse makes still more evident the propriety of the whole passage being addressed more specifically to the spiritual babes, for though all of God’s children need to take the same to heart, the younger ones especially so, since they were the ones most liable to be stumbled by the defection of these apostates. It is always a very disturbing and distressing thing for any of God’s people to see some of those whom they regarded as their fellow Christians apostatizing, the more so when such were members of their own local assemblies. Particularly is that the case with the recently converted. In the glow of his first love and newly found joy, his zeal longs to see his unsaved loved ones brought into the fold. But to behold some of those with whom he was in communion forsaking the church is a severe shock to him, and should some of the preachers he had sat under prove to be traitors and set themselves up in opposition to the truth, that is indeed a shattering blow. Inexperienced as he is, yet unacquainted with the fickleness of human nature and the prevalence of hypocrisy, he little expects to find those whom he considered to be quite orthodox<sup>10</sup> suddenly becoming thoroughly heterodox.

By thus going out, those men renounced all subjection to the headship of Christ over His churches. Thereby they proclaimed themselves as hypocrites, devoid of any love to Him and His Word. It was a terrible thing to do: they were guilty of the fatal sin of apostasy. They started up new sects, drew away many disciples after them, and corrupted the worship of God. In so doing they disrupted the unity of the faith, producing disorder in Christendom. Now, says the apostle (for such was the scope and design of his words here), be not shaken by this sad sight, for, *first*, you were forewarned that “antichrist should come,” and therefore instead of being perplexed and staggered by what you are now witnessing it should strengthen your faith. *Second*, as I have told you, the appearing of these many antichrists furnishes proof that “the last time” has come. *Third*, it was a word of warning for them to take heed unto themselves, to keep their hearts with all diligence, and to close their ears unto the horrible doctrines which were being propagated by these false prophets. *Finally*, there was, as he went on to state, a needs be why God permitted this tragic occurrence: that the line should be drawn between the genuine and the spurious, the latter being exposed for what they really were.

“*They went out from us.*” There have always been such. Even Moses had to say, “Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods” (Deu 13:13). There were false prophets in Israel as well as true ones, as Jehoshaphat discovered (1Ki 22:6-7). Through Jeremiah the Lord said, “Hearken not unto the words of the prophets...for they...prophesy a lie in my name” (27:14-15). Ezekiel was told to “prophesy against the prophets of Israel” and to pronounce a “woe” upon them (13:2-3). Zephaniah declared, “her prophets are light and treacherous” (3:4). At the beginning of His ministry the Lord Jesus gave warning, “Beware of false prophets” (Mat 7:15). The church at Jerusalem found it necessary to send word to the Gentiles, “Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain men which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment” (Act 15:24). The carnality and unbelief of men’s hearts always assure a welcome

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<sup>10</sup> **orthodox** – that which pertains to the body of doctrines that are essential to the Christian faith; this implies consistency in belief and worship with the revelation of Holy Scripture.

unto those who speak smooth things in order to win disciples. In his second epistle, Peter announced, “there shall be false prophets among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies,” adding “and many shall follow their pernicious ways: by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of ” (2:1-2).

“*But they were not of us.*” John is very definite in repudiating these apostates, careful to point out that they were never anything more than nominal Christians. They had professed faith in the Gospel, had been baptized, received into fellowship with the Lord’s people, and been admitted to His table; some of them had, perhaps, been church officers. John first informs us whence these antichrists sprang, and then he disowns them, denying that they were living branches of the Vine. They originated in Christian assemblies, but forsook the same. It was that which made them the more dangerous, for they knew the better how to sow their pernicious errors, and deceive the unwary. They were falsehearted professors who had cast off the sacred privileges of communion with the regenerate, and acknowledged no obligations to them. They pretended to have greater light, calling themselves Gnostics, or “knowing ones.” But the apostle here gives the lie to their proud boast, and then states a reason for and an explanation of their conduct: “they were not of us”—they were never of one heart and soul with God’s people, for such love the truth above everything on earth, and abhor whatever detracts from it.

“*They were not of us.*” It was very necessary to make this clear, for apparently the Church had produced these vipers and nurtured them in her bosom. John therefore denies that they ever belonged to Christ—“as chaff, though mixed with wheat on the same floor, cannot yet be deemed wheat” (John Calvin, 1509-1564). They had not obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine, which had been delivered unto them; so far from being all that they seemed, they were but wolves in sheep’s clothing. So it has been ever since. Almost all the heresies that have plagued the churches throughout the centuries originated from persons who were once in good standing in the assemblies. When some old error is revived, it is generally by those who were disaffected<sup>11</sup> to the saints and apostatized from the truth. Though for a season associated with believers, yet they were never united to them in spirit. As it was in the days of our Lord, “many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (Joh 6:66)—they were but nominal “disciples,” for verse 64 tells us they were of those “that believe not.” Paul warned the Ephesian saints, “Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Act 20:30); and also lamented, “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2Ti 4:10).

Strange as it may appear to those who closely examine our present text, it is one of the verses appealed to by those who deny the eternal security of the regenerate. Arminians<sup>12</sup> quote it in proof of their contention that it is not only possible for those who have been saved by divine grace to fall away and be lost, but that many such have actually done so. But certainly there is nothing here to support their erroneous theory, but that which directly refutes it. Instead of furnishing an example of real Christians falling from grace, it is evident that the characters, which are here in view, never had any grace. Though their names had been registered upon an earthly church roll, they were never written in the Lamb’s Book of Life (Rev 13:8; 17:8; 20:12). They may have had much head knowledge and zeal, but they were destitute of true piety. First, the apostle expressly declared “they were not of us,” and then he added “for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.” Instead of belonging to the company of God’s elect, they were reprobates.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> **disaffected** – alienated; resentful and rebellious.

<sup>12</sup> **Arminians/Jacobus Arminius** (1560-1609) – Dutch theologian, born in Oudewater, The Netherlands. He rejected the Reformers’ understanding of predestination, teaching instead that God’s predestination of individuals was based on His foreknowledge of their accepting or rejecting Christ by their own free will.

<sup>13</sup> **reprobates** – unbelievers left in their sins and abandoned by God to judgment (Romans 1-2).

This is the case with all who repudiate the truth and become teachers of error—they were never genuinely converted! It is a fundamental article of the faith that no regenerate soul is ever suffered finally to apostatize: the honour of God is concerned in the preservation of such, the efficacy of Christ's redemption secures it, the sufficiency of the Spirit's indwelling and operations effects it.

A sound expositor always feels himself to be on the safest ground when he is able to interpret Scripture by Scripture: that is, when he can locate another passage that is more or less parallel with the one before him, that uses different language but treats of the same subject. If he knows his Bible, he will naturally turn to Jude, for the distinctive theme of that epistle is "apostasy," the second half of it describing in detail the character of the false prophets in this "last time." Now our present text and the nineteenth verse of Jude are a case in point, for the one throws light upon the other, the latter affirming, "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." The first clause corresponds with John's "they went out from us." It was not a brief lapse or temporary break in fellowship from the Church that is here in view, but an entire and total forsaking of the same, an unwillingness to be amenable any longer to its doctrine and discipline, and that because of worldly ends and the affectation of vainglory. The second half of the verse amplifies John's "but they were not of us": they were *sensual* (the Greek word being rendered "natural" in 1 Corinthians 2:14), unregenerate, "having not the Spirit"—and therefore without any inward restraint upon their carnality, pride, and avarice—unsaved, abandoned by God.

*"For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us."* There was not need for the supplementary "no doubt" of the translators, in fact it tends to weaken the apostle's positive announcement. In those words he was supplying proof of his assertion in the foregoing clause. The force of his argument may be stated thus: the regenerate are endowed with a spirit of perseverance and run the race that is set before them, therefore those who quit the race and become apostates could never have been renewed in their hearts. It is the solemn engagement of God's everlasting covenant that He would put His fear into the hearts of His people, promising "they shall not depart from me" (Jer 32:40)—from faith to infidelity, from Christ to Belial. Thus it is that steadfastness, loyalty, and endurance are among the surest marks of the new birth. Said our Lord, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye [not "shall become such" because of so doing] my disciples indeed" (Joh 8:31, and cf. 1Co 15:2; Heb 3:6, 14). Those who have been divinely quickened will most assuredly remain true to the faith and persevere in holiness to the end of their earthly course. Such may indeed experience many a "fall" (but they "shall not be utterly cast down," Psa 37:24).

The new birth is a being made partaker of the divine nature (2Pe 1:4), and while that is far from signifying that they are deified, it does mean "such moral qualities as may be imparted to the creature" (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677). That which is received at regeneration is sometimes called "the life of God" (Eph 4:18), because it is a vital principle of action; sometimes the "image of God" (Col 3:10), because they bear a likeness to Him. One of the "moral qualities" which is imparted to the Christian is that of stability. We read in the Psalms that "the goodness of God endureth continually" (52:1), that "the glory of the LORD shall endure forever" (104:31), that "his righteousness endureth forever" (111:3), and that "his mercy endureth for ever" (136:1). As Christ declared, "they shall never perish" (Joh 10:28). Such a thing is impossible, for they were "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1Pe 1:23). Thus it is that constancy characterizes them: "and now *abideth* faith, hope, charity" (1Co 13:13). Those graces may indeed wax and wane, but be quenched they shall not. God's children are deeply rooted trees, and not chaff, which the wind blows away.



*“They would have continued with us.”* Those words were written for the encouragement of believers who feel their own weakness and have no confidence in the flesh; and not to provide a pillow for the presumptuous, nor for slothful fatalists. While they show that no Christian will fall from grace and be lost, yet they do not ignore his responsibility. They include within their scope not only the faithfulness of God in renewing their inner man day by day, but also the discharge of their duty in the use of means. The same power that made them Christians keeps them, yet *“through faith”* (1Pe 1:5)—through the exercise and cultivation of faith, and of all other graces, and not independently thereof. Remember that it is only by cleaving firmly to the words of God’s lips that we can keep ourselves from the paths of the destroyer (Psa 17:4); then heed the injunction, *“Prove all things”* (1Th 5:21), and give not place to *“itching ears.”* It is not sufficient for us to shun the hearing or reading of false teaching; we also need to be constantly on our guard against inward defection, mortifying our lusts (Col 3:5), and taking heed to the first decay of our love. It is much cause for thankfulness when we can truly say, *“I have stuck unto thy testimonies”* (Psa 119:31).

*“But they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”* In this clause John states the reason why God had suffered the presence of antichrists, therefore it would probably be more perspicuous<sup>14</sup> to supply *“But [this occurred] that they might be made manifest,”* for the *“they went out”* was already definitely stated. Such characters are raised up by God to disturb the peace of the churches in order that the true may be distinguished from the false. Error serves as a flail to separate the wheat from the chaff. *“For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you”* (1Co 11:19). Let some plausible and popular preacher come forward with an old error decked out in new clothes, and empty professors will at once flock to his standard; but not so those who are established in the truth. Thus, by means of false prophets, God purges His garner,<sup>15</sup> and makes it appear who are the ones who hold the truth in sincerity. The genuine gold endures every test to which it is subjected. Those who turn away from orthodoxy to heterodoxy must not be regarded as real Christians. Had these men been truly one with God’s people in a personal experience of His saving grace, nothing could have induced them to apostatize.

As God Himself raised up these antichrists for His own wise reasons, so He also caused them to forsake the assemblies of the saints—to make it evident that they were but formal members, and of a totally different family from His own children. Previously they had every appearance of being the genuine article, but by their defection and opposition to Christ they were now revealed as counterfeits. He who searches the heart and tries the reins was determined to give definite proof that they were unregenerate men. Let them boast as loudly as they pleased of being among the Lord’s beloved ones, their conduct gave the lie to such a claim; they never had any root in Christ, but were merely external and temporary followers. Those whom God gives up unto strong delusion to believe a lie (2Th 2:11) are such as never truly received His truth in the love of it, for none of His people are ever suffered to deny the faith after their conversion. Since they never *“knew the grace of God in truth”* (Col 1:6), He left them to the pride and corruptions of their hearts and the wiles of Satan, to be deceived into the espousing and propagating of fatal heresies. And though they drew many professing Christians after them, their divisions served a useful and necessary purpose, inasmuch as they made manifest those who were the friends and those who were the enemies of Christ.

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<sup>14</sup> **perspicuous** – clear in statement or expression; lucid; easily understood.

<sup>15</sup> **garner** – granary; a building where grain is stored.

# THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

## 81. Individual Portions

Our previous articles upon the distribution of Canaan were confined almost entirely to the typical side of things, adumbrating as it did, that blessed heritage which God decreed and Christ purchased for His people. But we must now consider briefly some of the *literal* features connected with the same. The orderly dividing of the land was not only a wise provision, but a necessary arrangement, so that the particular section of each tribe should be clearly defined. In Joshua 14-19, a full and detailed description is recorded of the boundaries of each one. That was done by the immediate appointment and direction of God, and not by any human sagacity and prudence, still less by the dictates of partiality and greed. All was regulated by “the lot.” This was done long before the whole of Canaan was actually conquered and possessed by Israel. There was to be no waiting until all the tribes had secured their respective portions. Instead, they were now informed of the exact section to which they had been given a divine title, so that they might go forward and possess their possessions. Thus were they called unto the exercise of *faith* and full confidence in God as they set about the performing of their respective tasks.

In our last, we saw that the method which God selected for the allocating of Canaan unto Israel combined the principles of grace, sovereignty, and righteousness. Of grace, inasmuch as Israel’s inheritance was a divine gift. Of sovereignty, for all was done by lot or submitting to the divine will in the dispositions made. Of righteousness, for the numerical strength of the tribe was taken into account in the size of the portion allotted it. The plan followed was thus the very opposite of what would be euphemistically termed a “Welfare State,” for there was no dividing of the land into twelve equal parts. The whole of Scripture makes it plain that it is the divine will that there should be distinctions both among nations, in the territory which they occupy, and among individuals, in the property which they possess. Likewise, it is required that each shall be contented with what the Lord has assigned them and him. “Thou shalt not covet” (Exo 20:17) is as much a part of the divine law as “Thou shalt not kill” (Exo 20:13). When the antitypical Joshua was asked to appoint two of His disciples to the chief places of honour in His kingdom, He replied, “To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father” (Mat 20:23), thereby acknowledging the sovereignty of the Father.

The benefits to be derived from the dividing of Canaan to Israel by divine lot should at once be apparent. Not only did such an arrangement exclude the exercise of human avarice and injustice, but it also precluded any occasion for strife and wrangling between the several tribes, determining as it did the precise location assigned unto each of them, with the limits thereof. Thus, all ground for jealousy, misunderstanding and law-suits about their respective territories was obviated. But more—Israel were thereby taught to submit themselves to the good pleasure of the Lord. Therein lies the chief practical lesson which *we* should draw from this transaction—to surrender ourselves wholly to the divine will and beg God to choose for us—whether it be in the

matter of our earthly vocation, the selection of a life-partner, or the measure of temporal prosperity which will be most for His glory and our good. As an old writer truly remarked, “Such as refer themselves unto God to choose for them, will never find cause to repent of their lot.” No, it is when we leave Him out, lean unto our own understanding, act by carnal impulse, that we bring trouble upon ourselves. How we should pray daily, “Work in me both to will and to do of thy good pleasure.”

Before the lot was cast for the determining of the portions of the respective tribes, Caleb appeared before those who had charge of that business, and presented his claim unto Hebron for his own possession. A brief allusion was made to the same at the end of our October, 1951, article, but a closer examination of the incident is now called for. Ere so doing, it should be pointed out that Joshua 14:5 is a general statement, which is amplified in Joshua 15:1 and onwards, the narrative being interrupted by what is now to be before us. “Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea” (Jos 14:6). Observe here the gracious humility of the man! Caleb was himself one of those who had been divinely appointed to serve as one of the commissioners, to see that the lot was carried out in a proper manner (Num 34:17-19). Yet, lest it might appear that he was seeking unduly to use his authority in furthering his own interests, he brought with him some of his brethren to act as witnesses. How careful was he to “abstain from all appearance of evil” (1Th 5:22)! Equally circumspect should we be in all of our public transactions.

“Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart” (verse 7 and cf. Num 13:30). Those last words are very expressive and blessed. It was in Caleb’s heart that God was fully able to give what He had promised, that the gigantic Amorites with their chariots of iron were nothing to Him. Caleb was strong in faith, and therefore he was quite sure that JEHOVAH would make good His word. It was the Lord Himself who had put such a firm persuasion in his heart. Just as at a later date, when faced with a task that was formidable unto flesh and blood, Nehemiah declared, “Neither told I any man what my God had *put in my heart* to do at Jerusalem” (Neh 2:12). That too was something which burned within and sustained him through heavy trials. David also had “found it in his heart to build the house of the LORD” (1Ki 8:17). How that language of Caleb’s made it evident that his heart was set upon the Promised Land! His “treasure” was there, and so was his heart also (Mat 6:21). That was his animating hope all through the forty years he had to spend with his unbelieving fellows in the wilderness. And so it should be with each Christian, his affections set upon things above as he journeys through this world to the antitypical Canaan.

“Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the LORD my God” (Jos 14:8). His fellows walked by sight instead of faith, and, consequently, they were occupied with and appalled by the obstacles which stood in the way. Full of distrust themselves, they infected the whole of the congregation with the same, intimidating and discouraging them so far that their spirits sank. But Caleb refused to be influenced by them, yea, boldly withstood them. “I wholly followed the LORD my God” (Jos 14:9) was not the language of presumption, but a plain declaration that he was neither daunted by the power of the enemy nor swayed by the skepticism of his brethren. It signified that on that occasion he had faithfully discharged his duty, remained steadfast in his faith in God, assured that He would enable His people to overcome the mighty sons of Anak. That meaning of his, “I wholly followed the LORD,” is made clear by the contrast of Numbers 32:11, where the Lord complained of his

unbelieving fellows, “They have not wholly followed me,” and from the fact that He there predicated the same fidelity and perseverance of Joshua. The great value which God set upon His servant’s steadfastness appears in His having recorded it in His Word no less than six times: Numbers 14:24; 32:12; Deuteronomy 1:36; Joshua 14: 8, 9, 14.

“And Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children’s for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God” (Jos 14:9). The sure word of prophecy he had hid—held fast, treasured—in his heart throughout the lengthy interval. It is to be considered that probably most of that generation of Israel would be ignorant of the divine grant which had been made unto him and his descendants so long before, and, therefore, Caleb quoted the Lord’s promise thereon for their benefit more than Joshua’s, so that it might appear that he was not now making any selfish or unreasonable demand. The divine promise was recorded in Deuteronomy 1:36, and treasured in the mind of Caleb. His object was to prevent this particular part of Palestine being put in the lot with the other portions of the country. He had a definite and valid claim upon the same, and he here insisted upon his right. Since God’s own mind concerning it had been plainly made known, then it would be useless to appeal unto His will respecting it via the lot, as in the case of the sections for the tribes.

“And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old” (Jos 14:10). What a God-honouring testimony was this! Passing through all the vicissitudes of Israel’s wilderness wanderings, during which so many of his fellows were removed from this scene, engaged in the five years of fighting in Canaan, when no doubt there was often but a step betwixt him and death, Caleb here ascribed his preservation not to “good luck” or “fortune” (heathen terms!), but unto Him “which holdeth our soul in life” (Psa 66:9). Caleb had something more than a general realization that his times were in God’s hands (Psa 31:15). His faith had laid hold of a special promise, as his “as he said” plainly shows (Jos 14:10). He was resting on the word of One who cannot lie—as David, at a later date, relied upon God’s changeless veracity, “Do as thou hast said” (2Sa 7:25). We are on both sure and comfortable ground, my reader, when we take our stand upon God’s promise, *expecting* a fulfilment. Caleb’s repeated “and now” (Jos 14:10) was tantamount to his saying, “The time has at last arrived for the Lord to make good His engagement.”

“As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in” (Jos 14:11). In those words, he was forestalling an objection which might be made against his appeal. Should the demurrer be advanced, “But you are much too old for such a difficult and dangerous venture as the dispossessing of the giants from the mountainous district of Hebron, that such a strenuous and hazardous task called for a much younger man.” Caleb here pressed his physical fitness for the same. The One who had preserved his life throughout the years had also renewed his youth like the eagle’s (Psa 103:5). Ah, my reader, God does nothing by halves. When He appoints a man for any particular work, He also equips the worker and furnishes him with everything needful. Not only so, He sustains and animates the heart for the task. Faith inspires resolution and courage, and He who had enabled His servant to hold fast for so long to His promise also removed all hesitation and fear, so that Caleb was just as ready and eager to set about the task which lay before him as he was in the prime of life.

“Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said” (Jos 14:12). The second half of this verse is very lovely, yet some have quite misunderstood its force. Though Caleb still retained his vigour, it was not *that* upon which he relied, nor yet upon his military ability and experience; but instead, upon the Lord. Thus, his “if so be the LORD will be with me” was not the language of doubting, but of self-renunciation. He had no confidence in the flesh and felt his own insufficiency. There will not be faith in God, nor even a sincere looking to Him, my reader, while we retain faith in ourselves. Trust in the Lord is ever accompanied by distrust of self. No, Caleb was conscious that the successful accomplishment of the work before him was quite beyond his own powers, but he counted upon the faithfulness of God to undertake for him. Proof was this that the divine promise was no empty theory to him, but a precious reality. Therein he differed sharply from his unbelieving companions. They were occupied with the power of the enemy and their own impotence, he with the omnipotent One and the sureness of His word.

“And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance” (Jos 14:13). Thus was the promise of God through Moses made good by *Joshua*. This is very blessed, for it causes us to look beyond the shadow to the substance. The fulfilment of all the divine promises is in and through the antitypical Joshua. “For all the promises of God in him [Christ] are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2Co 1:20). Since Christ Himself is the end and chief object of all the promises, He has become by His mediatorial character both the channel of supply to all who receive the grace of God in truth and the medium of their responsive praise. To the certified promises, thus declared to God’s elect, in the person of His Son, the Church now sets the seal of her Amen, affirming thus adoringly to the glory of the Father what the lips of Christ have first spoken to her heart. In Christ, we now have by an everlasting covenant of grace, whatever good things God spoke aforetime. In the Lord Jesus, the very fullness of God dwells, and in that holy humanity which He took upon Him for our sakes. The concentrating of God’s mercies in the living and effective Vindicator of His promises—“the Amen, the faithful and true witness” (Rev 3:14)—is declared to be “to the glory of God *by us*” (2Co 1:20), because of the praise which He receives from His people as they realize that all is summed up for them in God’s Beloved and in their Beloved.

“Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb...unto this day, because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel. And the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba; which Arba was a great man among the Anakims. And the land had rest from war” (Jos 14:14-15). Hebron signifies “Fellowship,” and may have been so named because of the wonderful communion which Abraham had with God there (Gen 13:18, first mention). This is the place above all others which the enemy of souls seeks to prevent God’s people occupying. What a suitable place was Hebron for Caleb! How appropriate an inheritance for the one who (we are once more told) “wholly followed the LORD God of Israel” (Jos 14:9)—who persevered in the performing of his duty, though opposed by ten of his companions and menaced by the whole congregation—which shows us that the ones and twos, who are out and out for God, must not expect to be popular, no, not with their brethren. Nevertheless, Hebron, or the place of intimate fellowship with God, is ever the portion of such. Finally, let it be duly noted, that upon Caleb was conferred the honour of the hardest task of all—the overcoming of the mighty sons of Anak. The next chapter tells us, “And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak” (Jos 15:14). Of course he did! God never fails such a one.

In Joshua 17:3-4, another case is recorded of claim to an individual portion being laid before Joshua, which is in some respects similar to that of Caleb. It was made by the five daughters of Zelophehad, who belonged to the tribe of Manasseh. Those women had received promise through Moses that when Canaan was divided among Israel they should have an inheritance, and now they came before those who had charge of the allotting, making request for the implementing of the same. God's commandment and promise by Moses is recorded in Numbers 27:1-11. These women appeared before what might be termed the supreme court, pointing out that their father was dead and had left no son. Up to that time, no legal provision had been made where the male issue had failed, and thus these daughters of Zelophehad, having neither father nor brother, found themselves destitute. Instead of murmuring and mourning over their hard lot, they wisely came before God's servants and asked for arrangement to be made for them to have a portion of their tribe's section. Moses did not presume to answer their inquiry personally, but brought the case before the Lord, and He declared, "Thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them" (Num 27:7).

In Numbers 36, we learn that the case of those five women was brought again before Israel's high court. This time, it was the chief fathers of the families of Gilead, to which Zelophehad belonged, who appeared. A difficulty was anticipated: should these five women intermarry with other tribes, then, their portion would pass out of Manasseh's possessions unto another's, and that would probably occasion future strife and confusion. In reply thereto, a more specific law was enacted, "Let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry. So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe" (Num 36:6-7). It is very blessed to see how the Lord honoured the faith of those women by protecting their interests. At the time when they first appeared before the judges, Israel was in the wilderness! Canaan had not then been entered, still less conquered and possessed, yet so sure were these women that God would fulfil His promise to give that land unto His people that even then they put in their claim to a portion thereof. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) wittily remarked, "They were *five wise virgins* indeed."

In a striking address made in 1918 on the virgin birth, Dr. A. T. Schofield (1846-1929) (not the editor of the Scofield Bible) pointed out that, but for the above Scriptures, an insuperable difficulty had stood in the way of Christ's being "the King of the Jews" (Mat 27:37): "Therefore, in any case, it seems our Lord could not be the inheritor of the throne of David, either through Joseph, for he was not born of Joseph, or through Mary, because a woman could not inherit it: and, but for one remarkable circumstance, it would be impossible for Him to be King of the Jews. In fact, the virgin birth in itself would appear to bar Him from the throne." Then the doctor went on to show that the "remarkable circumstance" which removed all difficulty was found in Numbers 27:8, "If a man die, and have no son [as in the case of Heli, the father of Mary], then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter." Thus, our Lord, according to the flesh, *had* legal title to inherit the throne of David, while Numbers 36:6 shows why it was necessary for Mary to be espoused to Joseph. From which we may see that not only in the ceremonial law, but in the civil law of Israel also, God ever had *Christ* before Him!

# THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

## 11. Its Corollaries, Part 3

The total depravity of all mankind *explains the opposition which the Gospel generally meets with*. When one considers what the Gospel is in itself—namely, a message of good news unto lost sinners—one would naturally suppose that it will be universally and cordially received. Will not those condemned to eternal damnation welcome a reprieve? Will not those perishing from a deadly malady be glad to avail themselves of an effectual remedy? Will the naked scorn the garments of salvation, the poverty-stricken refuse the unsearchable riches of Christ, the famishing decline an invitation to a feast? One had not thought so. The Evangel contains the most illustrious display of the divine character which has ever been given to this world, and therefore is it designated “The glorious gospel of the blessed God” (1Ti 1:11). It makes known to us how divine wisdom has so perfectly adjusted His attributes that God can, at the same time, be both just and merciful in saving a hell-deserving sinner, that He can lavish upon him the riches of grace without in any wise compromising His holiness. Such a marvel is so far beyond human conception that it evidences itself to be truly divine. It is indeed “worthy of all acceptation” (1 Ti 1:15) It announces the inestimable blessings of pardon, holiness, and joy, and therefore, should be cordially welcomed by all who hear it.

The love of God which the Gospel publishes, and the sufferings of Christ for sinners, ought to melt the hardest heart and cause every hearer fervently to cry, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (2Co 9:15). It is a message of glad tidings proclaiming peace. It tells of deliverance from condemnation and promises eternal life to all who receive it. Yet, the fact remains, that the great majority of those who sit under it are but little affected and obtain no lasting advantage to their souls, and *that* perplexes many Christians. How often we hear them saying, after the most winsome notes of the Gospel have been struck, I cannot see how it is possible for any hearer to reject such an appeal. But the total depravity of man fully explains that lamentable event. There is nothing whatever in a heart that is desperately wicked upon which the Gospel can seize that will evoke any echo to it. Nay, its contents are directly opposed to the opinions and inclinations of the fallen creature. If it informed men of how great worldly honours could be secured gratis, or how large sums of money could be obtained for nothing, it would be heartily welcomed. If it assured men how they could indulge their lusts with impunity, and live in sin without fear of death and hell, it would indeed be good news to them. But a *holy Gospel* suits not their tastes, being quite foreign to their longings.

If God were to leave men entirely to themselves in their response to the Gospel, it would be universally rejected. There is a deeply rooted contrariety to God in their very natures which makes them turn a deaf ear to His voice, though they are ready enough to listen to the least whispers of Satan. As there be plants which are attractive to the eye but poisonous to the stomach, so, even though the Gospel be a pleasant sound to the ear, it is repulsive to a corrupt heart. The Gospel requires men to renounce their own wisdom and become as little children, to repudiate

their own righteousness and accept that of Another, to cease from self-pleasing and submit to the will of God. The Gospel is designed to transform the inner man and regulate the outer man, and that is quite unacceptable to the unregenerate. No exhortations will reconcile a wolf and a lamb. No logical arguments will tame a fierce lion. Though man be a rational creature, he follows the promptings of his lusts rather than the dictates of his judgment. One who is wholly in love with sin and Satan desires not to enter into the service of Christ, and therefore, it requires to be overcome by a flood of almighty grace, as the stream of the river is by the tide of the sea.

There is a certain class of writers who represent the heart of fallen man as painfully conscious of its burden and sighing for deliverance. But to say that the natural man is eager to escape from the ruin and degradation to which sin has reduced him is but the figment of fancy, unsupported by a single fact of experience. The natural man does indeed encounter conflicts, yet his struggles are not for deliverance from indwelling corruption, but to escape from the accusations of conscience. Man's misery is that he cannot sin without unpleasant consequences. There is nothing whatever in him that predisposes him to welcome the Gospel, or to give it joyful acceptance when it is made known to him. The heart of man is more unwilling to embrace the Evangel than it is to acknowledge the equity of the Law. "The Law puts man upon his own strength, the Gospel takes him off from his own footing. The Law acknowledges him to have a power in himself, and to act for his own reward: the Gospel strips him of all his proud and towering thoughts (2Co 5:14). This is the reason why men are more against the Gospel than against the Law: because it doth more deify God and debase man" (Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680).

As there needed to be a forerunner for Christ to "prepare His way" (Luk 1:76) before Him, so the Holy Spirit must first work upon the heart ere it is ready to receive the Gospel. Not until He renews the soul is any real sense of need awakened. And, until its sickness be felt, the great Physician is undesired. Before the heart has been divinely prepared for its reception, the Word of God can find no permanent place in it. That is very evident from our Lord's parable of the sower, wherein He likened those who heard the Word unto several kinds of ground. The seed sown was the same in each case. It was the soils that differed. The seed which fell on the wayside, the stony ground, and the thorny ground was abortive. The heart has to be made "honest and good" (Luk 8:15) before there will be any increase or fruit. None but the Holy Spirit can produce in the soul a hatred of sin and the desire to be saved from it because of its intrinsic vileness. It is owing to the distinguishing and astonishing grace of God that *any* are brought to repent and believe the Gospel. One whose affections are chained to the things of earth cannot seek those things which are above. Nothing more clearly demonstrates the fact of human depravity than that without a special and divine operation no heart ever did or ever will savingly receive the Gospel.

In view of the total depravity of man, *we need not be the least surprised at what we behold in Christendom itself*. A change of clothes effects no alteration in the character of their wearer, neither does a person's taking upon him a profession of religion better his heart. It may indeed foster a spirit of hypocrisy, and cause him to take more pains to hide from the eyes of his fellows what he is by nature, but it will not cleanse his soul from indwelling sin. Thus, while there be more open wickedness in the profane world, there is far more secret and cloaked wickedness in the professing world. Error is bound to be much more popular than truth unto the unregenerate, and therefore, to render the truth in any wise acceptable to them, it has to be watered down, wrested, and perverted—and there are always those who, for the sake of filthy lucre, are ready to perjure their souls. Hence, it is that heretical sects and systems abound on every side. What delusions are cherished about the character of God! What erroneous ideas are entertained about His way of salvation! What false notions are held of man's dignity, greatness, free will, even by



many who call themselves Christians! Because of the unbelief, selfishness, and impiety of men's hearts, the false prophets, who speak smooth and flattering things, are assured of a ready hearing.

Here, then, is the explanation of the babel of tongues which is now to be heard in Christendom. When the natural man takes it upon him to handle the things of God, they are sure to be corrupted. How can those who are devoid of divine grace, in love with sin, deal faithfully with that which unsparingly condemns sin? For the same reason, those who are without true piety will prefer to hear and follow those whose preaching gives them the most licence to gratify their carnality. Moreover, Satan will see to it that his emissaries cater to the worldly-minded. What is Romanism, with its "indulgences," its gorgeous pageantry, its dogma of purgatory, but an appeal unto the flesh? What are Universalism and Annihilationism but opiates to remove the dread of eternal punishment? What is Antinomianism, with its bald fatalism and repudiation of the moral law as the believer's rule of life, but an attempt to set aside the unpalatable truth of man's responsibility? What are the great majority of present-day "missions" and "revivals," with their musical attractions and sensational methods, but a pandering to those who love emotionalism and sensationalism? Higher Criticism and Modernism are but devices to banish the authority of Holy Writ, and get rid of the supernatural. Arminianism panders blatantly to human pride, for it is virtually the deification of man, making him the architect of his life and the determiner of his destiny.

How the depravity of mankind *makes evident the infinite patience of God!* "The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power" (Nah 1:3). How significant is the conjunction of those divine perfections! It is not because God is indifferent unto men's wickedness that He does not speedily take vengeance upon them; still less because He lacks the ability to do so. No, it is because God is not at the command of His passions as men are. He can restrain His anger when under great and just provocation to exercise it. His power over Himself is the cause of His slowness to execute wrath (Num 14:17); nevertheless, His might to punish is as great as His patience to spare. And oh, what fearful provocations, insults, and injuries God meets with daily from mankind. "How many millions of practical atheists breathe every day in God's air and live upon His bounty, who deserve to be inhabitants of hell rather than possessors of earth! An infinite holiness is opposed, and infinite justice provoked, yet an infinite patience forbears the punishment, and infinite goodness relieves our wants" (Charnock). What a wonder it is that God has protracted human history until now, and that He still "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and unjust" (Mat 5:45). Patience is as truly a divine attribute as are holiness, wisdom, faithfulness.

What a mercy that God does not strike dead those who brazenly defy Him and take His holy name in vain! Why does He not suddenly cut off every blatant infidel, as He did Ananias and Sapphira (Act 5:1-10)? Why does He not cause the earth to open her mouth and swallow the persecutors of His people, as He did when Dathan and Abiram rebelled against Moses and Aaron (Num 16:30-32)? Why does He tolerate the ten thousand abominations in Christendom which are now being perpetrated under the holy name of Christ? Only one answer is possible—because He endures "with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" (Rom 9:22). There are many ways in which the patience of God is manifested in this world. First, by publishing His vengeance before He strikes. "Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee" (Job 36:18), thereby affording them "space to repent." Second, by delaying the judgments which He has threatened. How long was the ark preparing before He sent the great deluge (Gen 6:3)! Third, in executing His judgments by degrees, as He sent plague after plague upon Egypt before He commissioned the angel of death to

slay all her firstborn (Gen 7-11). And as the Shekinah glory departed slowly from an apostate Israel, retiring stage by stage (Eze 9:3; 10:4, 19; 11:23), as though reluctant to leave.

Consider how great are our provocations against the Most High—His authority and majesty. Consider how many are our transgressions against the Law. Consider how long-continued they have been. No improvement in their manners during the course of time, but each succeeding generation as bad as the former, nay, “evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse” (2Ti 3:13). Consider how fearfully God is insulted and offended by the world’s treatment of His Gospel. He proclaims mercy unto the chief of sinners, but they scoff thereat. He entreats them to turn unto Him that they may live, but they are determined to destroy themselves. What an indescribably dreadful state men must be in who prefer their idols to Christ, and have no desire to be saved from their sins! What proof of His longsuffering that God has already prolonged this day of salvation for almost five hundred years more than the Mosaic economy lasted! Yet so far from appreciating such clemency, the unregenerate misinterpret and abuse it, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecc 8:11). When His rod was laid heavily upon them they “blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds” (Rev 16:11). How it should astonish us that God not only preserves in this life such a multitude of monsters, but continues to spread their tables!

How clearly the depravity of mankind *demonstrates the necessity for hell!* What can be the future of stout-hearted rebels who throughout life defied their Maker and Ruler and died in impenitence? Shall such a Being be despised with impunity? If, by the common consent of all right-minded people, one who is guilty of treason against an earthly monarch be worthy of death, what punishment can be too great for those who prefer themselves to the King of kings, and daily invade His prerogatives? Sin is a challenge to the government of God, and insurrectionists must be dealt with. Sin has to be paid the wages which it has so hardly earned. Equity requires that each one should reap as he has sown. The time of God’s patience has an end. He has wrath to punish as well as patience to bear. Because God is holy, He hates all sin, and as the moral Governor, it becomes Him to deal with revolters. How could He be the Sum of all excellence were He to make no distinction between good and evil and to treat virtue and vice alike? Christ bade His hearers, “Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him” (Luk 12:5). He knew as none other did that God is the enemy of sin and the avenger of those who set at naught all His counsels.

God will yet fully vindicate His throne and make evident what a fearful thing it is to despise Him. It is meet that He should display His governmental supremacy and make a footstool of all those who rise up against Him. Though He “endures [not “loves”!] with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,” yet in the day to come He will “show His wrath, and make known His power” (Rom 9:22), and that wrath will be no greater than the mercy which they abused. The highest contempt merits the greatest anger, and it is fitting that those who refuse to make God their happiness should be made to feel everlastingly the misery of their separation from Him. Eternal life and eternal death were plainly set before them, and since they chose the latter, they cannot justly blame any but themselves when they are cast into the same. God’s veracity requires Him to fulfil His threatenings, and His very goodness to separate eternally the wicked from the righteous—for the latter could not enjoy perfect peace and happiness if they lived for ever with the reprobate. It is just that those who freely serve the devil should be cast into the same prison and tormented with him. How could those who hate God, whose very natures are averse to

Him, be admitted into heaven? What *must be* the portion of those who would destroy the deity were it in their power to do so?

The total depravity of our race *sheds much light on Providence*. Many of God's dealings with men present insoluble riddles unto carnal reason. There is a divine handwriting on the wall of human affairs which, like that in Belshazzar's palace (Dan 5:8), is indecipherable by human wisdom. Unto those who are unacquainted with what is recorded in Genesis 3, God's ways with our race cannot but be most mysterious, but the whole subject is at once illumined when the doctrine of human depravity is understood. The whole brood of ills which now afflicts mankind has sprung from the pregnant womb of sin. The wrecked and wretched condition in which man now finds himself is the inevitable consequent of his fall. The frowning aspect of Providence which so often darkens this scene and appalls our minds receives its only adequate solution in the fact that Adam's offence fearfully changed the relation of God and the creature. Our nature, being what it is, we cannot expect history to be written in any other inks than those of tears and blood. Hospitals and mental homes, the discords and strifes among men, the warring between nations, unprincipled politicians, conscienceless preachers—all are the effects of the corruption of human nature.

Here is the key to the problem of suffering. All the misery in the world proceeds from sin. But, not only are the governmental ways of God with men what they are because of what the race is, they are also designed to make more evident the real character of fallen man. While Providence sets bounds to the exercise of human depravity, at the same time it permits sufficient manifestations thereof to leave no candid observer in doubt of the same. God causes men to reveal what they are by suffering their insubjection to His Law, their rejection of His Gospel, their perverting of His truth, their persecutions of His people. How many others, who were regarded as upright, are by some sudden temptation shown to have been all along corrupt at heart. Many a merchant, lawyer, bank official, yea, even minister of the Gospel, who was highly respected is permitted to fall into open sin, that the long-cherished depravity of his soul might be exposed. How remarkably does Providence often bring to light the hidden things of darkness—as in the case of Abraham's deception, of Joseph's brethren, the discovering of Judah's secret sin (Gen 38:17), of Achan's, of David's.

Belief of this doctrine *ought to have a beneficial effect upon the children of God*. A sense of our native depravity should engender deep humility. What a state we were in when God plucked us as brands from the burning! The realization of that ought to make us take and maintain a very lowly place before Him. "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more [in self praise] because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the LORD God" (Eze 16:63). Pride should be for ever hid from us, and that acknowledgment of Jacob's be our constant confession, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant" (Gen 32:10). Again, as we look back to the hole of the pit from which we were dug, what fervent praise and thanksgiving should be awakened in our hearts! How we should adore the One who opened our prison doors, for none but His hand could loose the bolts and shoot back the many locks which held us captive. How our hearts should be melted and filled with wonderment at the amazing grace which has saved us from the dominion of Satan and made us kings and priests unto God, which has elevated beggars to be "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17).

Once more, how this solemnizing doctrine ought to convince the saint that he cannot keep himself alive! If, being a mutable creature, sinless Adam, when left to himself, brought about his destruction, how much more so would the mutable believer, with a fallen and corrupt nature still

within him, unless an Almighty hand preserved him! So perverse are we by nature, and so weak as Christians, that without Christ, we can do no good thing (Joh 15:5). Sustaining and preserving grace must be sought by us hourly. We are treading a slippery path and need to pray, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe” (Psa 119:117). Finally, the knowledge of this truth ought to beget in us a spirit of complete dependence on God. How beautifully is that state depicted in the description given of the Church of old, “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?” (Song 8:5). So ignorant and wayward are we that “we know not what we should pray for as we ought” (Rom 8:26). It is only by the gracious operations of the Spirit that our affections are raised above this world, faith is strengthened, and we are enabled to lay hold of a divine promise. So shut up are we to God that, in all things, He must work in us “both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phi 2:13).

# INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

## Part 22

30. *The law of full mention.* In our last, we treated of the principle of first mention, and showed that the initial reference to a subject, or the earliest occurrence of a term, indicated from its context, and the manner in which it was used, what would be its force in all later references. This, we followed with the law of progressive mention, wherein it was seen that the Holy Spirit has observed an orderly development in the unfolding of each aspect of the truth. That as it is naturally, so in connection with divine revelation. There is first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. That may be further illustrated by a simple and well-known example, namely, the three allusions made unto Nicodemus in John’s Gospel. In John 3, we behold the midnight condition of his soul. In John 7:50-51, we see, as it were, the dawning of twilight. But in John 19:39-40, the daylight had fully broken. Now those principles are augmented by a third, for, as A. T. Pierson (1837-1911) pointed out in his most helpful book *The Bible and Spiritual Criticism* (now out of print), somewhere in the Bible each of its prominent themes is given a complete and systematic presentation. In other words, a whole chapter is devoted to an exhaustive treatment of what is more briefly mentioned elsewhere. Below, we barely mention examples of this fact—culled from Dr. Pierson, supplemented by our own researches.

Exodus 20 gives us the complete Decalogue, the ten commandments of the moral law being stated clearly and orderly. Psalm 119 sets forth at length the authority, the importance, and the manifold excellency of the written Word of God. In Isaiah 53, we have a full-length picture of the vicarious sufferings of the Saviour. John 17 contains a complete outline on the subject of intercession, revealing as it does the substance of those things which our great High Priest asks of the Father for His people. In Romans 3:10-20, we have the most detailed diagnosis of the depraved condition of fallen man to be met with in the Bible. In Romans 5:12-21, the foundation doctrine of federal headship is developed at length. In Romans 7, the conflict between the “two natures” in the believer is described as it is nowhere else. In Romans 9, the awful sovereignty of God, in election or reprobation, is dealt with more largely than elsewhere. In 1 Corinthians 15, the

resurrection of the believer's body is depicted in its full-robed splendour. In 2 Corinthians 8-9, every aspect of Christian giving and the varied motives which should prompt our benevolences are stated. In Hebrews 2:6-18, we find the clearest and most comprehensive setting forth of the reality of our Lord's humanity. In Hebrews 11, we have a wonderfully complete outline of the life of faith. Hebrews 12 furnishes us with an extensive treatment of the subject of divine chastisement. In James 3, we have summed up what the rest of the Bible teaches concerning the might and malice of the tongue. The whole of Jude is devoted to the solemn theme of apostasy.

In these articles, we have endeavoured to set before our readers those rules which we have long made use of in our own study of the Word. Since they were designed more especially for young preachers, we have spared no efforts to make them as lucid and complete as possible, placing in their hands those principles of exegesis which have stood us in best stead. Though not a distinct canon of hermeneutics, a few remarks require to be offered on the subject of *punctuation*, for since there be none in the original manuscripts, the manner and mode of dividing the text is often a matter of interpretation. The early copies were unbroken into chapters and verses, still less had they any notations of their sentences and clauses. It should also be pointed out that the use of large capitals in such verses as Exodus 3:14; 27:3; Isaiah 26:4; Jeremiah 23; Zechariah 14:20; Revelation 17:6; 19:16, originated with the Authorized Version of 1611, for they are not found in any of the previous translations. They are without any authority, and were used to indicate what the translators deemed to be of particular importance.

*The use of parentheses* is entirely a matter of interpretation, for there were none in the originals, and few in the early Greek copies. The translators deemed them necessary in a few instances, so as to indicate the sense of a passage by preserving the continuity of thought, as in Romans 5:13-17, which is an unusually long one. Some of the simplest and best-known examples are Matthew 6:32; Luke 2:35; John 7:50; Romans 1:2. It is not to be thought that words enclosed in brackets are of less importance. Sometimes they are an amplification, as in Mark 5:13, at others, they are explanatory, as in Mark 5:42; John 4:2. Instead of being only of trivial significance, a number of parenthetical clauses are of deep moment. For instance, "For I know that in myself (that is in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom 7:18)—the absence of that qualifying word had denied that there was any principle of grace or holiness in him. Similar examples are found in 2 Corinthians 5:7 and 6:2. On the other hand, some are of doubtful propriety. Not all will consider that the parentheses found in the following passages are necessary or even expedient: Mark 2:10; John 1:14, and 7:39; 1 Corinthians 9:21; 2 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 4:9-10. Below are three passages in which this writer considers the use of parentheses is a real help in the understanding of them.

In our judgment, a three fold change is required in the punctuation of 1 Corinthians 15:22-26. First, the clause "then cometh the end" should be placed at the close of verse 23, and not at the beginning of verse 24, for it completes the sentence instead of beginning a new one. Second, the whole of verse 25 requires to be placed in brackets, if the order of thought is to be preserved. Third, the italicized words in verses 24 and 26 should be deleted, for they are not only unnecessary, but misleading. Punctuated thus, the passage will read: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive; but every man [literally "everyone"] in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming, then the end." As the sin of Adam resulted not only in his own death, but also in the deaths of all who were in him as their federal head, so the obedience unto death of Christ not only procured His own resurrection, but ensures that of all who are united to Him as their federal Head—a resurrection in honour and glory—the resurrection of the wicked "to shame and everlasting contempt" falls not within the scope of this

chapter. The clause “then the end” denotes *not* “the termination of all mundane affairs,” but signifies the conclusion of the resurrection—the completion of the harvest (Joh 12:24).

By placing its first clause at the close of verse 23, what follows in verse 24 begins a fresh sentence, though not a new subject. “When he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God [not His mediatorial one, but only that aspect thereof which concerns the suppression of all revolters against heaven], even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power (for he must reign till he hath put down all enemies under his feet), the last enemy shall be destroyed—death.” Christ rose again *to reign*. All power in heaven and in earth has been given to Him for the express purpose of subjugating and annulling all the enemies of Himself and of His Father, and this issues in the abolition of death in the glorious resurrection of all His people. The grand object throughout this chapter is to show the guarantee which Christ’s resurrection gives for that of His redeemed—*denied* by some (1Co 15:12). That this subject is continued *after* the passage we are here critically examining is clear from 1 Corinthians 15:29-32, where further arguments are advanced—from the case of those who are baptized, and Paul’s own experiences. Verses 24-26 are brought in to assure the hearts of believers. Many powerful enemies seek to bring about their destruction, but their efforts are utterly vain, for Christ shall triumph over them all—death itself being abolished at their resurrection.

Most of the commentators have experienced difficulty when attempting to trace the course of the apostle’s argument in Hebrews 4:1-11. Its structure is indeed much involved, but not a little light is cast on it by placing verses 4-10 in parentheses. The exhortation begun in Hebrews 3:12 is not completed till 4:12 is reached. All that intervenes consists of an exposition and application of the passage quoted from Psalm 95 in Hebrews 3:7-11. The connecting link between the two chapters is found in, “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Heb 3:19). On those words is based the admonition of 4:1-3, which bids us to take to heart the solemn warning there given. The first clause of verse 3, when literally rendered, reads, “For we enter into the rest, who believe”—the historical tense is thus avoided. It is neither “have entered” nor “shall enter,” but an abstract statement of a doctrinal fact—only believers enter into God’s rest. The second half of 4:3 quotes again from Psalm 95—for the force of which we refer the student to pages 92 and 93 of last year’s volume for our remarks thereon.

In the parentheses of 4:4-10, the apostle enters upon a discussion of the “rest” which the Psalmist spoke of and which he was exhorting his readers to strive to enter, bidding them to take heed lest they fell short of attaining thereto. First, he pointed out (verses 4-6) that David had not referred to God’s own rest upon creation, and the Sabbath rest which ensued therefrom. Second, nor was it the rest of Canaan (verses 7-8) into which Joshua led Israel. Third, it was something then *future* (verse 9), namely the rest announced in the Gospel. Fourth, in verse 10, there is a noticeable change of number from the “us” in verse 1 and the “we” of verse 3 to “He that is entered into his rest,” where the reference is to Christ Himself—*His* entrance being both the pledge and proof that His people will do so, “whither the forerunner is *for us* entered” (6:20). In 4:11, the apostle returns to his principal exhortation of 3:13 and 4:1-3. There he had 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”. Here he makes known *how* that “fear” is to exert itself. Not in dread or doubting, but a reverential respect unto the divine threatenings and promises, with a diligent use of the appointed means of grace.

“Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice (first for his own sins, and then for the people’s): for this he did once, when he offered up himself” (Heb 7:27). This is another verse which has troubled commentators, but all difficulty is removed by inserting the

above parentheses. In this and the next verse, the apostle specifies some of the respects in which our High Priest is superior to the priests of the Aaronic order. His perfections, described in verse 26, exempted Him from all the infirmities and blemishes which pertain to the Levitical priests, and which disqualified them from making an effectual atonement unto God for sin. In blessed contrast, Christ was infinitely well pleasing to God, not only without personal transgression and defilement, but intrinsically holy in Himself. Thus, not only was there no need for Him to offer any sacrifice for Himself, but His oblation for His people was of infinite value and eternal validity. “This he did once” announces the glorious fact of its absolute sufficiency—that it requires no repetition on His part, nor augmentation from us.

*The use of italics* is also largely a matter of interpretation. In ordinary literature they are employed for emphasis, but in our Bibles they are inserted by the translators with the design of making the sense clearer. Sometimes they are helpful, sometimes harmful. In the Old Testament, it is, in certain instances, more or less necessary, for the Hebrew has no copulative, but joins the subject unto the predicate, which gives an emphasis of abruptness to which the English mind is unaccustomed, as in “From the sole of the foot even unto the head—no soundness in it....Your country—desolate, your cities—burned with fire” (Isa 1:6-7). In the great majority of cases, this writer *ignores* the added words of men, considering it more reverent so to do, as well as obtaining more directly the force of the original. In some instances, the translators quite missed the real thought of the passage, as in the last clause of Exodus 2, where, “God had respect unto them” ought to be “had respect unto *it*,” i.e., His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob of the previous verse. The last word of Daniel 11:32 is too restrictive—doing His will also is included.

But it is in the New Testament that the majority of mistakes occur. There we find a number of passages where needless additions have been made and where the meaning has been misapprehended, falsified, by the words the translators inserted. In Romans 8:27, “the *will* of God” is too contracted—His covenant, His word, His grace and mercy are not to be excluded. The “from another” in 1 Corinthians 4:7 unduly narrows the scope—from what *you* were as unregenerate is not to be excluded. “Inspirer” is preferable to “author” in 1 Corinthians 14:33, for God is the Decreeer of all things (Rom 11:36), yet not the Prompter of confusion. It is very doubtful if “the nature of” is permissible in Hebrews 2:16, for it is not the divine incarnation which is there in view (*that* we have in verse 14), but rather the purpose and consequence of the same. Its opening, “For” looks back, remotely, to verses 9 and 10, immediately, to verses 14 and 15. In verse 16, a reason is given why Christ tasted death for “every *son*,” and why He destroyed (annulled the power of) the devil in order to liberate his captives. It was because He laid hold of (espoused) not the cause of (the fallen) angels, but the chosen seed of Abraham—thus, a foundation is here laid for what is said in verse 17.

Second Corinthians 6:1 is a yet worse instance, for by inserting the words “with Him” a thought entirely foreign to the apostle’s scope is introduced, and ground given for horrible boasting. Paul was referring to the joint efforts of God’s servants, the one planting and another watering (1Co 3:5-6). To say they were “workers together with God” would be to divide the honours. If any supplement be made, it should be *under* Him. The ministers of the new covenant were fellow workers, merely “helpers” of the joy (1:24) of God’s people. So too the correct punctuation (as the Greek requires) of 1 Corinthians 3:9 is, “For God’s *we* are: fellow workers; God’s heritage *ye* are.” One other example must suffice. The added “to bring us” in Galatians 3:24 quite misses the scope of the passage, and inculcates false doctrine. The apostle was not there treating with the experiential side of things, but the *dispensational* (as the opening verses of

the next chapter demonstrate), not with the unsaved as such, but with God's people under the old covenant. The Law never brought a single sinner to Christ. The Holy Spirit does *that*, and though He employs the Law to convict souls of their need of Christ, the Gospel is the means which He employs to make them close with Christ.

Now one or two brief observations and we conclude this lengthy series. The work of the expositor is to bring out the grammatical and spiritual meaning of each verse he deals with. In order to do that, he must approach it without bias or prejudice, and diligently *study* it. He must neither assume that he knows its meaning nor take his doctrinal views from others. Nor is he to form his own opinions from a few detached verses, but carefully compare his ideas with the entire Analogy of Faith. Each verse requires to be critically examined and every word thoroughly weighed. Thus, he is to note the "*is* accepted" of Acts 10:35, and not "shall be," and the "are" (rather than "shall be") in Hebrews 3:6, 14—to change the tense mentally in those verses would inculcate false doctrine. Minute care is needed if we are to observe the "the Lord and Saviour" of 2 Peter 2:20 (not "their"), and the "our" and not "your" of 1 Corinthians 15:3. Finally, it is not the interpreter's province to explain what God has *not explained* (Deu 29:29), i.e., His "ways" (Rom 11:33), miracles, etc.





# June

## NO MARVELS

“If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, *marvel not* at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth” (Ecc 5:8). In the midst of his soliloquizings and moralizings, Solomon interjected an occasional counsel or exhortation. He duly observed in his day “the place of judgment, that wickedness was there, and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there” (Ecc 3:16), and now he bids his readers not to be surprised or stumbled thereat. It was a timely word, for such passages as Job 12:6 and 21:7; Psalm 73:2-12; Jeremiah 12:1 show that the Old Testament saints were deeply exercised over the prosperity of the wicked and the adversity of the righteous. Solomon, therefore, seeks to remove this stumbling-block and prevent their taking offence at or murmuring against the divine government. Fallen human nature being what it is, we should not think it strange that the strong oppress the weak, or that justice should be corrupted by those in high places. Man is made to reap the bitter harvest of his apostasy from God. Yet, however perplexed we may be over the success which so often rewards the workers of iniquity, let us be assured that nothing escapes the notice of the Most High, that *He “regardeth”* and has wise reasons for permitting the frequent miscarriage of human justice by the magistrates and rulers of earth. There is One infinitely above to whom they must yet render an account, and from whom they will receive “a just recompense of reward” (Heb 2:2).

“*Marvel not* that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). Nicodemus was nonplussed by Christ’s statement that “except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:3). Though a master in Israel, he was unable to grasp our Lord’s meaning. The new birth is indeed a marvel, for it is a miracle, a supernatural thing. It is a marvel of divine grace, for it is entirely unmerited by those who experience the same; yea, is unsought by them (Isa 65:1), undesired. It is a miracle of divine wisdom; that the Holy One should act in mercy unto a vile rebel, and lift up the beggar from the dunghill and set him among princes (1Sa 2:8), without compromising His justice or sully any of His perfections. It is a marvel of divine power that one who is dead in trespasses and sins should be quickened into newness of life—for that is an even greater display of God’s might than is the raising of a physical corpse. But, if regeneration be such a wonderful thing, why did Christ say to Nicodemus, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (Joh 3:7)? He was not forbidding him to be amazed and awed at the new birth itself, but was rebuking him for his dullness in failing to see the necessity of it.

The imperativeness of the new birth is evident from the fact that man is a fallen creature. Originally he was made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26), fitted to enjoy fellowship

with Him. But upon his apostasy, he was alienated from his Maker, became unsuited unto the Holy One, and fled from Him. The natural man is totally depraved, a slave of Satan, dead in sin, and, therefore, it is no marvel that *he* needs to be born again. He is devoid of any love to God, any delight in Him, any relish for heavenly things, any ability to perform spiritual acts. A miracle of grace, then, must needs be wrought upon him before he is qualified to enter the Father's house. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, for those who have been made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col 1:12), for without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb 12:14). An unregenerated person would be entirely out of harmony with the ineffable purity of the celestial courts, and could no more enjoy their company and activities than could a deaf man an oratorio or a blind one the beauties of an exquisite sunset. A spiritual kingdom requires a spiritual nature, and in order to the acquisition of that the natural man must be regenerated—divinely regenerated, for the creature can no more quicken himself than he could give himself a natural being. Why not? Because regeneration is no mere outward reformation, process of education, or even religious cultivation. No, it consists of a radical change of heart and transformation of character, the communication of a gracious and holy principle, producing new desires, new capacities, a new life. Then, marvel not that in order thereto a man must be born from above.

"For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. *Marvel not at this*" (Joh 5:26-28). It should occasion us no surprise to be informed that the Father has invested the Mediator with the right to execute judgment in connection with both the present and the future order of things—in the churches now (Rev 2:3), and in His kingdom then (Mat 13:41). Not because the Father has relinquished the government, but that He is pleased to bestow this high honour upon His Son. Christ has been elevated to the utmost conceivable dignity, and had conferred upon Him the glory of adjudicating at the grand Assize, and this because He is "the Son of man." It is the just recognition of His voluntary abasement. Because He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, God has "highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Phi 2:9-10). Even now, He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and is upholding all things by the word of His power (Heb 1:3). But the authority to dispense judgment in the last great day is the culminating point of His exaltation, the suitable recompense of His curse-bearing life and death. This makes manifest the Father's valuation of Christ—acquits Him from the charge of blasphemy in making Himself equal with God (Mar 14:64; Joh 5:18), and demonstrates that He is "over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom 9:5).

God "hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained" (Act 17:31). What a stupendous undertaking that will be! All mankind summoned before His tribunal to receive every one according to his works. The discharge of such an office calls for one who is possessed of infinite integrity and justice, of omniscience also, for he must be capable of reading the secrets of the heart and bringing to light the hidden things of darkness, acquainted with all the circumstances of each life. In John 5:27, Christ affirmed that the Father has committed all judgment unto Him because He is His Son. Here, He adds, "because he is the Son of man." Because the Son of God assumed human nature, tabernacled here in the same, He was despised and rejected. How fitting then that the slighted One should occupy the place of supreme authority. At His first advent, He was in the form of a servant (Phi 2:7), at His second, He will be seen as the King of kings (Rev 19:16). Formerly, He invited men to repentance, then, He comes to take vengeance on the scorers of His grace. There, fishermen were His

ambassadors, here, angels are His attendants. Then, He stood before human tribunals, now, He sits upon the throne of His glory. “Marvel not at this” (Joh 5:28), for the same was promised Him before He became incarnate (Dan 7:13-14). It is suitable that the Judge should be visible and men be sentenced by one in their own nature. Full proof will be given that He is qualified for such a task, for “All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth” (Joh 5:28), and then will it be universally known that He is none other than the Almighty clothed with flesh and blood.

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And *no marvel*; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2Co 11:13-14). The devil is the prince of duplicity as well as of wickedness. He has always worked secretly, endeavouring to hide his true identity. When beguiling Eve, he did so through a serpent (Gen 3:1). When he appeared to accuse Job, he waited until a day when “the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also *among them*” (Job 1:6). When he sowed his tares, he did so at night, “while men slept” (Mat 13:25)—not thistles, but imitation wheat! When he betrayed Christ into the hands of His enemies, he employed an apostle and used a kiss for the sign (Mat 26:48). He is the arch-imposter, “which deceiveth the whole world” (Rev 12:9), and in so doing he assumes many characters and plays many parts. In the religious world, he appears not as the dragon of darkness, but as an angel of light (2Co 11:14)—light being the emblem of purity and blessedness. He pretended to have regard for the authority of Scripture, and quoted from it when tempting Christ (Mat 4:6). He never shows himself openly for what he really is. Therefore, we need not be astonished that his ministers sail under false colours, occupy pulpits, and pose as the champions of the truth. They are as zealous and industrious in their labours as are the servants of God. Often they are of unblemished moral character, of apparent piety and real love for souls. Yet are they “wolves in sheep’s clothing” (Mat 7:15). But they do not deceive God; He will yet unmask them and consign them to the everlasting burnings.

“*Marvel not*, my brethren, if the world hate you” (1Jo 3:13). Rather should we be amazed if it were otherwise, especially in view of Genesis 3:15. If the world despised and rejected the Head, we cannot expect that it will fawn upon His members. He has plainly warned us to the contrary, John 15:18-21. The unregenerate hate the regenerate because their lives condemn them.

## EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

### 30. Our Anointing (2:20)

*“But ye have an unction from the Holy One,  
and ye know all things”*

From what was before us in the last article, it is clear that the preaching of the apostles themselves did not result in the conversion of all who were convinced of its verity. From a very early date God made it appear that the gospel net enclosed bad fishes as well as good ones (Mat 13:47-48), that not all who took upon them the name of Christ were His disciples indeed. What Paul predicted in Acts 20:30-31 was soon fulfilled: nominal Christians apostatized from the faith,

disturbed the peace and harmony of the churches—prejudicing many against God’s faithful servants, alluring such to follow them and organize themselves into heretical sects and schisms. Yet both 1 John 2:19, and Jude 1:19 furnish conclusive proof that such men were devoid of true piety. It is therefore a mark of God’s goodness and mercy unto His people when His providence so orders it, that those who are not one with them at heart, but who in fact hate all that is holy, should withdraw from them. It is a blessing to the churches when those who are determined to walk after their own lusts forsake their fellowship, for while they remain they are but Achans who draw down the judgment of God upon the whole congregation (Jos 7:20 ff.).

Some of the very worst sins men are guilty of may be committed under the purest preaching of the gospel and the most spiritual administration of its ordinances. The antichrists referred to by John are a definite case in point. None can be supposed to have clearer light externally into the doctrine and practice, worship and discipline, of genuine Christianity than those apostates enjoyed; yet none ever sinned more willingly and perversely. We too have beheld those who departed from the truth: men like blazing comets for a season, professing to have superior light and sanctity, who are greatly admired and secure a large following, yet who are of their father, the devil (Joh 8:44). Yet such occurrences should not shake the saints. When Paul made mention of two heretics of his day, “who concerning the truth have erred...and overthrow the faith of some,” he at once added, “nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure” (2Ti 2:18-19)—the combined effort of Satan and all his agents cannot shake it. “The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations” (Psa 33:11). His Church is built upon the Rock of ages and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!

Paul then went on to say, “The Lord knoweth them that are his,” which means not only that He recognizes them amid the mass of professors (which we are not always able to do), but that He loves them and makes all things work together for their good. Then the apostle added, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” The fact that God overrules the perfidy of apostates to His own glory and the good of His people, by making manifest hypocrites on the one hand and those who are approved of Him on the other, does not excuse the former—nor must we palliate their awful guilt, but shun them as a plague. And while those who by grace remain steadfast to Christ and His gospel are not to be stumbled by the infidelity of graceless professors, yet they are to take the same to heart and turn it into earnest prayer, crying, “O let me not wander from thy commandments” (Psa 119:10). Say not in a spirit of fatalism, “If I have been born again I shall never perish,” for God gives warning: “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1Co 10:12). God has not promised to preserve the reckless. To affirm that He will preserve us whether or not we use the means of grace is not the language of faith, but of presumption and impiety. True faith produces a spirit of humility and self-distrust. True faith causes us to work out our own salvation “with fear and trembling” (Phi 2:12).

*“But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things”* (verse 20). This is in sharp and blessed contrast with what has been before us in the preceding verses, and shows the gracious provision that the Lord has made for “His own” to preserve them from embracing fatal error. The antichrists had formerly been admitted to communion with the saints, but their subsequent apostasy proved that (like Judas) they had been hypocrites from the beginning. They were of the world and not of God, for His truth dwelt not in their “inward parts” (Psa 51:6). Had they been born of Him, they would have remained faithful to Christ and His Gospel. God permitted them to forsake the assemblies of His saints, to make it evident that they had never received the anointing, which is from above. By their defection they only made more apparent the real people of God, who will not sell the truth at any price. Many appear to take the yoke of Christ

upon them, but afterwards fall away and return to their wallowing in the mire; but those who are effectually called persevere unto the end—for the Spirit has been given to be with them “for ever” (Joh 14:16), and the prevalent intercession of Christ ensures their preservation (Heb 7:25). Thus the distinction between the two classes is made to be seen more clearly.

The relation of our present verse to the one immediately preceding, which mentions the going out of certain ones from the churches, was well expressed by James Morgan (1799-1873):

“They had been exposed to the temptation of false teachers, and they did not endure the test. They were drawn away by the speculative errors presented to them, and so evidenced that they were not ‘rooted and grounded’ in the truth. On the contrary those whom the apostle commends in our text had remained firm in the midst of all attempts to seduce them from the faith.”

Thus the blessedness of our present verse is greatly enhanced by the sharp antithesis presented in the foregoing: the former supplying a dark background to bring out into clearer relief the excellence of this gift of the Saviour’s—the anointing. Those words clearly intimate that John entertained no fear that any of the saints would apostatize and bring reproach upon the cause of Christ. They had received such an unction from above as enabled them to understand and lay hold of those things which belonged to their everlasting peace, and which insured their perseverance in the faith.

Brief though our present verse be, it possesses a fullness that no expositor or commentator can exhaust. It treats of that which in our day receives but scant attention. It speaks of one of the outstanding benefits and blessings that God bestows on His people.

“*But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*” What is meant by the “unction” (or “anointing,” for that is the meaning of *chrisma*, and it is so translated in verse 27) that believers are here said to have? Who is meant by “the Holy One” from whom it comes? What is signified by “and ye know all things”? In what sense or senses do they “know” them? Important questions are these, yet none of them is difficult to answer. We shall, however, consider the second one first and ponder the Anointer, then the anointing, and last the anointed.

## The Anointer

Who is the Anointer or “Holy One?” It is surprising that one of Albert Barnes’s<sup>16</sup> acumen should say it is the Holy Spirit, for there is not the least room for doubt that it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is here in view. As the Son of God, He is essentially holy, as appears by comparing Isaiah 6:1 with John 12:41. In His humanity, impeccably<sup>17</sup> holy (Luk 1:35). In His life upon earth, ineffably<sup>18</sup> holy (Heb 7:26). In His official character He was prefigured by Israel’s high priest, who wore upon his forehead a plate of pure gold on which was inscribed “Holiness to the Lord” (Exo 28:36). In Old Testament prophecy He was designated the “Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel” (Isa 41:14, cf. 54:5). In the days of His flesh the demons owned Him as “the Holy One of God” (Luk 4:34). After His ascension the apostles referred to Him as “the Holy One” (Act 3:14). Thus it is abundantly clear from the Scriptures that “the Holy One” is one of the Redeemer’s

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<sup>16</sup> **Albert Barnes** (1798-1870) – American theologian; born in Rome, New York; graduated from Hamilton College and Princeton Theological Seminary. He was the pastor successively of the Presbyterian Church in Morristown, New Jersey and of the First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia. He was an eloquent preacher, but his reputation rests chiefly on his expository works, which are said to have had a larger circulation both in Europe and America than any others of their class. Of the well-known *Notes on the New Testament*, it is said that more than a million volumes had been issued by 1870.

<sup>17</sup> **impeccably** – sinlessly.

<sup>18</sup> **ineffably** – inexpressibly.

divine titles; for as none but God is essentially holy, and Christ is the Holy One, then He must be God!

Further, that the Lord Jesus is the person from whom God's people receive an unction, appears from the fact that not only is He the "Holy One," but He is also "the Christ" or the Anointed One. He was not only chosen and ordained to the mediatorial office, but furnished for the same by anointing. During the Old Testament economy, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed unto and confirmed in their office by anointing (Lev 8:12; 2Sa 5:3; 1Ki 19:16), pointing forward to Him who should be, in His own person, Prophet, Priest, and Potentate alike. The anointing of the Redeemer was announced in Messianic prophecy: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach glad tidings unto the meek" (Isa 61:1). That was fulfilled at His entrance upon His public ministry, when "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil" (Act 10:38)—the historical reference being to what is recorded in Matthew 3:16, when the Spirit of God descended like a dove and lighted upon Him. It was the furnishing of the God-man Mediator with all the necessary gifts for the discharge of His office (Isa 11:1-2). Immediately after, He was said to be "full of the Holy Ghost" (Luk 4:1).

The Lord Jesus is denominated the *Messiah* (the Hebrew term) and the *Christ* (the Greek) from this unction of the Spirit, for each of those two titles signifies "The Anointed One." At the triumphant completion of His work, when He ascended into heaven, the Saviour was again anointed by God—anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows (Heb 1:9)—when He received the Spirit to pour out upon His disciples; there termed "the oil of gladness" to celebrate His victory and exaltation, and to denote His deliverance from any further trouble and distress. As Peter declared of Christ on the day of Pentecost, "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this" (Act 2:33). "I beheld...a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (Rev 5:6). In each of those passages the ascended Christ is seen dispensing this gift, conferring the Spirit on His people. In His mediatorial work, Christ fully met all the claims of God upon His people, and in proof thereof He has been given the Spirit to communicate to them. This is clear from Galatians 3:13-14: Christ's gift of the Spirit is the result of His removing God's curse from us, and thereby putting away our sins. His forerunner declared, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost" (Mar 1:8).

Christ had referred to the Comforter thus: "whom I will send unto you from the Father" (Joh 15:26). And again, "If I depart, I will send him unto you" (Joh 16:7). Such passages as those contain the balancing truth to Isaiah 11:1-3 and 61:1-2, where the Mediator is viewed as subordinate to the Spirit; but in Revelation 3:1, He has the Spirit, in John 15:26, He promises to send the Spirit, and in Acts 2:33, He actually bestows Him—so there we see the Spirit subordinate to the Son. Put the two together, and we learn that there is a conjoined mission in which the Son and the Spirit act in unison for the salvation of God's elect: the Son *effecting* their redemption, the Spirit *applying* it. Moreover, while the Spirit is from Christ, likewise His great mission is to direct souls to Christ. "As the Spirit never acts but in and through Christ with respect to His people, so Christ is never received but by and with the influences of the Spirit. They are as united in Their operations as in Their essence" (Ambrose Serle, 1742-1812). That Christ received the Spirit to bestow upon His redeemed was blessedly prefigured in the anointing of the high priest, of which we read, "The precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments" (Psa 133:2)—reaching to the lowest of his members!



## The Anointing

“*But ye have an unction from the Holy One.*” Believers have nothing but what they have in and from Christ: it is “of His fullness” that all of them receive “and grace for grace” (Joh 1:16). The Spirit is given to Christ *immediately*, [and] to us *derivatively*, for in all things He has the pre-eminence. “For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him” (Joh 3:34), whereas in our case, “unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph 4:7). The Spirit dwells in Christ by *radiation*, in us by *operation*. Therefore, as communicating to us by the Saviour, He is denominated the “Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8:9) and “the Spirit of his Son” (Gal 4:6). This is one of the vital points on which “the Greek Catholic Church” errs, for she insists that the Spirit proceeds from the Father only. That is a most serious error, for there is no higher exhibition of the Godhead of the Saviour than the fact that He is represented in the Scriptures to be the Possessor and the Sender of the Spirit to His redeemed; nothing more clearly demonstrates the full equality of the Son with the Father. It is a decisive proof of His deity; for no mere servant of God, however exalted his station, could possibly confer such a gift as the Spirit Himself.

There was a peculiar propriety in saying that the believer’s unction is “from the Holy One,” for the purpose of the same is to make him holy. As Haupt rightly pointed out, “The fundamental idea of anointing in the Old Testament is the setting apart of an object from a common use to the service of God—from the world to holy fellowship. It must be remembered that things as well as persons—the vessels of the tabernacle, etc. (Lev 8:10-11)—were anointed in order for a separation from a profane to a sacred use. The stone which Jacob anointed was set apart as the place where God had manifested Himself (Gen 28:18).” Thus, here, the anointing is both the communication of a spiritual gift and an operation, which separates the individual from the world and all that is opposed to God, consecrating him to Him. It was so with the Lord Jesus Himself, for the coming of the Spirit upon Him was both the endowing of Him for His mediatorial work (Isa 61:1) and the divine setting apart of Him unto His mission (Mat 3:16-17). Thus it is with His members. The unction He received He imparts to them. He is the Anointer, they are the anointed ones, and as such the christs of the Christ, He being designated “the Christ” (Mat 16:16), “the Christ of God” (Luk 9:20), “the Lord Christ” (Col 3:24) by way of eminence.

The Holy Spirit is the vital bond of union with Christ. The One cannot be without the Other. If we have Christ as our Saviour, we have the Spirit for our Indweller. When Christ takes possession of anyone, He puts the Spirit within him; if he lacks the latter, he has no saving interest in the former. That is unmistakably clear from, “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom 8:9). He who claims to belong to the Lord Jesus and gives no evidence of being indwelt by the Spirit of Christ lacks the only irrefragable<sup>19</sup> proof that establishes the validity of his claim, and thus his profession is falsified. We cannot be Christ’s “fellows” (Heb 1:9) unless we are His brethren or companions, and that cannot be without partaking of His anointing. This it is that distinguishes “the wise virgins” from the foolish ones, the actual possessors from graceless professors,<sup>20</sup> the former having “oil in their vessels” (Mat 25:4). In due course, all of God’s elect receive this unction: “Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God” (2Co 1:21)—a decisive proof that Christ, our Anointer, is divine. At regeneration we are made members of Christ’s mystical body, partakers in our measure of those gifts and graces that our Head received without measure.

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<sup>19</sup> **irrefragable** – incontestable; undeniable.

<sup>20</sup> **graceless professors** – those who make a profession of faith but who are not truly saved by the grace of God.

## The Anointed

Both Christ and His Church come under this office-act of God the Spirit, for as the Redeemer could not have been the Messiah without His unction, neither could the Church have been His spouse without the same. As it was from the Spirit's unction that the Lord Jesus received His name "the Christ," so it is from their being anointed ones that believers receive their name "Christians" (1Pe 4:16), signifying that they are anointed with the Spirit. This it is which is the distinguishing mark of every truly born-again soul: he is made the temple of the Holy Spirit. Yet we say again, it is not the Spirit who anoints us; rather is He the unction wherewith we are anointed by Christ. Even where the Saviour Himself was concerned, the Spirit was not the Anointer, but His anointing, for He was anointed by the Father (Act 4:27). Our anointing is by a holy Saviour (Rom 8:2) to fit us for holy converse and walking with Him. It is received out of His fullness (Col 2:9-10). We can have no gift or grace but in and by and from the Lamb of God. The love of the Father centers in Christ Jesus our Lord, and flows through Him to us (Rom 8:39). The apostle, then, would keep our eyes fixed on Christ, the Holy One; then let us praise Him for this "unction," which is the fruit of His death for us.

The anointing of believers sanctifies and consecrates them as kings and priests unto God (Rev 1:6) as those persons were typically during the Old Testament era. "Whereas, therefore, those titles denote the dignity of believers in their especial relation unto God, by this unction they are peculiarly dedicated and consecrated unto Him" (John Owen<sup>21</sup>). The Spirit then takes up His abode within their hearts with all His graces, operations, gifts, and enablings. He does so on a twofold basis. First, on the ground of redemption: in the types, the oil (emblem of the Spirit) was always placed upon the blood (Lev 14:14, 17)—it is on the ground of *atonement accomplished* that the Spirit comes to believers, which at once sets aside human merits. Yet, second, there must be a moral fitness as well. The Spirit of God will not dwell within unbelieving rebels: "After [or "when"] that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph 1:13). When we repudiate all idols, surrender to Christ as Lord, and trust in the efficacy of His sacrifice, the heart is prepared for the Spirit to enter and take possession for Christ's use. When we give up ourselves to Christ, He owns the dedication by making our bodies the temples of the Holy Spirit, there to maintain His interests against all the oppositions of the devil.

*"But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."* The first benefit that believers have by this anointing is an *illumination of their minds*. Not that the Spirit imparts any superior mental endowment, or that anything over and above what is contained in Holy Writ is revealed to them; rather does He enable them to perceive what the natural man cannot discern (1Co 2:14), by His effectual application of the truth to their hearts. In order to see, two things are necessary: the organ of vision within, and light from without—the Spirit imparts the former, the Scripture furnishes the latter. Their knowledge is such as to deliver from fatal delusions and preserve them from apostasy. As Levi Palmer aptly declared, "The departure of the antichrists [verse 19] shows the supreme importance of our abiding discipleship. But in order thus to abide, it is necessary to have what may be called a divine tuition, whereby we may be able to detect error. Neither heart nor intellect will do—nothing can be sufficient less than the 'seven eyes,'

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<sup>21</sup> **John Owen** (1616-1683) – called "The Prince of the Puritans." He was a chaplain in the army of Oliver Cromwell and vice-chancellor of Oxford University, but most of his life he served as a minister in congregational churches. His written works span forty years and run to twenty-four volumes representing among the best resources for theology in the English language. Born to Puritan parents in the Oxfordshire village of Stadhampton.



which are the Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth' (Rev 5:6; R. V. margin). It is this power of spiritual discernment that all believers receive in the gift of the Spirit."

# THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

## 82. Tribal Portions

We turn now to those chapters (Jos 15-19) which offer the least scope to the expositor, the presence of which has probably deterred not a few from attempting to write a connected commentary on this sixth book of the Word. Those chapters contain, for the most part, a geographical description of the different portions of Canaan which were allotted unto Israel's tribes. They consist largely of a list of places, many of which are never referred to again in the Scriptures, and which cannot now be identified. Nor can we be sure, in the majority of instances, of the precise meanings of the names of those towns and villages, though in those cases where such is obtainable, the typical and moral significance thereof is more or less apparent. That nothing has been recorded in the Bible without divine design must be believed by every reverent heart—the genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1-9 not excepted—and that all is of real value to the people of God is not to be questioned. Yet, so far as we are aware, the Holy Spirit has not yet "opened" their purpose and spiritual contents to the Church. Acknowledging our ignorance and refusing to speculate thereon, we can but single out a few of the more prominent details found in this section, and offer some remarks thereon.

"This then was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah by their families" (Jos 15:1). The first two of the tribes to have made known to them their allotments were Judah and Joseph, that being detailed here, the other in the next chapter. Upon which Matthew Henry (1662-1714) said, "Judah and Joseph were the two sons of Jacob on whom Reuben's forfeited birthright devolved. Judah had the dominion entailed on him, and Joseph the double portion, and therefore the two tribes were first seated—Judah in the southern part of the land of Canaan, and Joseph in the northern part. And on them, the other seven did attend, and had their respective lots as appurtenances to these two. The lots of Benjamin, Simeon, and Dan were attendant to Judah, and those of Issachar and Zebulon, Naphtali, and Asher to Joseph. These two were first set up to be provided for, it should seem, before there was such an exact survey of the land as we find afterward (Jos 18:9).

"It is probable that the most considerable parts of the northern and southern countries, and those that lay nearest to Gilgal, and which the people were best acquainted with, were first put into two portions, and the lot was cast upon them between these two principal tribes, of the one of which Joshua was, and of the other Caleb, who was the first commissioner in this writ of partition; and by the decision of that lot, the southern country fell to Judah, of which we have an account in this chapter; and the northern to Joseph, of which we have an account in the two following chapters. And when this was done, there was a more equal dividend (either in quantity or quality) of the remainder among the seven tribes. And this, probably, was intended in that

general rule which was given concerning this partition: ‘to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man’s inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth’ (Num 33:54): that is, ‘Ye shall appoint two greater portions, which shall be determined by lot, to those more numerous tribes of Judah and Joseph, and then the rest shall be lesser portions, to be allotted to the less numerous tribes.’ The former was done in Gilgal, the latter in Shiloh.” It should also be pointed out that, as the injunction was given that when Israel were on the march “these [i.e. Judah] shall first set forth” (Num 2:9), so the assigning of Judah’s portion *first* was a prophetic intimation of the future pre-eminence of this tribe.

It is to be observed that the description given of Judah’s heritage is broken into at 15:13, by mention being made of Caleb (who belonged to this tribe) receiving Hebron for his personal portion. This was before us in our last, but a further detail is here recorded which claims our attention. After informing us that he drove thence the three sons of Anak, we are told that, “Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife” (Jos 15:16). This should not be understood as an exhibition of any personal sloth on Caleb’s part, still less of fear, but rather as his affording an opportunity for another to obtain some laurels as well as himself. It is to be borne in mind that in the East the father is regarded as having the right to dispose of his daughter, and it is the regular custom for him to select her husband without consulting her—compare 1 Samuel 18:17. Kirjath-sepher was a fortress of the Anakims, one that was difficult of approach, being situated on a hill (note “went up” in verse 15). The offer made by Caleb was an incentive to bravery. He knew that only a man of faith and courage would attack such a place.

In the above, we obtain a further insight into Caleb’s character and see what a well-balanced one it was. He was not only a man of strong faith, an intrepid warrior, but a dutiful father as well. It was not only that he desired to stir up Israel generally to set about the tasks which still required performing (Jos 16:10 shows that some of them had already become slack in their duty), but that he desired to make sure that his daughter obtained a worthy husband. Caleb’s challenge was accepted by his own nephew, for we read, “And Othniel the son of Kenez, the brother of Caleb, took it” (Jos 15:17). It is noteworthy that, years later, this same Othniel, who acted so admirably and valiantly on this occasion, became both a deliverer and a judge in Israel (Jdg 3:9), and, in fact, the first person who presided over the nation after Joshua’s death. “It is good for those who are setting out in the world to begin betimes with that which is great and good, that, excelling in service when they are young, they may excel in honour when they are old” (Matthew Henry).

“And he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife” (Jos 15:17). It is to be borne in mind that there was nothing in the Mosaic Law which forbade the marrying of cousins. As others before us have suggested, it is highly probable that Othniel was in love with Achsah before her father made this proposal. It is also likely that Caleb was aware of it and looked favourably upon him, but decided thus to put him to the test before finally committing himself. It was both an honour to wed the daughter of the man who was the chief of his tribe and a great privilege for Othniel to marry into a family so marked by faith and piety, and to be united to one who, we cannot doubt, had been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Such a woman is to be desired far above one who is endowed with the riches of this world, or possesses little else than a pretty face.

“And it came to pass, as she came unto him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou?” (Jos 15:18). Here, we behold some of the becoming traits which marked the character of Caleb’s daughter. The “as she came unto him” means to her husband, her father accompanying them from his house where they would be married. First, her meekness appears in the owning of Othniel as her head—desiring

that he should be the one to present her request unto Caleb. Apparently Othniel considered that the request would come better from her direct, and, though contrary to her own inclination, she deferred to her husband's judgment. Second, her getting down from her mount betokened her respect and reverence for her father (compare Genesis 24:64 where Rebekah did the same when Isaac approached her), which showed that marriage had not "turned her head." She was as ready to honour her parents now as formerly.

Perceiving that his daughter desired to ask him for some favour, Caleb said to her, "What wouldest thou?" And she answered, "Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a southland; give me also springs of water" (Jos 15:19). We do not understand from the first clause that she meant the paternal benediction, or that he should supplicate JEHOVAH for a blessing upon her, but rather an inheritance over and above what he had already given her. She desired this bounty because it would add to the comfort of her settlement. Teaching us, thereby, that it is no transgression of the commandment, "Thou shalt not covet" (Exo 20:17), to desire those conveniences and comforts which may be obtained in an honest and honourable way. Caleb had already given her some land which was much exposed to the sun and poorly watered. Having married according to his orders, she felt he would the more readily grant what she now petitioned him for. Her modesty appears in the simplicity of her request, namely, some field with springs of water in it. She might have asked for jewels to adorn her person, or servants to make her lot easier in the home. Instead, she confined herself to bare necessities, for land without water could not be very productive.

"And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs" (Jos 15:18), probably bestowing upon her more than she had asked. Plain is the celestial lesson illustrated for us here. If earthly parents are ready to bestow upon their children that which is good for them, how much readier is our heavenly Father to give both spiritual and temporal blessings when we ask Him in faith! This is indeed a lovely domestic picture, and each of its features claims our admiration and imitation. Here, we see the wife in subjection to her husband, and he declining to take advantage of his authority. When husbands and wives mutually advise and jointly agree about that which is for the common good of the family, the domestic machinery will run smoothly. Here, we see a married woman despising not her father when he was old, and she lost not by honouring him. Here, we see how wise parents will not deem that lost which they bestow upon their children for their real advantage, especially when they are dutiful ones. "When the character of parents, the education of their children, and the children's consequent prudent and pious conduct combine, there is the fairest prospect that they will be settled in life to the mutual comfort and advantage of all the parties concerned" (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

There is one other detail recorded here of the tribe of Judah, and it is in marked contrast with the above. "As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day" (Jos 15:63). It is to be recalled that in the tenth chapter, we saw how that the king of Jerusalem persuaded four of his fellow monarchs or chieftains to join him in launching an attack upon Gibeon (Jos 10:3-4) (which made peace with Israel), and how that Joshua completely vanquished their combined forces, slew the five kings (Jos 10:26), and took all their land (Jos 10:42). Judges 1:8 supplies an additional detail, informing us, "Now the children of Judah *had* fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire." However, it would appear that during the next few years, while Israel were occupied in conquering other parts of the country, the Jebusites recovered the fort of mount Sion at least, which remained in their hands till the time of David (2Sa 5:7). Matthew Henry suggested: "It

may, therefore, be justly looked upon as the punishment of their neglect to conquer other cities which God had given them, that they were so long kept out of this.” So today, if the Lord’s people be slack in performing their duties, they need not be surprised if some important centres of Christendom remain under the control of the enemy, having the management of the same—how many of the denominational boards, seminaries, etc., are now governed by modern Jebusites!

“And the lot of the children of Joseph fell from Jordan by Jericho, unto,” etc. (Jos 16:1). The order of procedure among the tribes of Israel was always Judah first, the sons of Joseph second, which is in full accord with that parenthetical, but important, statement in 1 Chronicles 5:1-2. “Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father’s bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph’s).” As C. J. Ellicott (1819-1905) pointed out, “Accordingly, in the division of the land of Canaan under Joshua, there are three successive stages. First, the settlement of the tribe of Judah in the strongholds in the south of Palestine. Second, the estating of Ephraim and Manasseh in the centre of the country, and in some strong positions in the north. Third, the settlement of the remaining tribes, so as to fill up the gaps between Judah and Joseph, and also upon the outskirts of their territory, so as to be, as it were, under the shelter of their wings.”

Reuben’s portion was much inferior to that of Joseph, for it lay on the wilderness side of the Jordan (Jos 13:7, 15-21) separating them from the tribes on the western side, thereby exposing them to be attacked more easily by enemies. As a matter of fact, this tribe, with that of Gad (which adjoined it), was sorely stricken by Hazael (2Ki 10:32-33), and afterwards carried into captivity twenty years before the general seizure of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria (1Ch 5:26). Whereas, Joseph and his posterity were highly favoured in their lot, for their position lay in the very heart of the land of Canaan, extending from the Jordan in the east to the Mediterranean in the west. It is therefore very striking indeed to note how that, on the one hand, we behold in Reuben’s heritage and its history a solemn demonstration of God’s “visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate” Him (Num 14:18). And on the other hand, we see in the case of Joseph’s posterity a blessed exemplification of the divine promise, “Showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments” (Exo 20:6). The disposings of divine providence are not capricious or arbitrary, but regulated by moral and spiritual considerations which accord with the principle of sowing and reaping.

“And the separate cities for the children of Ephraim were among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages” (Jos 16:9). This was because the tribe of Ephraim was now much more numerous than that of Manasseh. Matthew Henry appropriately called attention to the fact that “though when the tribes were numbered in the plains of Moab, Manasseh had got the start of Ephraim in number, for Manasseh was then fifty-two thousand and Ephraim but thirty-two thousand (Num 26:34, 37); yet, by the time they were well settled in Canaan, the hands were crossed again (Gen 48:13-14) and the blessing of Moses was verified: ‘They are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and there are the thousands of Manasseh’” (Deu 33:17). Since the Ephraimites were much more plentiful than the Manassites, additional cities were given them besides “the lot” which fell to them. Those cities were in the heritage of Manasseh. God having assigned them more than their own needs required. No doubt that was to *test them*, to afford an opportunity of showing kindness to their brethren, by giving of their abundance to those who lacked. This is one reason why Providence so orders things that “ye have the poor always

with you” (Mat 26:11). Note that “always”—sure intimation that Socialism, the Welfare State, will never become universally and permanently established.

“And they drove not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer” (Jos 16:10), which marked the boundary of this tribe, and was close to the sea (Jos 16:3). Their failure to do so was much worse than that of Judah to recapture Jerusalem (Jos 15:63), for *they* made an attempt to do so, whereas *these* did not. No specific reason is given for their wanting in duty, whether it was because of cowardice, slothfulness, or something else. But, the fact remains, that they disobeyed the commandment in Deuteronomy 20:16. There is no intimation that these Canaanites renounced their idolatry and became worshippers of JEHOVAH. But the second half of the verse seems plainly to indicate that their disobedience was due to the spirit of greed, “But the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute” (Jos 16:10). Since the Ephraimites were strong enough to subject the Canaanites and compel them to pay tribute, no excuse can be made for allowing such to live with them. They considered their financial gain more than submission to God or the good of their country, which was in keeping with their general character—compare Hosea 12:8. They soon followed the ways of those heathen, and became idolators themselves (Jdg 17:1-5). The Canaanites continued to dwell in Gezer until the days of Solomon, when the king of Egypt took and gave it to his daughter who had married Solomon (1Ki 9:16-17).

# THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

## 12. Its Remedy, Part 1

Perhaps some of our younger and more impatient readers are inclined to demur, “Why devote a separate section to this? We already know all about it. The remedy for ruined man is to be found in God’s salvation.” But that is a very superficial view to take, and a wrongful one too, for the greatest and grandest of all the wonderful works of God ought never to be spoken of so lightly or dismissed so cursorily. Moreover, the matter is very far from being as simple as that, and since there be such widespread ignorance concerning the disease itself, it is needful to examine closely and enter into some detail upon a description of the cure for the same. The fact needs to be deeply realized at the outset that to all natural wit the condition of fallen man is beyond repair, that so far as self-help or human skill is concerned, his case is hopeless. Yea, none other than the Son of God Himself declared, “With men this is impossible” (Mat 19:26), and it is only as we perceive, to some extent at least, the various respects in which that impossibility lays that we can begin to appreciate the miracle of grace which secures the recovery of lost sinners.

The deadly disease which has seized man is not a simple but a compound one, consisting of not a single element but a combination, each of which is fatal in itself. Look at some of them. Man’s very nature is thoroughly corrupt, yet he is in no wise horrified because of it. Not only is sin part and parcel of his being, but he is deeply in love with it. He is filled with enmity against God, and his heart is as hard as a stone. He is wholly paralysed Godward, and completely under

the dominion and sway of Satan. He is not only devoid of righteousness, but a guilty sinner, without a spark of holiness, a moral leper. He is quite incapable of helping himself, for he is “without strength” (Rom 5:6). The wrath of God abides upon him, and he is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). Fallen man is not merely in danger of ruin and destruction, but is already sunk in the same. He is like a brand on the very edge of a raging fire, which will swiftly be consumed unless the divine hand plucks him thence (Zec 3:2). His condition is not only wretched but desperate, inasmuch as he is altogether incapable of devising any expedient for his cure.

The sinner is guilty, and no creature can make an atonement for him. He is an outcast from God, terrified by His very perfections, and, therefore, does his best to banish Him from his thoughts. No tongue can express or heart be suitably affected with the woeful plight and abject misery of the natural man. And, such will be his case for ever, unless God intervenes. Yet all of this presents but one side of the problem—and the easier one—which stands in the way of man’s recovery. To finite intelligence it would seem that a creature so vile and polluted, so wayward and rebellious, so obnoxious to the righteous curse of the Law, is beyond all hope—that it would not comport with the divine honour to save such a wretch. How a transgressor could be pardoned consistently with the requirements of that Law which he had despised and flouted, and be delivered from the penalty which it justly demands, and how he could be recovered unto God’s favour in concord with the maintaining of the divine government, presented a difficulty which no angelic wisdom could solve. It was a secret hid in God till He was pleased to make it known.

There are those—with no regard to the Word of truth—who suppose that God must pardon and receive to favour those who throw down the weapons of their rebellion against Him and sue for mercy. But the solution to the problem is far from being as simple a matter as that. Meeting such people on their own ground, it is to be pointed out that human reason can advance no valid and sufficient argument why God should forgive the sinner merely because he repents, or that this could be done consistently with His moral government. Rather is the contrary evident. The contrition of a criminal will not exonerate him in a human court of law, for it offers no satisfaction and reparation for his crimes. Any sinner who cherishes the idea that his repentance gives him a claim to divine clemency and favour demonstrates that he is a total stranger to true repentance, and never will he repent until he abandons such presumption. Universal experience and observation, as well as Scripture, fully attest the fact that none of mankind ever repent while they be left to themselves, and are not made the subjects of those divine operations to which they have no claim, and which mere reason is incapable of concluding that God will grant them.

That an adequate remedy for the complicated and fatal malady by which man is stricken must be *of God* is very obvious. It must needs be of His devising, His providing, His applying, His making of the same effectual. That is but another way of saying it must be *wholly of Him* from start to finish, for if any part thereof be left to the sinner, at any stage, it is certain to fail. Yet it requires to be pointed out once more that God was under no obligation whatever to make such provision, for when man deliberately apostatized from Him, he forfeited all favourable regard from his Maker. Not only might God now righteously inflict the full penalty of His broken law upon the entire human race, but, suitably unto His holy nature, He could have left all mankind to perish eternally in that condemnation whereinto they had cast themselves. Had He utterly forsaken the whole of Adam’s apostate posterity and left them as remediless as the fallen angels, it had been no reflection whatever upon His goodness, but rather a display of His inexorable justice. Wherefore, whenever redemption is mentioned, it is constantly described as proceeding from sovereign grace and mere mercy (Eph 1:3-11).

Yet, something more than a gracious design was required on God's part in order for any sinner to be saved. Grace is indeed the source thereof, yet it was not sufficient of itself. One may be filled with the most amiable intentions, yet be unable to carry them out. How often is the fond love of a mother impotent in the presence of her suffering child! There has to be the forthputting of divine *power* also if the purpose of grace is to be accomplished. And no ordinary power either, but, as Scripture affirms, "the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power" (Eph 1:19). It calls for the exercise of far more might to recreate a fallen creature than it did to create the universe out of nothing. Why so? Because in *that* there was no opposition, nothing to resist His working. Whereas in the case of fallen man, there is the hostility of his will, the alienation of his heart, the inveterate enmity of his carnal mind to be overcome. Furthermore, there is the malice and opposition of Satan to be neutralized, for he endeavours with all his might to retain his hold upon his victims. The devil must be despoiled of the advantage which he had gained, for it consists not with the glory of God that he should be left to triumph in his success.

But something more than the exercise of God's power was still required. Omniscience must be exercised as well as omnipotence. Strength itself will not build a house. There must also be art to contrive and proportion the materials. *Skill* is the chief requirement of an architect. Let that faintly illustrate what we are here endeavouring to express. Those who are saved are not only the products of God's amazing grace and almighty power, but they are also "His workmanship" (Eph 2:10). Wondrously does God's *wisdom* appear in the beautiful fabric of His grace, in the spiritual temple which He erects for His own residence. He has "wrought us for the selfsame thing" (2Co 5:5). As stones are carved and polished, so believers are made "living stones" in that edifice in which God will dwell forever. Now, that which is exquisite in execution serves to make manifest excellent skill in the planning of the same. The counterpart of God's law in the hearts of His quickened children is no less the fruit of His wisdom than the writing of it on the tables of stone—wisdom in the first framing of it, wisdom also in the imprinting of it upon the understanding and the affections.

It is neither in the marvels of creation nor in the mysteries of providence that the depths and riches of *God's wisdom* are to be found. Rather is it in the plan and fruits of redemption that they are most fully and illustriously revealed. This is clear from several Scriptures. It is in the God-man Mediator that "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3). Yea, He is expressly denominated "the wisdom of God" (1Co 1:24). "Unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places" is now being made known by means of "the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph 3:10). The devising of a method whereby a part of mankind should be recovered out of their miserable estate is indeed the masterpiece of divine wisdom. Naught but omniscience itself could have found a way to effect such a triumph in a manner suited to all the divine perfections. The wise men of this world are termed "princes" (1Co 2:6, 8), but angels are designated "principalities and powers in the heavenlies," because of their superior dignity, wisdom, and strength. Yet, though they be so great in intelligence, always beholding the face of the Father, yet a new and grander discovery of God's wisdom is made to them through the Church, for His work in the redemption of it far transcends their native understanding.

The celestial hierarchies had witnessed the dishonour which had been done to the authority of God and the discord brought into the sphere of His government by the sin and rebellion of Adam. It was therefore necessary, morally speaking, that that defiance of God's rule should be dealt with, and that that affront to His throne should be rectified. This could not be done except by the infliction of that punishment which, in the unalterable rule and standard of divine justice, was due

thereunto. The dismissal of sin on any other terms would leave the rule of God under unspeakable dishonour and confusion. “For where is the righteousness of government if the highest sin and provocation that our nature was capable of, and which brought confusion on the whole creation below, should forever go unpunished? The first express intimation that God gave of His righteousness in the government of mankind was His threatening punishment equal unto the demerit of disobedience if man should fall into it: ‘In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die’ (Gen 2:17). If He revoke and disannul this sentence, how shall the glory of His righteousness in the rule of all be made known? But how this punishment should be undergone, which consisted in man’s eternal ruin, and yet man be eternally saved, was a work for divine wisdom to contrive” (John Owen).

Not only was it necessary unto the honour of God’s righteousness, as He is the moral Governor and supreme Judge of all the earth, that sin should be summarily punished, but it was required that there should be an obedience unto God, and such an obedience as would bring more glory unto Him than the dishonour and reproach which resulted from the disobedience of man. “This was due unto the glory of His holiness in giving the Law. Until this was done, the excellency of that Law, as becoming the holiness of God, and as an effect thereof, could not be made manifest. For, if it were never kept in any instance, never fulfilled by any one person in the world, how should the glory of it be declared? How should the holiness of God be represented by it? How should it be evident that the transgression of it was not rather from some defect in the Law itself, than from any evil in them that should have yielded obedience unto it? If the Law given unto man should never be complied withal in perfect obedience by any one whatever, it might be thought that the Law itself was unsuited unto our nature, and impossible to be complied withal” (John Owen). It did not become the Rector of the universe to give unto man a law whose spirituality and equity should never be exemplified in obedience. That law was not imposed, primarily, that man might suffer justly for its transgression, but rather that God should be glorified in its performance. But since Adam’s offence brought ruin upon all his posterity, so that they are incapable of meeting its requirements, how could a perfect obedience be rendered to it? Omniscience alone could supply the answer.

Oh, what a truly amazing thing it is, Christian reader, that the wisdom of God has, by our redemption, made that which is the greatest possible dishonour to Him the occasion of His greatest glory. Yet such is indeed the case. Nothing is so displeasing to the Most High as sin, nothing so dishonouring to Him, for it is in its very nature enmity against Him, contempt of Him. Sin is a reproach to His majesty, an insult to His holiness, an insurrection against His government. And yet, this “abominable thing” which He hates (Jer 44:4), upon which He cannot look but with infinite disfavor (Hab 1:13), is made the occasion of the greatest possible good. What a miracle of miracles that the Lord makes the wrath of man to praise Him (Psa 76:10), that the very evil which aims at dethroning Him is transmuted into the means of magnifying Him. Yea, that thereby He has made the grandest manifestation of His perfections that ever was. Sin casts contempt upon the law of God, yet, through redemption, that law is made supremely honourable. Never was the King of heaven so grievously slighted as when those made in His image and likeness broke out into revolt against Him. Never was such honour paid unto His throne as by the way He chose to effect the salvation of His people. Never was the holiness of God so slighted as when man preferred to render allegiance to that old serpent the devil. Never did God’s holiness shine forth so illustriously as in the victory He has gained over Satan.

Equally wonderful is it, Christian reader, that God contrived a way whereby a flagrant transgressor should become not guilty, and that he who is completely destitute of righteousness



should be justified or pronounced righteous by the Judge of all the earth. Had such things as these been submitted for solution, they had forever appeared to be irreconcilable contradictions to all finite understandings. It seems to be utterly impossible for a condemned culprit to be cleared of any charge against him. Sin necessarily entails punishment. How then can any committer of it escape the “due reward” of his deeds (Luk 23:41), except by a manifest violation of justice? God has declared plainly that He “will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo 34:7). He has determined by an unalterable decree that sin shall be paid its wages. Then how can the guilty be exempted from the sentence of death? Nor is the problem any less formidable of how God can, with perfect equity, declare righteous those who have not themselves met the requirements of the law. To adjudge entitled to the reward of obedience those whose record is a lifelong disobedience appears to be something worse than an anomaly. Nevertheless, Omniscience contrived a solution to both of these problems, a solution which is, in every respect, a perfect and a glorious one.

Without that solution, the restoration of any of mankind into the favour of and unto fellowship with and the enjoyment of God Himself was utterly impossible. It was so not only because of the total depravity of man himself, but because of the concernment of the glory of the divine perfections in our sin and apostasy. Not only were they stricken with a fatal disease, from which there was not the slightest hope of deliverance unless a supernatural remedy be provided, but the government of God had been so grievously outraged by our revolt therefrom that full compensation must be made to His insulted scepter, and complete satisfaction offered to His broken law, before the throne of heaven could be satisfied. Great beyond conception to finite intelligence as was the difficulty of repairing the damage wrought in the whole of our constitution and being by sin, yet greater far were the obstacles which stood in the way of the exercise of God’s grace and mercy in the restoring of the outcast. That way of restoration must be one wherein God was magnified, His justice vindicated, His threatenings realized, His holiness glorified. The manner in which all of those ends were achieved and those results secured is the adoring marvel alike of the redeemed and of the angels.

As others before us have pointed out, if the divine government was to be vindicated, the whole work of our recovery must be performed *in our nature*, and the very nature of those who had sinned, and which was to be recovered from the ruins of the fall and brought to everlasting felicity—yet in human nature that was not only free of any pollution, but intrinsically holy. In order to the salvation of sinners, no satisfaction could be made unto the glory of God for the vitiation of apostate man’s nature, with all the evil fruits thereof, but in the nature of those who had sinned and were to be saved. Since God’s giving of the Law unto our first parents was itself an effect of His wisdom and holiness, wherein could the glory of them be exalted if that rule of righteousness be complied with by a nature of a totally different kind? Should *an angel* fulfil it, his obedience would be no proof that the Law was suited unto man’s nature, whereunto it was originally prescribed. Rather would an angel’s compliance with the Law have been a reflection upon the divine goodness in giving it to men. Nor could there have been the necessary *relation* between the nature of the substitute and those on whose behalf he acted and suffered, and therefore such an arrangement had not magnified the divine wisdom, but had been at best an unsatisfactory expedient.

The Scriptures are very explicit in their teaching about the necessity of the same nature in the surety and those whom he represented, as being condecant unto God’s wisdom. Speaking of the way of our relief, the apostle declared, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he [the Deliverer] also himself likewise partook of the same” (Heb 2:14). It was human nature—here expressed by “flesh and blood”—that was to be delivered, and therefore it was

human nature in which this deliverance was to be wrought. The apostle enters into considerable detail upon this point in Romans 5:12-21, the sum of which is, “as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one [“by one man,” verse 15] shall many be made righteous”. The same nature that transgressed must work out the remedy for the same. Again, in 1 Corinthians 15:21, “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.” Our ruin could not be retrieved, nor deliverance from our guilt be effected, except by one in our own nature.

It is further to be observed that the deliverance to be secured must be wrought by one whose substance was derived from the common stock *of our first parents*. It had not met the exigencies of the case for God to create a second man out of the dust of the ground, or out of anything which was different in nature from ourselves, for, in such a case, there had been no nexus and relation between him and us, and, therefore, we could be in no wise concerned in anything he did or suffered. That alliance depended solely hereon, that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men” (Act 17:26). But, at this point, a further difficulty was presented, one which, again, had proved insurmountable unto all created intelligences had not “the only wise God” (Rom 16:27) revealed His provision for the resolving of the same. Any deliverer of sinful men must derive his nature from their original stock, yet he must not bring along with it the least taint of corruption or the same liability as us unto guilt upon his own account. For if his nature were defiled, if it lacked the image of God, it could do nothing that should be acceptable unto Him. And were he subject to the penalty of the law on his own account, then he could make no satisfaction for the sins of others. But, since every descendant of Eve is shapen in sin and conceived in iniquity, how could any of *her seed* be sinless? Only Omniscience could bring an immaculately clean thing out of thorough uncleanness.

Nor must we lose sight of *the grounds* on which defilement and guilt adhere unto our nature, as they do in all individuals alike. First, our entire nature, as to the participation of it, was in Adam as our covenant head and federal representative. Therefore, his offence was ours also, and justly imputed unto us. Because we sinned in him, we became “by nature the children of wrath” (Eph 2:3)—the subjects of God’s judicial displeasure. Second, we derived our nature from Adam, by way of natural generation, so that his defilement is communicated to all his offspring. We are the degenerate plants of a degenerate stock. Thus, still another difficulty was presented. The nature of a deliverer for fallen man must, as unto its substance, be derived from our first parents, yet so as *not* to have been in Adam as a legal representative, *nor* be derived from him by natural generation. But, how could this be—that his nature should relate as truly unto Adam as does ours, yet so as neither to partake of the guilt of his transgression nor to participate in his pollution? Such a prodigy was utterly beyond the concept of every finite mind.

# THE APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

## Part 1

Having written so much upon both the inspiration and the interpretation of Holy Writ, it is necessary, in order to give completeness unto the same, to supply one or two articles upon the application thereof. First, because this is very closely related to exegesis itself—if a wrong application or use be made of a verse, then our explanation of it is certain to be erroneous. For example, Romanism insists that “Feed My sheep” (Joh 21:15-17) was Christ’s bestowal upon Peter of a special privilege and peculiar honour, being one of the passages to which that evil system appeals in support of her contention for *the primacy* of that apostle. Yet, there is nothing whatever in Peter’s own writings which indicates that he regarded those injunctions of his Master as constituting him “Universal Bishop.” Instead, in his first epistle, there is plainly that to the contrary, for there we find him exhorting the elders or bishops, “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not be constraint, but willingly: not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (1Pe 5:2-3).

Thus, it is quite clear from the above passage that Christ’s precepts in John 21:15-17 apply or pertain unto *all pastors*. On the other hand, our Lord’s words to Peter and Andrew, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Mat 4:19) *do not* apply to the rank and file of His disciples, but only unto those whom He calls into and qualifies for the ministry. That is evident from the fact that in none of the Epistles, where both the privileges and the duties of the saints are specifically defined, is there any such precept or promise. Thus, on the one hand, we must ever beware of unwarrantably restricting the scope of a verse. And, on the other hand, be constantly on our guard against making general what is manifestly particular. It is only by carefully taking heed to the general Analogy of Faith that we shall be preserved from either mistake. Scripture ever interprets Scripture, but much familiarity with the contents, and a diligent and prayerful comparing of one part with another, is necessary before anyone is justified in dogmatically deciding the precise meaning or application of any passage.

But, there is a further reason, and a pressing one today, why we should write upon our present subject, and that is to expose the modern and pernicious error of dispensationalism. This is a device of the enemy, designed to rob the children of no small part of that bread which their heavenly Father has provided for their souls. A device wherein the wily serpent appears as an angel of light, feigning to “make the Bible a new book” by simplifying much in it which perplexes the spiritually unlearned. It is sad to see how widely successful the devil has been by means of this subtle innovation. It is likely that some of our own readers, when perusing the articles upon the interpretation of the Scriptures, felt more than once that we were taking an undue liberty with Holy Writ, that we made use of certain passages in a way altogether unjustifiable, that we appropriated to the saints of this Christian era what does not belong to them

but is rather addressed unto those who lived in an entirely different dispensation of the past, or one which is yet future.

This modern method of mishandling the Scriptures—for modern it certainly is, being quite unknown to Christendom till little more than a century ago, and only within recent years being adopted by those who are outside the narrow circle where it originated—is based upon 2 Timothy 2:15, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Very little or nothing at all is said upon the first two clauses of that verse, but much on the third one, which is explained as “correctly partitioning the Scriptures unto the different peoples to whom they belong.” These mutilators of the Word tell us that all of the Old Testament from Genesis 12 onwards belongs entirely to Israel after the flesh, and that none of its precepts (as such) are binding upon those who are members of the Church which is the Body of Christ, nor may any of the promises found therein be legitimately appropriated by them. And this, be it duly noted, *without* a single word to that effect by either the Lord or any of His apostles, *and despite* the use which the Holy Spirit makes of the earliest Scriptures in every part of the New Testament. So far from the Holy Spirit teaching Christians practically to look upon the Old Testament much as they would upon an obsolete almanac, He declares, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for *our learning*, that we through patience and comfort of the [Old Testament] scriptures might have hope” (Rom 15:4).

Not satisfied with their determined efforts to deprive us of the Old Testament, these would-be super-expositors dogmatically assert that the four Gospels are Jewish, and that the epistles of James and Peter, John and Jude are designed for a “godly Jewish remnant” in a future “tribulation period,” that nothing but the Pauline epistles contain “Church truth,” and thousands of gullible souls have accepted their *ipse dixit*—those who decline so doing are regarded as untaught and superficial. Yet God Himself has not uttered a single word to that effect. Certainly there is nothing whatever in 2 Timothy 2:15 to justify such a revolutionizing method of interpreting the Word. That verse has no more to do with the sectioning of Scripture between different “dispensations” than it has with distinguishing between stars of varying magnitude. If that verse be carefully compared with Matthew 7:6, John 16:12, and 1 Corinthians 3:2, its meaning is clear. The occupant of the pulpit is to give diligence in becoming equipped to give the different classes of his hearers “their *portion of meat* in due season” (Luk 12:42). To rightly divide the Word of truth is for him to minister it suitably unto the several cases and circumstances of his congregation—to sinners and saints, the indifferent and the inquiring, the babes and fathers, the tempted and afflicted, the backslidden and fallen.

While there be great variety in the teaching of the Word, there is an unmistakable unity underlying the whole. Though He employed many mouthpieces, the Holy Scriptures have but one Author: and while He “at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” and “hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” (Heb 1:1-2), yet, He who spoke by them was and is One “with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam 1:17), who throughout all ages declares, “I am the LORD, I change not” (Mal 3:6). Throughout, there is perfect agreement between every part of the Word. It sets forth *one system of doctrine* (we never read of “the doctrines of God,” but always “the doctrine”: see Deu 33:2; Pro 4:2; Mat 7:28; Joh 7:17; Rom 16:17, and contrast Mar 7:7; Col 2:22; 1Ti 4:1; Heb 13:9) because it is one single and organic whole. That Word presents uniformly *one* way of salvation, *one* rule of faith. From Genesis to Revelation, there is one immutable Moral Law, one glorious Gospel for perishing sinners. The Old Testament believers were saved with the same salvation, were indebted to the

same Redeemer, were renewed by the same Spirit, and were partakers of the same heavenly inheritance as are New Testament believers.

It is quite true that the Epistle to the Hebrews makes mention of a better hope (7:19), a better testament or covenant (7:22), better promises (8:6), better sacrifices (9:23), some better thing for us (11:40), yet it is important to recognize that the contrast is between *the shadows and the substance*. Romans 12:6 speaks of “the proportion [or “analogy”] of faith.” There is a due proportion, a perfect balance, between the different parts of God’s revealed truth which must needs be known and observed by all who would preach and write according to the mind of the Spirit. In arguing from this analogy, it is essential to recognize that what is made known in the Old Testament was *typical* of what is set forth in the New, and therefore the terms used in the former are strictly applicable unto the latter. Much needless wrangling has occurred over whether or not the nation of Israel were a regenerate people. That is quite beside the real point. Outwardly they were regarded and addressed as the people of God, and, as the Spirit through Paul affirmed, “who are Israelites: to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promise; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came” (Rom 9:4-5).

Regeneration or non-regeneration affected the salvation of *individuals* among them, but it did not affect the covenant relationship of the people *as a whole*. Again and again, God addressed Israel as “backsliders,” but never once did He so designate any heathen nation. It was not to the Egyptians or Canaanites that JEHOVAH said, “Return, ye backsliding *children*, and I will heal your backslidings,” or “Turn, O backsliding children...for I am *married unto you*” (Jer 3:22, 14). Now it is this analogy or similarity between the two covenants and the peoples under them which is the basis for the transfer of Old Testament terms to the New. Thus, the word “circumcision” is used in the latter not with identity of meaning, but according to analogy, for circumcision is now “of the heart, in the spirit” (Rom 2:29), and not of the flesh. In like manner, when John closes his first epistle with “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1Jo 5:21), he borrows an Old Testament term and uses it in a New Testament sense, for by “idols” he refers not to material statues made of wood and stone (as the prophets did when employing the same word), but to inward objects of carnal and sensual worship. So too are we to see the antitypical and spiritual “Israel” in Galatians 6:16, and the celestial and eternal “mount Sion” in Hebrews 12:22.

The Bible consists of many parts, exquisitely correlated and vitally interdependent upon each other. God so controlled all the agents which He employed in the writing of it, and so coordinated their efforts, as to produce a single living Book. Within that organic unity there is indeed much variety, but no contrariety. Man’s body is but one, though it be made up of many members, diverse in size, character, and operation. The rainbow is but one, nevertheless it reflects distinctly the seven prismatic rays, yet, they are harmoniously blended together. So it is with the Bible. Its unity appears in the perfect consistency throughout of its teachings. The oneness yet triunity of God, the deity and humanity of Christ united in one Person, the everlasting covenant which secures the salvation of all the election of grace, the highway of holiness and the only path which leads to heaven, are plainly revealed in Old and New Testament alike. The teaching of the prophets concerning the glorious character of God, the changeless requirements of His righteousness, the total depravity of human nature, and the way appointed for restoration therefrom, are identical with the apostles’ teaching.

If the question be raised, “Since the sacred Scriptures be a strict unit, then why has God Himself divided them into two Testaments?” Perhaps it will simplify the matter if we ask why God has appointed two principal bodies to illuminate the earth—the sun and the moon. Why, too,

is the human frame duplex, having two legs and arms, two lungs, and kidneys, etc.? Is not the answer the same in each case? To augment and supplement each other? But, more directly, at least four reasons may be suggested. First, to set forth more distinctly the two covenants which are the basis of God's dealings with all mankind—the covenant of works and the covenant of grace—shadowed forth by the “old” from Sinai and the “new” or Christian one. Second, to show more plainly the two separate companies which are united in that one Body which constitutes the Church of which Christ is the Head, namely redeemed Jews and redeemed Gentiles. Third, to demonstrate more clearly the wondrous providence of God—using the Jews for so many centuries to be the custodians of the Old Testament, which condemns them for their rejection of Christ. And in employing the papists throughout the dark ages to preserve the New Testament, which denounces their idolatrous practices. Fourth, that one might confirm the other—type by antitype, prophecy by fulfilment.

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

## ACCEPTANCE OF GOD'S WILL

Resignation to the divine will is one of the last and highest attainments of the Christian life. It is what is ultimately to be aimed at, as essential to comfort here and happiness hereafter. But it seems not by any means to be the first object of one who is desirous of becoming a Christian, nor even attainable, except some other necessary things are previously required. For me to have my will in unison with the will of God, I must, in the first place, trust Him thoroughly, and love Him supremely. For it is impossible for me freely to give my will to another entirely while we are on bad terms, that is, as long as I cannot trust him and so long as I hate him. The conclusion is that all attempts at resignation will be vain without conversion and reconciliation with God, whom, when we are convinced of the sinfulness and misery of our natural state, it is a high point of wisdom to seek by prayer and diligent searching of the Word, that only right and effectual method of relief which God has provided.

Repent and believe the Gospel is the first thing. We should not stir from this direction till we have some good ground of evidence that we do repent and believe. Alas, our guilt and wickedness is much deeper and larger than we are apt to suspect, and our pride fights with inexpressible obstinacy against all just correction. But let us not be discouraged. Things impossible with men

are possible with God. Let us pray, not only now and then, but constantly. Life is short, we have no other business that ought to interfere with this. It should be the perpetual, it is the most important, employment of the soul. The Scriptures, daily meditated on, will supply with instruction. And if we persevere, our business in godliness will doubtless be made in due time our chief pleasure; a thorough insight into human emptiness and worldly vanity—a complete conviction of the evil of sin, even in our own particular case, and a desire to forsake it altogether; a solid discernment of the complete sufficiency of Christ to save us in all respects—these things in seeking daily to God are to be attained.

We are not as ready to pray as God is to hear. He delights to magnify Christ, and to show what the Father can and will do for us through His Son. He calls us to nothing in our own strength. And, as we cannot have, so we need not think of having, any worthiness of our own, we may come and take freely what He bestows. And when once, in this way, you can steadfastly rely on the divine promises through Christ, so sure as faith worketh by love, you will find yourself enabled to love God. And it is in Christ Jesus that His love may be seen. A union and fellowship with Christ will take place, accompanied with the sweetest perception which the human mind can have. Though often the effervescence of it be but brief, yet its steady energy is real and powerful. To encourage us, we should remember the interest we have *in Him* by the ties of a common nature. Hebrews 2 and 4 represent this point strongly. You may think I deviate from the subject of resignation, but I know no other way of coming to it.

Once brought to love Christ above all, we shall love other persons in the best manner, but always in subordination. Even to part with dearest friends will be practicable, because “If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1Th 4:14). When we can feel any genuine love to God in Christ, we shall be led to such an acquiescence in His wisdom and goodness that we shall choose His will to take place rather than ours. And the thought of how soon all things shall be set right in a future life, and that He will make all things work together for good, will reconcile the mind to anything that God pleases. And though the dissolution of the soul and body be always a serious thing and against the feelings of nature, yet a mind whose hope and desires are with Christ, and which has a constant thirst for spiritual enjoyments as true felicity, and which is loosened from all worldly attachments, must *on the whole* wish for death rather than life, as we all wish most for that which has most of our hearts. But the love of God will teach such a one to resign himself as to the *time* of his Father’s will

You will not mistake me, I hope, as if I suppose all true Christians have learned all this completely. Far from it! These things are learned by them in measure, but not without much conflict, opposition from sinful nature all along, and much imperfection. And though it is not easy to confine by rules the order of the Spirit’s operations, yet this seems the general order of Christian virtues: repentance, faith, love, resignation. In Christ Himself this resignation was perfect—“not My will, but Thine be done” (Luk 22:42), and as far as we can trust in Him for grace, so far we may receive grace out of His fullness. Among mere men, the apostle Paul seems the completest pattern of resignation. What a tremendous view is that of his sufferings in the latter part of 2 Corinthians 11! But how practicable did the love of God make everything to him! In Philippians 4:11-13, he tells us he has learned to be content in any state, and that he could do all things through Christ who strengthens him. The original word for “have learned” alludes to the Grecian mysteries and shows that the learning was of a mysterious nature.

I write in the fullness of affection, wishing you to make it your main business from day to day to learn these things. I am far from thinking that your long course of affliction has been against

your acquiring them. Oh, let us beg for patience to lie as clay in the hands of Infinite Wisdom, who knows how to humble our pride, to bend our wills, and to form us to a conformity unto Himself. And may you be helped to a steady course of praying and of seeking God, with a willingness to give up all for Christ. May Christ Jesus visit you and lead you to true rest. (Joseph Milner, 1780)





# July

## A GOOD CONSCIENCE

Not a little is said in the Bible about the conscience, even where it is not called by that particular name. In many places, the “heart” (1Jo 3:20, etc.), the “spirit” (Rom 8:16; 1Co 2:11), the “reins” (Psa 16:7), the “candle of the Lord” (Pro 20:27), and the “eye” (Luk 11:34-36) all signify the conscience. This inward monitor is one of the two eyes of the soul, the other one being the reason. Conscience is that faculty which perceives moral qualities, enables us to discern of conduct in reference to right and wrong, which decides upon the lawfulness or unlawfulness of our desires and deeds, which discriminates between truth and error. It estimates and declares the ethical character of whatever is presented to the mind and that according to the measure of light which it has from reason and from the Word. Thus, conscience has a threefold office to perform. First, to discover sin to us and to reveal our duty, with the penalty of the one and the reward of the other. When it has passed the verdict, pronouncing an act to be good or bad, its next office is to bear witness that we have done the one or the other. Thus, third, it performs the office of judge, acquitting or condemning the soul by the comforting or terrifying evidence which it testifies unto.

Twice we read of a “pure conscience” (1Ti 3:9; 2Ti 1:3), and no less than six times is a “good conscience” mentioned in the New Testament, Acts 23:1; 1 Timothy 1:19; Hebrews 13:18; 1 Peter 3:16, 21. What then is a good conscience? Not the natural faculty itself, for that is defiled by sin, but rather one that has been made good, as it was awakened by the Spirit, renewed by grace, purged by the blood of Christ (Heb 9:14), purified by faith (Act 15:9), instructed by the Scriptures. It is an enlightened monitor which directs unto holy conduct. It is one which sets God before it, moving its possessor to act as in His presence, seeking to please Him, and to avoid whatever displeases Him—as in the case of Joseph, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen 39:9). For the same reason, it causes its possessor to weigh what he says and ponder before he acts, and though fallible, yet according to the best of his knowledge he honestly endeavours to abstain from that which is evil and to cleave unto that which is good. He does so impartially and universally, “I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Act 23:1). Thus, a “good conscience” is to have a heart that reproaches not, but testifies in my favour.

A good conscience is one that properly discharges its office. It does not deal deceitfully, wrongly informing or flattering me. Yet, we say again, that in order to act properly, the conscience must be well-informed, illumined by the lamp of God’s Word, for as there is a religious zeal which is not according to knowledge (Rom 10:2), so there are both activities in God’s service (Joh 16:2) and humanly devised austerities (Col 2:20-22), which issue from a mistaken or ignorant conscience. A good conscience bears witness within that I am really sincere

in desiring with all my heart to have done entirely with sin and to be holy as God is holy, that my strivings to please Him in all things and my ardent longings for unbroken communion with Him are genuine. And that I am honest when I mourn over my oft-repeated failures. It is one that is kept “pure” and clean, or clear from guilt, and that by keeping short accounts with God, promptly confessing every known sin unto Him, and washing daily in that fountain which has been opened for sin and for uncleanness (Zec 13:1). Therefore are we exhorted, “Let us draw near [unto God] with a true heart in full assurance of faith [i.e., in a firm belief in the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice and an exclusive dependence upon Him], having our hearts sprinkled [by the approbation of Christ’s blood] from an evil conscience” (Heb 10:22).

The *maintenance* of a good conscience is an essential part of personal piety. Said the apostle, “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and men” (Act 24:16). By which we understand him to mean that he observed a strict self-discipline, being careful that it might not justly accuse him of any offence. Paul took great pains to preserve peace within, and laboured hard to discharge faithfully every duty required of God, both toward Himself and toward His creatures—being ever on his guard against offending the One or laying a stumbling-block before the others. His, “I exercise myself,” was the human-responsibility side, the discharge of his moral obligations. Such too was Job’s resolution. Said he, “My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live” (Job 27:6)—he was determined so to conduct himself that his conscience would not accuse him for any action. We should be just as careful not to offend conscience as we are of avoiding anything that would displease our best friend. A good conscience can only be maintained by daily searching the Scriptures to discover our duty—“Understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph 5:17), by serious inquiry into the state of our heart and ways—“Commune with your own heart” (Psa 4:4), and by a uniform course of obedience—“Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him” (1Jo 3:19).

The *testimony* of a good conscience is priceless. “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward” (2Co 1:12). The apostle was conscious both of the holiness of his life and the purity of his motives. He had an inward witness to the rectitude of his deeds, which approved of all and condemned for none. Though others ascribed his zealous service to unworthy incitements and ends, conscience testified to his integrity and piety. He acted in “simplicity” or candour, for the word stands opposed to “double-dealing.” He was actuated not by carnal prudence, but the grace of God. Asking himself not, “Is this good policy” or expedient, but “Is it *right*?” He knew that he was not directed by crookedness, that his spirit was without guile, and the realization thereof was his “rejoicing.” Hence, he could say again that he had “renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (2Co 4:2). He dreaded histrionic devices, relied not on the force of rhetoric, but aimed—with an eye single to God’s glory and the good of souls—to convict his hearers by the truth.

Those who labour to keep conscience free from guilt receive rich dividends in return. It supplies comfortable relief when we are falsely accused and unjust aspersions are cast upon us. It did so with Job when he was so misunderstood by his friends, for he feared not to say, “Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know my heart” (Job 31:6). Though Jeremiah was defamed of many, he was peacefully assured that his aims were upright. And therefore he hesitated not to expose his cause unto Him that “triest the righteous and seest the reins and the

heart” (Jer 20:10-12). So too David, “Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity” (Psa 26:1). A clear conscience gives us assurance to approach unto God and freedom of utterance before him, “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God” (1Jo 3:21). It is a real support under trouble, and in the approach of death. Thus, Hezekiah appealed to God, “Remember now, O LORD...how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect [sincere] heart” (Isa 38:3). In 1 Timothy 1:5 and 3:9, faith and a good conscience are linked together, for we cannot hold the one except in the other. It is with the conscience that the Holy Spirit bears witness (Rom 8:16), shining upon His own work in the soul, assuring of our sincerity, giving us to see the genuineness of our profession by such evidences and fruits of the same.

Here are some of the qualities or characteristics of a good conscience. *Sincerity*. Alas, how little of this virtue now remains in the world today. What shams and hypocrisy abound on every hand. There is scarcely any fidelity or reality left. But where the fear of the Lord is, there is a genuine desire to please Him—“in all things willing to live honestly” (Heb 13:8). *Tenderness*. There is a wakefulness and sensitiveness, so that it smites for sin on all occasions. So far from being indifferent to God’s claims, the heart is acutely sensible when they have been ignored. Even for what many regard as trifling matters, a good conscience chides and condemns. *Fidelity*. A constant judging of ourselves before God and a measuring of our ways by His Word. The favourable opinion of his fellows affords no satisfaction to an upright man unless his heart can assure him that his conduct is right in the sight of God. No matter what be the belief and customs of others, he will not knowingly offend his inward monitor.

Marked are the differences between the actings of the natural conscience and those of a renewed and good one. The former works mainly by means of slavish fear and the terror it impresses on the heart. It usually smites for total omissions or gross deeds, but not for the absence of spirituality or perfunctory performances. It works mainly when convictions are strongest, minding duty in time of distress, “in their affliction they will seek me early” (Hos 5:15). But a good conscience moves us to perform duty out of love to God. If there were no binding precept, gratitude would prompt to the bringing of a thank-offering to Him!

## EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

### 31. Christian Knowledge (2:21)

*“I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth,  
but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.”*

*“But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things”* (verse 20). It is important to perceive the intimate connection between those two things: the believer’s anointing and his knowledge are related as are cause and effect. Not only are the regenerate separated from the world by this unction, but they are also distinguished from the unregenerate in point of essential knowledge. The gift of the Spirit consecrates their souls and bodies as His temples to dwell in, and His gracious operation within imparts to them the true knowledge of divine things. As we

saw in our last, when we dwelt almost entirely upon the first part of the verse, the Spirit, which Christ received without measure, He communicates to His redeemed in a degree suited to finite creatures. In consequence thereof they are sharers, in their measure, of His knowledge, so that they can say, “we have the mind of Christ” (1Co 2:16). Himself the Wisdom of God, His saved ones are the children of wisdom (Mat 11:19), the children of light. Thus, from another angle, verse 20 is a reiteration of “which thing [namely the exercise of brotherly love] is true [is realized] in him and in you” (verse 8): in Him originally, in us derivatively; in Him essentially, in us reflectively; in Him perfectly, in us faultily.

*“But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.”* The last clause, equally with the first, calls for the expositor, that it’s meaning may be made clear. It is another example where we must distinguish between the sound and the sense of Scripture. To take the “ye know all things” at its face value, without restriction, would be to affirm that the regenerate are omniscient—a manifest absurdity. Let this be duly noted by those who are so fond of saying, “Scripture always means what it says, and requires no explaining by man.” There is not a little in the Bible that requires a divinely qualified teacher to interpret, for it is God’s general way to make use of such in “opening” His Word to the rank and file of His people. “Ye know all things” signifies that those who have received the Spirit are given a saving apprehension of the fundamental parts of the Gospel, so that they are brought out of darkness into God’s marvelous light, and thereby fitted to commune with and obey Him. Believers can say that God “hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true” (1Jo 5:20), and knowing Him, they know all things that are necessary to their everlasting well-being. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (Joh 17:3).

We can have no saving and sound knowledge of divine things without this anointing, for the natural man is incapable of discerning spiritual things. All the teaching of men, even of the Lord’s most faithful and eminent servants, is inefficacious without it. God cannot be apprehended merely by the intellectual faculty, for He is spirit (Joh 4:24), and therefore can be known only by those who are made spiritual. A living knowledge of God consists of a personal discovery of Him to the heart, such as conveys a true, supernatural, affecting realization of His surpassing excellence. When He makes such a discovery of Himself to the soul, its favoured recipient exclaims, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee” (Job 42:5), as a glorious reality.

Note well, John did not say, “we know all things,” but “ye”: it was not a privilege peculiar to the apostles. Nor is this an experience reserved for the “fathers” in Christ only: rather is it shared by all the renewed. Said the Saviour to His Father, “Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Mat 11:25). Contextually the “and ye know all things” means that by the gracious teaching of the Spirit believers are granted an experiential and effectual knowledge of divine things so that no propagator of error can fatally deceive them. He alone can impart that wisdom which secures against delusions. The Spirit of Truth communicates such a personal and practical acquaintance with the things of God as preserves from total apostasy. Still more narrowly, they are admitted into a saving acquaintance with the person and work of Christ, which the antichrists denied. Not that any are vouchsafed a perfect knowledge, for in this life we only “see through a glass, darkly” (1Co 13:12); nor all Christians to the same degree and extent. But each one has so opened to him the mysteries of grace that he is secured against all the ruinous cheats of the enemy—it is to be noted that in 2 Corinthians 1:21, “establisheth” and anointing are linked together.

If, however, the “and ye know all things” be interpreted in the light of the general analogy of faith, it has a much wider meaning: “The whole truth concerning Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Father, in all its bearings on the divine character and counsels, as well as on human experience and hope” (Calvin). Let us amplify the second part of the Reformer’s definition.

## Assurance

It is with the desire to help some of our weaker and fearing brethren that we now enter into detail. Such are inclined seriously to doubt that they have “an anointing from the Holy One”; for so far from being assured that they savingly “know all things,” they are painfully conscious of their ignorance.

1. Then, first, those who have received this anointing are firmly persuaded that the Bible is the Word of God, so that they doubt not its inspiration, nor question its authority. A work of grace is attended with a spiritual conviction of the judgment of the reality and certainty of divine things. Its subjects are assured of the truth of the Gospel, so that they no longer halt between two opinions of its origin. God’s way of salvation ceases to be a doubtful thing to them. These are matters which are settled in their minds beyond any dispute, so that they value them above all else. They know the Bible to be God’s Word, for it has judged and searched them, exposing the secrets of their hearts (Heb 4:12-13). They have the weight and power of it on their souls.

2. Second, they have a *humbling and experiential knowledge of sin*, not merely from an awakened conscience, but more immediately from the anointing they have received. The former occupies the mind more with sin’s consequences, the latter with its nature. The Holy Spirit is the great Convicter of sin (Joh 16:8). It is an essential part of His office work to remove the scales from the eyes of those in whom He operates, so that they behold Him in the light of God’s holiness. As He does so, the soul perceives the awful sinfulness of sin: its excuselessness, its filthiness, its vileness; that it is “that abominable thing” which the Lord hates (Jer 44:4). The soul now realizes what all sin really is, namely a revolt against God, an opposition to Him, the outbreaking of the heart’s inveterate enmity against Him. The Holy Spirit brings to light the hidden things of darkness and makes the convicted soul recognize that the whole of his life has been one of self-seeking and self-pleasing, of continuous insubjection to God. That brings him to condemn himself as a guilty criminal, as a vile leper,<sup>22</sup> and to take his place before God in the dust.

3. Third, they know *what real repentance is*, not only theoretically, but practically. As the sinner learns what he is in himself—in a state of depravity, darkness, and death, utterly unfit for the presence of God—he is overwhelmed with horror and anguish. God now reproves him, setting his sins in order before his eyes (Psa 50:16-21), so that he exclaims, “my sin is ever before me” (Psa 51:3). “The arrows of the Almighty” stick in his heart so that he cannot get rid of them (Job 6:4). He is made to feel what an evil and bitter thing it is to treat his Maker with contempt. He realizes that he has acted toward God with the basest ingratitude, abusing His goodness, perverting His mercies, despising His authority. His comeliness is turned into corruption (Dan 10:8), and he cries, “Woe is me! for I am undone” (Isa 6:5). He is filled with the most poignant sorrow for having offended so infinitely gracious a Being as the Majesty of heaven. He confesses, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight” (Psa 51:4).

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<sup>22</sup> See Pink’s tract *Vile*, available from Chapel Library.

4. Fourth, they know *Christ as the sinner's Saviour*. They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. None but those with an urgent sense of need really turn unto the great Physician. It is only those who are conscious of being heavily laden who come unto Christ for relief and rest (Mat 11:28). Yet so legalistic and self-righteous is the human heart that, generally, a convicted sinner sets about his reformation and gives himself earnestly to religious performances, hoping to find peace for his conscience therein. But proving all self-efforts to be utterly vain, he is driven to despair. Then it is that his heart is prepared to welcome the good news of the Gospel. Then it is that this anointing gives him to see that Christ is in every way suited to his wretchedness, that His finished work is perfect, that His blood and righteousness require nothing whatever to be added unto them, that His so-great salvation is free, without money and without price (Isa 55:1). The blessed Spirit now works faith in such a soul, causing him to place his entire confidence in the Lord Jesus for the whole of his salvation. *Now* it is that he personally knows Christ to be an all-sufficient Saviour.

### Verse 21

*"I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth,  
but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth" (vs. 21).*

Once more the apostle inserts an explanatory word (compare 1:4; 2:1, 12-14), stating why he has penned this section of his epistle. The frequency with which he did so strikingly evinced his modesty. Can the reader imagine "the Pope" of Rome, when sending a message to his "cardinals and priests," condescending to give any reason for his conduct? No indeed, he is far too self-important and arrogant to do so. Not so this honoured ambassador of Christ, who almost apologizes for writing what he has. He pauses to assure them that it is not because he deems them to be uninstructed, nor because he fears they are unsound, or even wavering, in the faith. Those are points on which the saints are very tender, resenting any suspicion upon their orthodoxy. Thus, this explanatory word of John's was not only a mark of his humility, but a delicate consideration of their feelings as well. He would at once relieve their minds by letting them know that he entertained no doubts about their spiritual intelligence, but assured them that, since they had received an unction from the Holy One, he was fully persuaded that they were savingly acquainted with the Gospel in all its parts.

Yet as we first ponder this verse as a whole, there seems to be somewhat of a lack of coherence between it and the remainder of the passage of which it forms a part. After consulting many expositors, we consider that John Gill (1697-1771) best perceived its force. He suggested that the apostle was here obviating an objection, which he saw might be made against what he had last said. Since he acknowledged that they "knew all things," why was it necessary for him to write as he was here doing? To this question John replies that he writes to them not as *ill-informed* but as *instructed* ones. They "knew the truth": the Father as "the God of truth" (Jer 10:10), Christ as the embodiment of the truth (Joh 14:6), the Spirit as "the Spirit of truth" (Joh 15:26), the Scriptures as "the word of truth" (Eph 1:13), by which the truth is to be defended and confirmed. If they had not "known the truth," it had been to no purpose for him to write them about the antichrists. Moreover, though they were already taught of God, it was very proper for him to declare afresh those things which were most surely believed by them (Luk 1:1), that they might be still further established in the faith and fortified against false doctrine.



The connection between our present verse and the preceding one appears too in that there the “ye know all things” (as the result of the Spirit’s anointing) is here defined more definitely as a knowledge of “the truth,” and therefore qualified to detect error. As John Calvin (1509-1564) expressed it, “they would be able readily to distinguish between light and darkness because they had the Spirit for their guide.” From the above paragraph it will be seen that we do not restrict “the truth” in our text to either the personal Word or the written Word. We are always wary of limiting any biblical expression. Christ Himself is “the truth,” because the whole truth of God is summed up and embodied in Him. Equally, as Christ said to the Father, “Thy word is truth” (Joh 17:17). Even where the truth is already known, there needs to be “precept upon precept, line upon line” (Isa 28:10). As Jude said, “I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this” (verse 5); and Paul, “To write the same things to you, to me is not grievous, but for you it is safe” (Phi 3:1). Not only are the eyes of our understanding opened gradually, but memory is weak, affections sluggish, and much opposition is made by the flesh. Truth requires to be driven home, blow upon blow, if it is to be fixed “as a nail in a sure place” (Isa 22:23). Christ often repeated the same thing.

### The nature of the believer’s knowledge

Having shown above something of the scope and contents of the believer’s knowledge, let us now consider the kind or nature of it. There is a real and radical difference between the knowledge that a Christian has of the things of God and that which non-Christians may obtain of them, as there is between the substance and the shadow cast by it. The latter is but “the form of knowledge” (Rom 2:20), a merely *traditional*, intellectual, and historical knowledge, such as children have when they are taught to read and memorize the Scriptures without believing or understanding them. Later, it becomes an *opinionative* knowledge, so that they form their own ideas about certain doctrines or aspects of the truth, and are able to discuss and dispute about them; yet it cannot be said of them that “wisdom entereth into” their hearts (Pro 2:10). They do not act out what they talk about. Yet there is a *further degree* of this speculative and theoretical knowledge, which may in some measure exercise their conscience and work upon their natural affections so as to offer opposition to temptations from without. They may be influenced thereby to lead moral and decent lives, so as to escape “the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the [not “their”] Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 2:20), yet their knowledge falls far short of conforming them to the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:29).

1. The difference between gracious and graceless professors as to their knowledge lies not so much in the *matter* as in the *manner* of it. Some of the latter may greatly outstrip the former in the extent of their theological lore, and yet know nothing yet as they ought to know, nothing in a right manner, nothing spiritually; whereas the excellence of a believer’s knowledge lies not in the largeness of his apprehension of divine things, but that he sees them in the light and knows them in the power of the Spirit, so as to produce communion and walking with God. “The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power” (1Co 4:20), which means that the rule or dominion which God has over the hearts of His children is not a theory but a reality; it consists not in bare notions, nor in confident assertions, but in God’s working effectually in the soul. “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance” (1Th 1:5), inclining the heart to heavenly things. When the effects and fruits of the Gospel are accomplished in the inner man, an indelible and affecting impression is made upon the soul, such

as the apostle had reference to when he said, “even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you” (1Co 1:6).

2. Christian knowledge is an *experiential* one. The different aspects of truth are no longer abstract propositions to him, but are by the effectual operation of the Spirit wrought into the very warp and woof of his soul. Hitherto he had at best only a nominal information of them, but now he has an inward and intuitive realization of the same. To the Jews Christ said, “I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom you know not” (Joh 7:28). Despite all their boasted belief in the one only, true and living God (Rom 2:17-18), they were at heart complete strangers to Him—well informed theologically, they had no spiritual union with Him. Nor had the writer or the Christian reader, until they could say, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). It is only by an inward revelation that He is savingly known: “and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me” (Gal 1:15-16).

3. Christian knowledge is a *soul-humbling* and self-abasing one. That knowledge of divine things, which is received in a natural way from men or from the reading of books, “puffeth up” (1Co 8:1), producing self-esteem and presumption. But that spiritual knowledge which comes from God reveals to a person his empty conceits, his ignorance, his worthlessness. The teaching of the Spirit convinces the soul what a miserable failure he is, how very far short he falls of measuring up to the standard of conduct set before him, what horrible corruptions indwell him, and that makes him little in his own eyes. Among those born of women was not greater than John the Baptist—wondrous were the privileges granted him, abundant the light he was favoured with—yet he felt that “I am not worthy to unloose” Christ’s shoe’s latchet (Luk 3:16). None granted such an insight into heavenly things as Paul, yet he regarded himself as being not “the greatest Bible teacher of the age,” but as “less than the least of all saints” (Eph 3:8).

4. Christian knowledge is a *certifying* one. Its glorious object is no longer known speculatively and inferentially, but truly and immediately—not by a process of reasoning, but directly. He who is spirit and invisible is made visible and palpable to the soul: Moses endured “as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27)—God was real to his faith though imperceptible to his senses. Believers know “the grace of God in truth” (Col 1:6) by a sensible experience. As it is one thing for a friend to call upon us and inform us that the wind is biting cold, and quite another for us to walk with him or her to the bus and have the frost nip our nose and ears; so it is a very different thing to hear the preacher saying God’s grace is sufficient for His children, and for them to prove the sustaining power of the same under the most trying and painful afflictions. So, too, to read that God is a prayer-hearing God, and for me to obtain definite and wonderful answers to my petitions. Again, as I ponder Romans 7, I know it is a true and accurate description of the saint’s inward conflict, for it is verified in myself.

5. Christian knowledge is an *operative* one, for it is not a species of information that adds to our mental store, but an inspiration that stirs the soul unto action. However scriptural be the notions possessed by the natural man, they exert no sanctifying influence upon him, and yield no godliness of character and conduct. His light is like that of the moon: it quickens not, nor produces fruit; however orthodox, it leaves the heart cold and barren. Whereas, the light which the blessed Spirit communicates is like that of the sun: it not only illumines the understanding, but it searches the conscience, moves the will, and sets the heart on fire for God. His teaching is dynamical, having a vitalizing effect upon the whole of the inner man, stirring its subject unto holy endeavours. Spiritual knowledge is intensely practical, altering the disposition, producing obedience, conforming unto Christ.



There are multitudes in Christendom today of whom it must be said that they are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2Ti 3:7). They are not only regular attenders upon preaching, but many of them are even engaged in running around to one special “meeting” or “communion” to another, read much religious literature, and have their heads stored with a mass of undigested theological details, yet arrive not at an experiential, practical, humbling, operative, and transforming acquaintance with the things of God. And why is this? Because they have never received an anointing from the Holy One; that is what makes all the difference! But that anointing gives the regenerate a supernatural and sanctifying realization of the truth. Not that they know as fully as they ought, or so as to preclude their duty of a diligent application on their part to make further progress therein. While they only “know in part” (1Co 13:9), and a very small part, yet they know it in a spiritual and saving way.

## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

### 83. Indolence, Part 1

Before turning to the next chapter, an incident recorded in Joshua 17 requires our attention. It may be recalled that the fourteenth chapter closed with the words, “And the land had rest from war.” At first sight, that seems to be a blessed statement, but in view of several later ones, it should rather be regarded as the striking of an ominous note. The fact is that Israel had, temporarily at least, become weary of well-doing, and were resting on their oars, for they had failed to complete the task which God had assigned them. There were many places yet unsubdued, numerous companies of the Canaanites which were still unconquered. That resting from war was fraught with evil consequences, for soon after we are told, “As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out” (Jos 15:63). And again, it is recorded of the Ephraimites, “They drave not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute” (Jos 16:10). And once more, “Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in the land” (Jos 17:12). Sad blemishes were those in the account given of the general success of the nation.

The above failures are to be accounted for by God’s *withholding* of His power and blessing upon their efforts. And why did He not show Himself strong on their behalf? Because they had failed in their duty, for, instead of finishing the work which the Lord had given them to do, they became slack and took their ease. And later, like poor Samson when he awoke out of his sleep, said, “I will go out as at other times,” but “wist not that the LORD was departed from him” (Jdg 16:20). Thus it happened with them—they were shorn of their strength. For God to have given success unto those Israelites would be countenancing their indolence. Never does He place a premium upon slothfulness, but, instead, leaves those who yield thereto to suffer the painful effects thereof. The lessons *for us* to learn therefrom are obvious. God grants His people no furloughs in the “good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12) to which He has called them, and should they take one, then their enemies will inevitably prove too strong, nor will the Captain of their

salvation fight their battles for them. Our commission is, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1Co 16:13), and if we heed not, most unpleasant will be the outcome.

It is important to note carefully *the order* of those four precepts, for the first three must be obeyed in order to the realization of the fourth. Unless we be vigilant in guarding against the temptations and dangers on every side, are faithful in holding the truth of the Gospel both doctrinally and practically, are undismayed and undaunted by those who oppose us—conducting ourselves boldly and bravely—we shall have no strength with which to overcome our foes. Nor is there to be any cessation in the discharge of those duties—the divine command is “always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1Co 15:58) i.e., striving against sin, resisting the devil, bringing forth the fruits of holiness. But note well the precise point at which the great failure of Joshua 14:15 occurred. It was immediately following the most notable successes which had attended their arms, so that they probably thought they were now entitled to a respite. Here too the lesson is plain for us. It is right after some signal victory which grace has given us over our lusts that we are most in danger—tempted to relax our efforts. Ah, my reader, forget not that it is the “fool” who says, “Take thine ease” (Luk 12:19), whereas God enjoins us, “Let not thine hands be slack” (Zep 3:16).

In Joshua 17:14-18, an incident is recorded which afforded a further opportunity for Joshua to display yet another striking quality of his character. There, we read of the children of Joseph coming to Israel’s leader with a complaint, “Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the LORD hath blessed me hitherto?” (verse 14). The tribe of Joseph was, of course, a *double* one, comprising the descendants of both Ephraim and Manasseh. Nevertheless, we consider that avowal of their greatness had reference to something more than their numerical strength, namely, their honourable parentage—their being the descendants of the man whom Pharaoh had made lord of Egypt—and thus it was the breathing of pride. This is borne out by the subsequent history of this tribe, in the light of which their complaint unto Joshua was thoroughly characteristic of the haughty spirit that possessed them. Thus, we behold their arrogance again in their murmuring against Gideon (Jdg 8:1), in the conduct of Jephthah (Jdg 11:9, 30-31), and later still in the days of David, they were constantly asserting their claim to superiority in Israel without exhibiting any qualification for it.

“And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee” (Jos 17:15). Thus did Joshua turn their argument against themselves, rebuking their pride and discontent, as well as their unbelief and indolence, for there was plenty of room for their expansion if they possessed the necessary enterprise and courage. C. J. Ellicott (1819-1905) pointed out that it is plain from what is here stated that a large part of the country of Palestine then consisted of uncleared forest. That the inhabitants of that district were far fewer than those in the valley of Esdrealon and of the territory assigned to Judah in the south. Also, that this fact justifies the strategy of the attack of Israel upon *the centre* of the country, so that the forces of the Canaanites were necessarily divided, and thus, Israel could strike first with their whole force at the southern armies, and then, turn round upon the enemies in the north. This serves to explain the ease with which they set up the Law at Ebal (Jos 8:30) at the commencement of the invasion, and the selection of Shiloh for their capital afterwards.

“And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us; and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are of Beth-shean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel” (Jos 17:16). Here we behold their covetousness, for Joshua 17:5 informs us that “There fell ten portions to Manasseh, beside the land of Gilead

and Bashan, which were on the other side Jordan,” while another and separate inheritance had been allotted unto their brethren the Ephraimites. But though they had been given the largest share of Canaan, they were not satisfied. While the reference they made unto the “chariots of iron” possessed by the Canaanites, who occupied the adjacent valleys, at once revealed the unbelief and timidity of their hearts and disproved their pretensions to being “a great people” (Jos 17:14). See here again, my reader, the evil results of allowing ourselves an intermission from the warfare to which the Christian is called. As surely as he ceases therein and takes his ease, so will a spirit of discontent with his lot come upon him, and so too will unbelief occupy him with the might of his enemies and dispirit him.

“And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, to Ephraim and to Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people, and hast great power; thou shalt not have one lot only: but the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down; and the outgoings of it shall be thine; for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong” (verses 17-18). We do not regard that as the language of satire, but rather as pressing upon them the discharge of their responsibility, and calling upon them to trust in the Lord and go forward in His name. Joshua pointed out that there were extensive tracts of wooded country which could be cleared for agricultural use, so that, if they continued to multiply, land would be available for their families. True there was the menace of the powerfully armed Canaanites in the immediate vicinity, but if they bestirred themselves and performed their duty, looking to the Lord for protection and help, they might assuredly count upon His enabling them to drive out those who then possessed that land which He had given unto the seed of Abraham, and be granted strength to vanquish all their enemies. Thus, from Joshua’s reply, it is clear that they were lacking in diligence and enterprise.

There can be little doubt that the Ephraimites and Manassehites expected to receive preferential treatment from Joshua, since he himself belonged to the tribe of Ephraim (Num 13:8). But Joshua refused to show partiality unto his brethren, thereby demonstrating his fidelity unto the commission JEHOVAH had given him. Blessed is it to behold in that refusal still another adumbration in the character of his Antitype, for when the Saviour was asked to assign the seats on His right hand and on His left unto those who were nearest and dearest to Him (James and John), He declined to show any favouritism (Mat 20:20-23). In his *Practical Observations* on this passage, Thomas Scott (1747-1821) well remarked, “Alas, professing Christians are often more disposed to murmur, envy and covet, than to be content, thankful, and ready to distribute. Indeed, we are more prone to grasp at what belongs to others, than to manage our own to the best advantage; and many complain of poverty, and encroach upon the benevolence of others, because they rebel against the sentence of divine justice, ‘Thou shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy brow’ (Gen 3:19).

“Men excuse themselves from labour on any pretence, and nothing serves the purpose better than having rich and powerful relations, though by providing for them, these are often partial and unfaithful in disposing of those funds with which they are entrusted for the public benefit. But there is more real kindness in pointing out to men the advantages within their reach, that they may be excited to improve them, than in gratifying their indolence and profusion. True religion gives no sanction to these evils. ‘We commanded,’ says the apostle, ‘that if any man would not work, neither should he eat’ (2Th 3:10); and many of our *cannots* are only the language of sloth, which magnifies every difficulty into an impossibility, and represents every danger as inevitable destruction. This is especially the case in our spiritual work and warfare; but even our professed relation to the Captain of the Lord’s host will not avail us if we be indolent and self-indulgent.

Our very complaints that comforts are withheld, frequently result for negligence and fear of the cross; and when convinced that we can do nothing, we are apt to sit still and attempt nothing.” Such has been poor human nature throughout the ages—either spurred on by the feverish energy of the flesh, so that we run without being sent, or lazing and repining instead of doing with our might what God has bidden us to do.

“And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them” (Jos 18:1). The commentators are unanimous in supposing that this moving of Israel’s camp and headquarters was by divine appointment. They surmise that Joshua had received some message from JEHOVAH, either direct or through the Urim and Thummim of the high priest, bidding him remove the tabernacle from Gilgal to Shiloh, and they also point out the advantages of this new location. Gilgal was at the extremity of Palestine, being situated on the bank of the Jordan, whereas Shiloh was in the heart of the land, and, thus, would be much more handy for the males to visit (Deu 16:16) after the tribes had departed to their separate sections. Personally, we consider that is assuming too much. There is not the slightest hint that God had given any orders for them to leave Gilgal, where they had been encamped ever since their supernatural entrance into Canaan, and we regard the absence of any record of God’s revealing His will for them to do so as ominous. It seems to us much more likely that this move was dictated by what the flesh terms “prudential consideration”—their own convenience. “Shiloh was in the lot of Ephraim, the tribe to which Joshua belonged, and it was expedient that the sanctuary should be near the residence of the chief governor” (Scott). But if *that* was the reason which prompted Joshua to act, then he was leaning to his own understanding, instead of having his paths directed by the Lord (Pro 3:5-6).

Gilgal was the place of circumcision (Jos 5:8-9)—typically the mortifying of the flesh and separation from the world—and so long as Israel returned thither after each campaign, the power and blessing of the Lord rested upon them. They should, therefore, have been very slow in leaving Gilgal, even though what it signified spiritually was very unpleasant to nature. Nothing is said of their waiting upon the Lord for guidance, no mention made of their seeking His mind via the high priest. Let it be carefully borne in mind that what is here said in Joshua 18:1 follows right after the record of a number of sad failures. Observe too that the Holy Spirit does not here designate the sacred tent “the house of the LORD” as He did in Joshua 6:24, or “the LORD’s tabernacle” as in Joshua 22:19, but merely “the tabernacle,” as though to indicate that He did not endorse or associate Himself with the move made—cf. “the Jews’ passover” and “a feast of the Jews” (Joh 2:13; 5:1), rather than “the LORD’s passover” (Exo 12:11) and a feast “of the LORD” (Lev 23:2). It is also solemnly significant that in the opening chapters of Judges (which record Israel’s failures after the death of Joshua), we are told “There arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD” (Jdg 2:10). So, apparently, they had forsaken the angel of His presence, who had remained at their true base.

During several generations of Israel’s spiritual poverty and powerlessness, the tabernacle remained at Shiloh (1Sa 4:3), but in centuries later, when God through Elijah and Elisha was granting a revival unto Israel, those prophets made Gilgal, and not Shiloh, their headquarters (2Ki 2:1). The Holy Spirit thereby intimating that, if in a dark day of declension, we make the place of circumcision (devotedness unto God) our camping ground or centre, then the divine blessing will be upon us. But *Gilgal* is not at all popular, making demands which are unwelcome to flesh and blood. Thus in the type itself—Gilgal lay at the very extremity of the land, a long and tiresome journey being entailed for the men of war to return to camp, and, therefore, a more convenient

headquarters—easy to the flesh—would be far more acceptable. The commentators dwell upon the fact that “Shiloh” was one of the names by which the Messiah was fore-announced (Gen 49:10), and conclude that it was with an eye to Him that Israel so designated the place to which the tabernacle was now taken and erected. But we very much question such a view, for Joshua 18:1 reads as though this place was already known as Shiloh when they arrived there, and not that *they* gave it such a name on this occasion. The word itself means “rest,” and *that* was what appealed to them now that so much of Canaan had been subdued.

We have pointed out above that what is recorded in Joshua 18:1 comes right after several marked failures on the part of three of Israel’s tribes, and now, immediately following it, we find Joshua upbraiding seven of the other tribes, saying “How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the LORD God of your fathers hath given you?” (Jos 18:3)! Thus, the whole context is directly *against* a favourable construction being placed on this mention of moving their headquarters to Shiloh. Instead, we consider that they acted precipitately, that they walked by sight instead of by faith, and consulted too much their own convenience. Viewed thus, there is pointed another practical lesson unto which *we* do well to take heed. Not only is it our bounden duty, but also for our good both spiritually and temporally, that we heed the divine precept “He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa 28:16). To act by impulse or passion is unworthy of a rational creature, yet it is only by definite prayer, constant watchfulness and strict self-discipline that we shall be preserved from the frenzied spirit of this foolish generation, which makes a god of speed.

More specifically, the above incident cautions us to be slow when contemplating *a change of our location*. Only too often the Lord’s people are regulated in this matter by material considerations rather than by spiritual ones, thinking more of improving their position than of glorifying God—and many of them are made to smart for their pains. “Ponder the path of thy feet” (Pro 4:26) is wisdom’s counsel, and failure to do so results in many a fall. Those who act hastily usually have reason to repent at their leisure. “The prudent man looketh well to his going” (Pro 14:15). The Christian should do more than that, “Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass!” Nor is that all, “Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him” (Psa 37:5, 7) to make His way plain before your face, and remember that He guides us a step at a time, rather than making evident the whole of our path at once. Lean not unto your own understanding (Pro 3:5), nor confer with flesh and blood. Instead, beg the Lord to work patience in you, and let your attitude be that of David’s, “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him” (Psa 62:5). “The way of the righteous [the one whose heart is right with God] is made plain” (Pro 15:19). Until it be so, remain where you are.

# THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

## 12. Its Remedy, Part 2

In our last, we dwelt upon some of the difficulties, yea, seeming impossibilities, which stood in the way of the recovery of any of the fallen sons of Adam, showing that there required to be something more than a benign purpose of grace on God's part to effect the same, something more than the forthputting of His mighty power. That the obstacles which needed to be removed were so many and so great that "the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph 3:10) must also needs be called into play. The difficulty from the human side was the desperate state of the sinner. How his darkness could be changed into light, his enmity into love, his unwillingness into willingness, without any violence being done to his moral agency. The obstacles from the divine side were how the Most High could restore such wretches to His favour, and yet not compromise His perfections. How He could have dealings with moral lepers without sully His holiness, clear the guilty without repudiating His law, exercise mercy consistently with His justice. To provide a remedy for such a malady, and to do so in a way that honoured the throne of God, was far beyond the reach of created intelligence.

We saw that, in order to save a law-cured and hell-deserving sinner, it was necessary that some method and means be devised whereby he should be delivered from all the consequences of the fall, and, at the same time, meet all the requirements of the divine government. Sin had to be dealt with unsparingly, yet transgressors be exempted from their merited doom. Full conformity unto the law must be rendered, yet by one in *the same nature* as those who had violated it. That was clearly adumbrated under the Old Testament types. The redeemer has to be a *kinsman* of those he befriended (Lev 25:25; Ruth 4:4-6). Moreover, the requirements of the law could be met only by one whose nature was derived from *the same* stock as those on whose behalf he transacted. Yet, his humanity must not be tainted in the least degree by their common defilement. It was required that he be a man of the seed of Adam (Luk 3:31-38) and of Eve (Gen 3:15), yet an absolutely pure and holy man, for none other could personally and perpetually obey in thought, word and deed. But none such existed, "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Ecc 7:20), nor would there ever have been one had the human race been left to itself. Naught but the manifold wisdom and miracle-working power of God could produce him.

Yet, one who was *more than man*, even though a perfect one, yea, far superior to those heavenly beings who veil their faces in the presence of deity, was needed in order to discharge the liabilities of depraved sinners, and renew them in holiness. This is evident from several considerations. The most exalted creature, simply because he is a creature, is *obligated* to render perfect obedience unto his Maker, and, therefore, could merit nothing on the behalf of others. If he fully performed his duty, he would indeed work out a righteousness and be entitled to the reward of the law—but he would need that righteousness *on his own account*, and, therefore, it would not be available for imputation unto another—and still less unto many others. Again, the work he had to do—pay in full that incalculable debt incurred by those who were to be saved, make expiation for all their sins, reconcile them to God, restore them to His favour, make them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light—was far beyond the compass of any mere creature,

no matter how high his rank in the scale of being. Moreover, any deliverer of the apostate sons of Adam must be essentially and infinitely holy, for none less could be qualified to put away the infinite guilt of their countless iniquities.

In order for any portion of mankind to be eternally saved *unto the glory of God*, it was necessary that not only a flawless obedience be rendered unto God's law, but such an obedience as brought more honour unto His holiness than was dishonour cast upon it by the disobedience of all. To affirm that it matters little what becomes of the glory of God, so long as poor sinners be saved in some way or other, is naught but the blasphemous belchings of the carnal mind. Where God be revered and loved above all, very different will be the sentiments of such a one. Namely, better far that the whole of Adam's race perish than that the character of deity be sullied and the foundations of His throne undermined. But such an obedience could not be rendered by any mere creature, no matter how pure his nature or eminent his rank. For there must needs be somewhat of *the divine* in it, in order for his performance to possess an infinite value. Nor must that obedience be constrained, but rather a voluntary one, for that which is forced proceeds not from love, and is valueless. Nor must his conformity unto the law be one which he was personally *responsible* to render unto it, for in such case, it could not be accepted as a due compensation for the disobedience of all.

It was not a single individual who was to be recovered from the fall and be brought unto glory, but "ten thousands" (Jude 1:14), and each of them had more sins to his account than the hairs upon his head. And every sin had in it an immeasurable guilt, since it was committed against the infinite Majesty of heaven. The woe unto which all of them were obnoxious was also infinite, the duration thereof being eternal—everything unspeakably dreadful and painful which our nature is capable of suffering. Nor could they be delivered from the awful consequents of their sin without an adequate satisfaction being made to the offended justice of God. To assert the contrary is all one as to say it matters not to God whether He be obeyed or disobeyed, whether He be honoured or dishonoured in and by His creatures, and that would be to deny His very being, seeing it is directly contrary to the glory of all His perfections. But where was the person qualified to make, and capable of making, the requisite propitiation for sin? Where was the one fitted to act as mediator between God and men, between the Holy One and the unholy? Where was the one who could bestow life on the dead and merit everlasting blessedness for them?

If a remedy be provided for sinners, it must be one that restores them unto the same state and dignity wherein they were placed before the fall. To recover them unto any lesser honour and blessedness than that which was theirs originally would not consist with either the divine wisdom or bounty. "Yea, seeing it was the infinite grace, goodness and mercy of God to restore him, it seems agreeable unto the glory of the divine excellencies in their operations that he should be brought into a better and more honourable condition than that which he had lost." In his primitive state, man was subject unto none but his Maker. Though he was less in dignity than the angels, yet he owed them no obedience. They were his fellow servants of the Lord God. Obviously (as John Owen, 1616-1683, also pointed out), if the sinner were saved by any mere creature, he could not be restored to his first state and dignity, for in such a case he would owe allegiance and subservience unto that creature who had redeemed him—he would become the property of the one who bought him. That would not only introduce the utmost confusion, but the sinner would be in a still worse case than he was before the fall, for he would *not* be in a position wherein he owed subjection and honour unto God *alone*.

From the foregoing, it will be seen that the only sufficient deliverer of fallen men must be one possessed of infinite dignity and worthiness, in order that he might be capable of meriting infinite

blessings. He must be a person of infinite power and wisdom, for the work he must perform could be successfully accomplished by none less. But more, it was requisite that he should be a person who was infinitely dear to God the Father, in order to give an infinite value to his transactions in the Father's esteem, and that the Father's love to him might balance the offence and provocation of our sins. He must also be a person who could act in this matter in his own right, that in himself he be not a servant and subject of the Most High. Otherwise, he could not merit anything for those he would save. Moreover, he must be a person possessed of infinite mercy and love, for none other would voluntarily undertake a task so arduous, so humiliating, and involving such unspeakable suffering, for creatures so unworthy and foul as fallen men. But, where in all the universe was such a one to be found? No created person possessed the necessary qualifications. When the apostle John beheld (in vision) the seven-sealed book, we are told that he wept much, because no man in heaven or earth was found worthy to open the book (Rev 5:1-4). And, had not the manifold wisdom of God found the solution to all these problems, men and angels alike had for ever been nonplussed by them.

The various elements in the complicated problem of salvation for any of Adam's children are far from being exhausted in those already pointed out. Man was made to serve and glorify God. In spirit and soul and body, in all his faculties and powers, in all that was given to and entrusted with him, he was not his own, but in the place of a servant. The same was equally the case with the angels. A creature, and one who is in all respects in subjection to his Maker, are convertible terms. But, from that condition and status the human race in Adam revolted, determining to be "as gods" (Gen 3:5)—lords over themselves. There is something of *that* in every sin—a preferring of self-will to the will of the Almighty. By his insurrection, man fell into complete bondage to sin and Satan. In order to free the sinner from his captivity, it was necessary for any deliverer to take the position man originally occupied. He must enter the place of *absolute subjection* to God, entirely subordinating his own will to His, for in no other way could adequate compensation be made to the outraged government of God, and the damage wrought by our first parents be repaired. But how could any uncreated being occupy the position of a creature? With what propriety could one possessed of infinite dignity and excellence suffer such humiliation? How could one who was above all law come under the law and render obedience to it?

Again, in his original state, man had naught but what his Creator had bestowed upon him. Made out of the dust of the ground (Gen 2:7), he was endowed with intelligence and moral agency—but to be employed in the divine service. He was also dependent upon his Maker for every breath he drew. That state of need and dependence he deliberately forsook, determining to enrich himself and assume absolute dominion. But his awful crime brought upon him, and all whom he represented, the loss of his original endowments. He lost the image of God, his right unto creatures here below, his own soul. Consequently, any saviour for him must needs experience *the degradation and poverty* which the sinner had brought upon himself, so that he would not have where to lay his head (Luk 9:58). But how was such an experience possible for anyone who was infinitely rich in himself, and in his own right? Since Adam stood for and transacted on the behalf of all whom he legally represented, it follows that any saviour must serve not in a private capacity but as the covenant head of those whom he was to recover. Finally, since God made the first man lord of the earth, giving him dominion over all creatures therein (Gen 1:28), which dominion he forfeited upon his fall, then a deliverer must be capable of recovering the lost estate. But where was one that was able to purchase so vast an inheritance?

"The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luk 18:27). Omniscience found a solution to all those problems which had for ever baffled the minds of men. Scripture



throws not a little emphasis upon this. It is referred to as “the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory”—i.e., our salvation (1Co 1:7). “In a mystery” connotes that which is undiscoverable by human reason, incomprehensible to the finite capacity, completely concealed until divinely revealed, and, even then, beyond our powers to comprehend fully. In Ephesians 1:8, we are told of it, “Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.” The word “abounded” has the force of gushing out, overflowing. It is called “all wisdom” for its excellency. It was not a single concept or act, but a conjunction of many excellent ends and means to the glory of God. Unto wisdom is added “prudence.” The former refers to the eternal contriving of a way, the latter to the ordering of all things unto the accomplishment of God’s counsel or purpose—wisdom in devising, prudence in executing. In Ephesians 3:10, it is designated “the manifold wisdom of God” because of its complexity and variety—the salvation of sinners, the defeat of Satan, the full discovery of the blessed Trinity in Their different persons, separate operations, combined actions, and expressions of goodness, and because of the vastness of its extent.

That “manifold wisdom of God,” now exhibited before the angels in the redemption of the Church, is said to be “according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph 3:11). The eternal Son of God, predestined to be the God-man Mediator, is the grand medium, means, and manifestation of the divine omniscience, and, therefore, is He called “The Word of God” (Rev 19:13), and “the wisdom of God” (1Co 1:24). “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 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; even in him” (Eph 1:9-10). “The mystery of the will of God is His counsels concerning His own eternal glory in the sanctification and salvation of the Church here below, to be united unto that above. The absolute original hereof was in His own good pleasure, or the sovereign acting of His wisdom and will. But it was all to be effected in Christ, which the apostle twice repeats. He would gather ‘all things into a head in Christ, even in Him,’ that is, in Him alone.

“Thus, it is said of Him with respect unto His future incarnation and work of mediation that ‘the LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was’ (Pro 8:22-23). The eternal personal existence of the Son of God is supposed in these expressions...without it, none of these things could be affirmed of Him. But, there is a regard in them both unto His future incarnation and the accomplishment of the counsels of God thereby. With respect thereto, God possessed Him in the beginning of His way, and set Him up from everlasting. God possessed Him eternally as His essential wisdom, as He was always and is always in the bosom of the Father, in the mutual, ineffable love of the Father and Son, in the eternal bond of the Spirit. But He signally possessed Him ‘in the beginning of his way’ as His wisdom acting in the production of all the ways and works that are outwardly in Him. The beginning of God’s way before His works, are His counsels concerning them, even as our counsels are the beginning of our ways with respect unto future works. And He ‘set Him up from everlasting’ as *the foundation* of all the counsels of His will, in and by whom they were to be executed and accomplished” (J. Owen)

The eighth chapter of Proverbs is an exceedingly profound chapter, but a most blessed one. In it, as the first verse shows, the voice of “wisdom” is heard speaking. That it is a *person* who is there in view is evident, again, from verse 12, “I wisdom dwell with prudence,” and verse 17, “I love them that love me.” That it is a *divine* person may be seen from verse 15, “by me kings reign.” But, it is equally clear from the language of verses 24 and 25, “I was brought forth,” and

“I was by him [the Father], as one brought up with him” (verse 30), that such expressions could not be predicated of the Son of God absolutely, that is as co-eternal and co-equal with the Father. No, “wisdom” is here to be understood of the Son as the God-man Mediator in His *two natures*, as the One ordained to be the incarnate “wisdom of God” (1Co 1:24). When He declares, “The LORD possessed me: the beginning [the Hebrew is without the “in”] of his way, before his works of old” (Pro 8:22), it is the Mediator speaking in the covenant subsistence which he had before God ere the universe was called into union with the eternal Son, was “the beginning” (cf. Rev 1:8) of the Triune God’s “way,” for in all things He must “have the pre-eminence” (Col 1:18).

The *first counsel* of God had respect unto the Man, Christ Jesus, for He was appointed to be not only the Head of His Church, but “the firstborn of every creature” (Col 1:15). The One whom the Lord of hosts addresses as “the man, my fellow” (Zec 13:7) was predestinated unto the grace of divine union and glory. “In the head [Greek] of the book it is written of me” (Heb 10:7), He being the Object and Subject of God’s original decree. “Our Redeemer came forth of the womb of a decree from eternity, before He came out of the womb of the Virgin in time. He was hid in the will of God before He was made manifest in the flesh of a Redeemer. He was a Lamb slain in purpose before He was slain upon the cross. He was possessed by God in the beginning or the beginning of His way (the Head of His works), and set up from everlasting to have His delights among the sons of men” (Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680). The person of the God-man Mediator was the origin of the divine counsels. As such, the triune JEHOVAH “possessed” or embraced Him, as a Treasury in which all the divine counsels were laid up, as an efficient Agent for the execution of all His works. Christ was God’s first Elect (Isa 42:1) and, then, the Church was chosen in Him (Eph 1:4).

“I was set up, from everlasting.” That declaration concerns Him not essentially, as God the Son, but economically, as the Mediator—“set up” or, literally, “anointed” by a covenant constitution and by divine subsistence before the mind of God. Before all worlds, in the “council of peace” (Zec 6:13), Christ was appointed and anointed to His official character. Before God planned to produce any creature, He first “set up” Christ as the great Archtype and Original. “Then I was by him as one brought up, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him” (Pro 8:30). It was not the Father’s complacence in the second person in the Trinity (as such) which is there in view, but His satisfaction and joy in the Mediator, as God contemplated Him in the glass of His decrees as the Repository of all His designs. The Hebrew word for “brought forth” also signifies “master-builder,” and is so rendered in the Revised version—how blessedly it described Him who could be relied upon to carry out the Father’s purpose! In His eternal thoughts and primitive views, the Man Christ Jesus was the object of God’s love. By Him, all things were to be created (Col 1:16). By Him, vessels were to be formed for His glory (Col 1:16). By Him, the grand remedy was to be provided for sin’s victims (Col 1:14).

It is indeed lamentable that so few of the Lord’s people have been instructed in these “deep things of God” (1Co 2:10), for they have been revealed for their edification and consolation. What we have sought to explain in Proverbs 8 throws light on other passages. For example, how many a thoughtful reader has been puzzled by John 6:62, “What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?”—in what sense had He been in heaven as Man before He became incarnate? But though *we* be ignorant of this wondrous truth, the Old Testament saints were not, as is clear from Psalm 80:17, “Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the Son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.” Though the Man Christ Jesus had no historical existence then, He *had* a covenant subsistence before the Father, as taken into union with the second person of the Trinity. As faith gives a present “substance” (the Greek word means “a real

subsistence”) in the believer’s heart and mind of the things hoped for, so that he has a present enjoyment of things yet future, so, in the mind of Him before whom all things are ever present, Christ as incarnate was ever a living reality. Thus, when God said, “Let us make man in our image” (Gen 1:26), the ultimate reference was to the God-man, who is *par excellence* “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15).

Let us pause here and admire and adore the glorious wisdom of God, which found a way to save His people in a manner that was infinitely becoming and honouring to Himself. And let us bow in wonderment and worship before the Lord Jesus, who, notwithstanding the unspeakable shame and suffering involved therein, delighted to do the Father’s will. The manifold wisdom of God is seen in *His choice* of the One to be the Head and Saviour of the Church, in that He was in every respect fit to perform that office and work, possessed of all the necessary qualifications, and in that He was the *only* person suited thereunto. God’s abounding wisdom appeared in His knowing that Christ *was* a fit person. Naught but omniscience itself could have thought of God’s dear Son becoming the Redeemer of hell-deserving sinners.

# THE APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

## Part 2

Some dispensationalists do not go quite so far as others in arbitrarily erecting notice-boards over large sections of Scripture, warning Christians not to tread on ground which belongs to others, yet there is general agreement among them that the Gospel of Matthew—though it stands at the beginning of the New Testament and not at the close of the Old!—pertains not to those who are members of the mystical body of Christ, but is “entirely Jewish.” That the sermon on the mount is “legalistic” and not evangelistic, and that its searching and flesh-withering precepts are not binding upon Christians. Some go so far as to insist that the great commission, with which it closes, is not designed for us today, but is meant for “a godly Jewish remnant” after the present era is ended. In support of this wild and wicked theory, appeal is made to and great stress laid upon the fact that Christ is represented, most prominently, as “the son of David” (Mat 1:1) or King of the Jews (Mat 2:2). But they *ignore* another conspicuous fact, namely, that in its opening verse, the Lord Jesus is set forth as “the son of Abraham” (Mat 1:1), and *he was a Gentile!* What is still more against this untenable hypothesis—and as though the Holy Spirit designedly anticipated and refuted it—is the fact that Matthew’s is the only one of the four Gospels where the Church is actually mentioned twice (Mat 16:18; 18:17)!—though in John’s Gospel its members are portrayed as branches of the Vine (Joh 15:5), members of Christ’s flock (Joh 10:15-16), which are designations of saints which have *no* dispensational limitations.

Equally remarkable is the fact that the very same epistle which contains the verse (2Ti 2:15), on which this modern system is based, emphatically declares, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”

(2Ti 3:16-17). So far from large sections of Scripture being designed for other companies, and excluded from our immediate use, ALL Scripture is meant for and is needed by us. First, all of it is “profitable for doctrine,” which could not be the case if it were true (as dispensationalists dogmatically insist) that God has entirely different methods of dealing with men in past and future ages from the present one. Second, all Scripture is given us “for instruction in righteousness” or right doing, but we are at a complete loss to know how to regulate our conduct if the precepts in one part of the Bible are now outdated (as these teachers of error assert) and injunctions of a contrary character have displaced them, and if certain statutes are meant for others who will occupy this scene after the Church has been removed from it. Third, all Scripture is given that the man of God might be “perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”—every part of the Word is required in order to supply him with all needed instruction and to produce a full-orbed life of godliness.

When the dispensationalist is hard pressed with those objections, he endeavours to wriggle out of his dilemma by declaring that though all Scripture be *for us*, much of it is not addressed *to us*. But really, that is a distinction without a difference. In his exposition of Hebrews 3:7-11, Owen rightly pointed out that when making quotation from the Old Testament, the apostle prefaced it with “the Holy Spirit saith” (not “said”), and remarked, “Whatever was given by inspiration from the Holy Spirit and is recorded in the Scriptures for the use of the Church, He contrived to speak it to us unto this day. As He liveth for ever, so He continues to speak for ever; that is, whilst His voice or word shall be of use for the Church—*He speaks now unto us*... Many men have invented several ways to lessen the authority of the Scriptures, and few are willing to acknowledge an *immediate* speaking of God unto them therein.” To the same effect wrote that sound commentator, Thomas Scott, “Because of the immense advantages of perseverance, and the tremendous consequences of apostasy, we should consider the words of the Holy Spirit as addressed to us.”

Not only is the assertion that—though all Scripture be *for us*, all is *not to us*—meaningless, but it is also impertinent and *impudent*, for there is nothing whatever in the Word of truth to support and substantiate it. Nowhere has the Spirit given the slightest warning that such a passage is “not to the Christian,” and still less that whole books belong to someone else. Moreover, such a principle is manifestly *dishonest*. What right have I to make *any use* of that which is the property of another? What would my neighbour think were I to take letters which were addressed *to him* and argue that they were meant *for me*? Furthermore, such a theory, when put to the test, is found to be *unworkable*. For example, to whom is the book of Proverbs addressed, or, for that matter, the first epistle of John? Personally, this writer, after having wasted much time in perusing scores of books which pretended to rightly divide the Word, still regards the whole of Scripture as God’s gracious revelation to him, and for him, as though there were not another person on earth, conscious that he cannot afford to dispense with any portion of it, and he is heartily sorry for those who lack such a faith. Pertinent in this connection is that warning, “But fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve...so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2Co 11:3).

“But, are there not many passages in the Old Testament which have no direct bearing upon the Church today?” Certainly not! In view of 1 Corinthians 10:11—“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples [margin, “types”]; and they are written for our admonition”—Owen pithily remarked, “Old Testament examples are New Testament instructions.” By their histories, we are taught what to avoid and what to emulate. That is the principal reason why they are *recorded*. That which hindered or encouraged the Old Testament saints was chronicled for our

benefit. But, more specifically, “Are not Christians unwarranted in applying to themselves many promises given to Israel according to the flesh during the Mosaic economy, and expecting a fulfilment of the same unto themselves?” No indeed, for if *that* were the case, then it would not be true that “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom 15:4). What comfort can I derive from those sections of God’s Word which these people say, “do not belong to me”? What “hope” (i.e., a well-grounded assurance of some future good) could possibly be inspired today in Christians by what pertains to none but Jews? Christ came here, my reader, not to cancel, but “to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy” (Rom 15:8-9)!

It must also be borne in mind that, in keeping with the character of the covenant under which they were made, many of the precepts and the promises given unto the patriarchs and their descendants possessed a *spiritual and typical* significance and value, as well as a carnal and literal one. As an example of the former, take Deuteronomy 25:4, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn,” and, then, mark the application made of those words in 1 Corinthians 9:9-10, “Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope.” The word “altogether” is probably a little too strong here, for *pantos* is rendered “no doubt” in Acts 28:4, and “surely” in Luke 4:23, and in the text signifies “assuredly” (ASV) or “mainly for our sakes.” Deuteronomy 25:4 was designed to enforce the principle that labour should have its reward, so that men might work cheerfully. The precept enjoined equity and kindness—if so to beasts, much more so to men, and especially the ministers of the Gospel. It is a striking illustration of the freedom with which the Spirit of grace applies the Old Testament Scriptures, as a constituent part of the Word of Christ, unto Christians and their concerns.

What is true of the Old Testament precepts (generally speaking, for there are, of course, exceptions to every rule) holds equally good of the Old Testament *promises*—believers today are fully warranted in mixing faith therewith and expecting to receive the substance of them. First, because those promises were made to saints as such, and what God gives to one, He gives to all (2Pe 1:4)—Christ purchased the self-same blessings for every one of His redeemed. Second, because most of the Old Testament promises were typical in their nature—earthly blessings adumbrated heavenly ones. That is no arbitrary assertion of ours, for anyone who has been taught of God knows that almost everything during the old economies had a figurative meaning, shadowing forth the better things to come. Many proofs of this will be given by us a little later. Third, a *literal* fulfilment to us of those promises must not be excluded, for since we be still on earth and in the body, our temporal needs are the same as theirs, and, if we meet the conditions attached to those promises (either expressed or implied), then we may count upon the fulfilment of them, according unto our faith and obedience so will it be unto us.

“But surely we must draw a definite and broad line between the Law and the Gospel.” It is at this point that the dispensationalist considers his position to be the strongest and most unassailable. Yet nowhere else does he more display his ignorance, for he neither recognizes the grace of God abounding during the Mosaic era, nor can he see that Law has any rightful place in this Christian age. Law and grace are to him antagonistic elements, and (to quote one of his favourite slogans) “will no more mix than will oil and water.” Not a few of those who are now regarded as the champions of orthodoxy tell their hearers that the principles of law and grace are such contrary elements that, where the one be in exercise, the other must necessarily be excluded. But this is a very serious error. How could the Law *of God* and the Gospel of the grace *of God*

conflict? The one exhibits Him as “light,” the other manifests Him as “love” (1Jo 1:5; 4:8), and both are necessary in order fully to reveal His perfections. If either one be omitted, only a one-sided concept of His character will be formed. The one makes known His righteousness, the other displays His mercy, and His wisdom has shown the perfect consistency there is between them.

Instead of law and grace being contradictory, they are complementary. Both of them appeared in Eden before the fall. What was it but grace which made a grant unto our first parents, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat” (Gen 2:16)? And it was law which said, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it” (Gen 2:17). Both of them are seen at the time of the great deluge, for we are told that “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen 6:8), as His subsequent dealings with him clearly demonstrated, while His righteousness brought in a flood upon the world of the ungodly. Both of them operated side by side at Sinai, for while the majesty and righteousness of JEHOVAH were expressed in the Decalogue, His mercy and grace were plainly evinced in the provisions He made in the whole Levitical system (with its priesthood and sacrifices) for putting away of their sins. Both shone forth in their meridian glory at Calvary. For whereas, on the one hand, the abounding grace of God appeared in giving His own dear Son to be the Saviour of sinners, His justice called for the curse of the Law to be inflicted upon Him while bearing their guilt.

In all of God’s works and ways, we may discern a meeting together of *seemingly* conflicting elements—the centrifugal and the centripetal forces which are ever at work in the material realm illustrate this principle. So it is in connection with the operations of Divine providence. There is a constant interpenetrating of the natural and the supernatural. So, too, in the giving of the sacred Scriptures. They are the product both of God’s and of man’s agency. They are a Divine revelation, yet couched in human language, and communicated through human media. They are inerrantly true, yet, written by fallible men. They are divinely inspired in every jot and tittle, yet, the superintending control of the Spirit over the penmen did not exclude nor interfere with the natural exercise of their faculties. Thus, it is also in all of God’s dealings with mankind. Though He exercises His high sovereignty, yet, He treats with them as responsible creatures, putting forth His invincible power upon and within them, but in no wise destroying their moral agency. These may present deep and insoluble mysteries to the finite mind, nevertheless, they are actual facts.

In what has just been pointed out, to which other examples might be added—the person of Christ, for instance, with His two distinct yet conjoined natures, so that though He was omniscient, yet, He “grew in wisdom” (Luk 2:52); was omnipotent, yet, wearied and slept (Joh 4:6; Mat 8:24); was eternal, yet, died (Mat 27:50)—why should so many stumble at the phenomenon of divine law and divine grace being in exercise side by side, operating at the same season? Do law and grace present any greater contrast than the fathomless love of God unto His children, and His everlasting wrath upon His enemies? No indeed, not so great. Grace must not be regarded as an attribute of God which eclipses all His other perfections. As Romans 5:21 so plainly tells us, “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness,” and not at the expense of or to the exclusion of it. Divine grace and divine righteousness, divine love and divine holiness, are as inseparable as light and heat from the sun. In bestowing grace, God never rescinds His claims upon us, but rather enables us to meet them. Was the prodigal son, after his penitential return and forgiveness, less obliged to conform to the laws of his Father’s house than before he left it? No indeed, but more so.

That there is no conflict between the Law and the Gospel of the grace of God is plain enough from Romans 3:31, “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” Here, the apostle anticipates an objection which was likely to be brought against what

he had said in verses 26-30. “Does not the teaching that justification is entirely by grace through faith evince that God has relaxed His claims, changed the standard of His requirements, set aside the demands of His government?” Very far from it! The divine plan of redemption is in no way an annulling of the Law, but rather the honouring and enforcing of it. No greater respect could have been shown to the Law than in God’s determining to save His people from its course by sending His co-equal Son to fulfil all its requirements and Himself endure its penalty. Oh, marvel of marvels! The great Legislator humbled Himself unto entire obedience to the precepts of the Decalogue. The very One who gave the Law became incarnate, bled, and died, under its condemning sentence, rather than that a tittle thereof should fail. Magnified thus was the Law indeed, and for ever, “made honourable” (Isa 42:21).

God’s method of salvation by grace has “established the law” (Rom 3:31) in a three-fold way. First, by Christ, the Surety of God’s elect, being “made under the law” (Gal 4:4), fulfilling its precepts (Mat 5:17), suffering its penalty in the stead of His people, and, thereby, He has “brought in everlasting righteousness” (Dan 9:24). Second, by the Holy Spirit, for at regeneration He writes the Law on their hearts (Heb 8:10), drawing out their affections unto it, so that they “delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom 7:22). Third, as the fruit of his new nature, the Christian voluntarily and gladly takes the Law for his rule of life, so that he declares, “with the mind I myself serve the law” (Rom 7:25). Thus is the Law “established,” not only in the high court of heaven, but in the souls of the redeemed. So far from law and grace being enemies, they are mutual handmaids. The former reveals the sinner’s need, the latter supplies it. The one makes known God’s requirements, the other enables us to meet them. Faith is not opposed to good works, but performs them in obedience to God out of love and gratitude.



# August

## A GOOD JUDGMENT

In certain respects, a good judgment and a good conscience may be said to be handmaids to each other, for a good conscience is one that is illumined by the understanding, and the understanding becomes further clarified as conscience properly performs her office. The intellectual and moral powers are reciprocal, for while the one provides light for the other, the latter tends to strengthen the former. It is a well-established fact that becoming conversant with divine things imparts vigour and breadth to the intellect. A good conscience is instructed by the Word, and therefore discerns between truth and error, so that “the voice of a stranger” (Joh 10:5) will not be followed. There is, therefore, clearness of vision, and if a person has a good conscience, it will cause him to act rightly. Thus, a good judgment is something more than a well-informed and balanced mind, which produces discretion in connection with practical matters—though that is certainly included, for we could not predicate it of an ignoramus. It is more a moral quality than a mental one, the capacity to estimate ethical values and not be imposed upon by shams. There is such a thing as *moral judgment*, which is vastly superior to what men term “common sense,” namely, a moral taste which savours the propriety or impropriety of things and persons.

“The understanding is the pilot and guide of the whole man, that faculty which sits at the stern of the soul; but as the most expert guide may mistake in the darkness, so may the understanding when it wants the light of knowledge” (from the Introduction to the Westminster Confession). Such indeed is now the case with the natural man, for the fall has so ruined his judgment and deranged his mind that he mistakes darkness for light and calls bitter sweet (Isa 5:20). Rightly did Bernard (1091-1153) say, “He that is his own teacher has a fool for his master.” Man cannot teach himself what he does not know, and of God and His will, he knows nothing by nature. Therefore, the dawn of wisdom is a consciousness of our ignorance and imbecility, so that we are made to distrust reason, and the heartfelt prayer goes forth, “Give me understanding” (Psa 119:34). That dawning of wisdom is one of the effects of the new birth, for the unregenerate are “wise in their own conceits” (Pro 26:16), and have no perception of their dire need of divine teaching. So far from inheriting from Adam a good understanding, his descendants are utter fools, as the Scriptures plainly and repeatedly testify. And when God declares man to be a fool, we may be sure that he is so.

How low has sin brought us, for without a good understanding, we are quite unable to apprehend the things of God. We are in a state of complicated ruin, from which nothing but manifold grace will deliver us. God has to bestow upon us at least a measure of understanding



before we are made conscious of our crass stupidity. But regenerated people soon become aware of this. A sense of their ignorance and a sight of their errors makes them teachable. They are afraid to lean unto their own understanding, and, therefore, seek wisdom from above, from Him that gives liberally to the poor in spirit, and upbraids not (Jam 1:5). Hence it is that we find David asking over and over again, “Give me understanding” (Psa 119:34, 73, 144, 169). That was what Solomon made request for (1Ki 3:9), and his counsel to us is, “with all thy getting get understanding” (Pro 4:7). Whatever else you fail to obtain, make sure of that. Spare no pains and use all legitimate means, and wait at Wisdom’s gates for it. Other gettings are for your body, this for your soul. They are only temporal, this eternal.

Thomas Manton (1620-1677) defined the uses of a good judgment as threefold. *To distinguish* and judge aright between things that differ, so that we mistake not error for truth, evil for good, things indifferent for things necessary. Many things are lawful which are not expedient. If it be important for our bodily good that we distinguish between wholesome food and harmful diet (however attractively served), much more is it for the soul to discriminate between what is profitable and what is injurious. *To determine and resolve.* After duty has been discerned, there must be determination of mind to perform the same, and to swerve not from it. In Acts 11:23, this is called “purpose of heart.” He who would please God has to set the bent and bias of his heart strongly upon so doing, “I said, I will take heed to my ways” (Psa 39:1). It is a firm and settled decision which sets the soul aworking. It is not so much men’s knowledge as their considered judgments which issue decrees to their wills. *To direct* or guide us in all our affairs. Many are comparatively wise in the generals who err sadly in particulars. Something more than a knowledge of God’s will is required, namely, wisdom to apply that knowledge in detail to all the varied circumstances of our lives.

Without good judgment, we are unable to make proper use of our intelligence and apply aright our knowledge to useful ends. Without it, non-essentials will be mistaken for fundamentals, and things indifferent for things unlawful. Without good judgment, we are incapable of discerning the design of God’s providential dealings with us, supposing He is treating us hardly and sternly, when in reality, He is seeking to turn us from folly. We have to be better instructed if we are not to misjudge the chastening hand of our heavenly Father. Without good judgment, we cannot distinguish between the promptings of our own spirits, the leadings of the Holy Spirit, or the beguilements of Satan. There is a vast variety of circumstances in our lives which call for prudence to deal with them properly. If our ways are to be suitably directed, we need not only a knowledge of God’s will, but also a spirit of discernment. A good judgment is essential if we are to recognize what best becomes the occasion, the place, the company we are in, so that we may know what is good, what is better, and what is best in all situations. There is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to keep and a time to cast away, a time to keep silence and a time to speak (Ecc 3), but through folly we often act untimely.

A good judgment is indispensable because there is a subtle serpent and a deceitful heart ever seeking to ensnare us in the course of duty. The one by plausible temptations, suiting his baits to each of our appetites, the other by representing evil under the notion of good, and good under the notion of evil. Hence it is that we are bidden to understand what the will of the Lord is (Eph 5:17). All our sin is from ignorance and folly (Ti 3:3 and cf. 2Sa 24:10). Without good judgment, we can never obtain the mastery over our corruptions or know how to mortify our lusts, for the appetites need to be regulated by right reason, and good works performed in their proper place and manner. What harm has been done in Christian enterprises and in local churches because the leaders of the one and the officers of the other conducted themselves indiscreetly! How many

sincere and warm-hearted believers are guilty of mischievous mistakes and of following foolish courses because they allow their emotions to run away with them. Hence, the apostle prayed, “That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment” (Phi 1:9)—that our affections may be intelligently directed and our zeal be a prudent one.

How real, then, how great, is the need for each of us to pray daily, “Teach me good judgment” (Psa 119:66). That may be rendered “good taste,” as in “O taste and see that the LORD is good” (Psa 34:8). As meats are savoured by their taste, so things by the judgment. A good taste in natural things appears in having the capacity to appreciate the excellence of style, the beauty of a poem, the harmony and melody of good music, the lights and shadows of a master painting. In connection with moral and spiritual things, it is the ability to admire and relish, enabling us to discern their excellence. The Hebrew word in Psalm 119:66 is rendered “behavior” in the heading to Psalm 34, for a man is “tasted” by his deportment. This is the great work of judgment—to reduce all our knowledge to practice—to order our behavior properly, to carry ourselves well in all relations, so that we are respectful to superiors, converse profitably with equals, have compassion on inferiors, do good unto all men. Love must not be exercised indiscriminately; justice is to be tempered with mercy; patience must not degenerate into sloth, nor temperance be pushed to the extent of self-injury.

Then, “Lift up thy voice for understanding” (Pro 2:3), for it comes not at the first call. But though this be God’s gift, yea, we are exhorted, “Apply thine heart to understanding” (Pro 2:2). He bestows it only on those who labour for it, on those who employ themselves on the acquirement of the same. In Psalm 111:10, a “good understanding” is preceded by “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,” for he who is influenced by that fear is moved to watchfulness and conscientious obedience. Again, we are told, “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way” (Psa 25:9). It is those who are docile and tractable who realize their need of being divinely instructed and directed, and, therefore, do they submit their reason to the divine will. The meek are such as lie at His feet and say, “Speak, LORD, for thy servant heareth” (1Sa 3:10). A good judgment is formed by heeding the teachings of the Scriptures, which makes wise the simple (Psa 19:7). Therefore, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Col 3:16). Hosea 6:3 also applies here, “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD.” Hebrews 5:14 intimates that it is the result of having our senses (conscience and mind) “exercised.”

## EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

### 32. Lies and Liars (2:21-22)

Once more there is a very close connection between our present verses and the two immediately preceding them—a point which the expositor requires to keep ever before him. There the line of demarcation is drawn between apostates (verse 19) and the anointed ones. Those who have an unction from the Holy One “know all things.” The scope and nature of their

knowledge we have already explained: briefly, it consists of a saving and influential understanding of the truth. It was because he was assured that those to whom he wrote were experientially acquainted with Christianity, that John was persuaded they would heed the solemn warnings he was about to pen.

*“I have not written unto you because you know not the truth,  
but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth” (vs. 21).*

As Thomas Scott (1747-1821) well expressed it,

“When we are thus established in the great truths of the Gospel, we shall know that no lie is of the truth, and shall therefore disregard the eloquence, learning, ingenuity, and confidence of those who contradict the Bible; and be satisfied with opposing the express testimony of the truth itself to their well-varnished and ably defended falsehoods.”

1. It is by the knowledge of the truth that the Lord’s people *are able to discern whatever be contrary thereto*. As an old adage declares, “The line that shows itself to be straight, shows also what line is crooked.” “No lie is of the truth”; [a lie] [n]either springs from [the truth] or is according to [the truth], but the very reverse. Error often has a very plausible appearance, and by it multitudes are deceived. Not only is it propagated, frequently, by men of scholarship and seeming spirituality, but their lies are presented in most subtle and attractive forms, appearing to promote the glory of God and the good of souls—were it otherwise, the unwary would not be beguiled. Many a heresy seems to remove difficulties that perplex the thoughtful people of God, to solve doctrinal problems that are a real puzzle to them, to be favourable unto practical piety, and to give peace and happiness to those who accept the same. Nevertheless, if they are not foursquare with the truth, but really conflict with the same, they are falsehoods, and therefore worthless, pernicious, dangerous. No matter how fair the fruits they bear, how apparently excellent their “results,” they are to be rejected and shunned.

That declaration “no lie is of the truth” seems rather like a truism—something so self-evident as to need no stating. In reality it expresses a principle of deep moment. First, as S.E. Pierce (1746-1829) pointed out, “here we have expressed the transcendent excellency of the everlasting Gospel: there is no darkness in it, there is no lie in it, there is no error [that] can arise out of it.” Divine revelation is inerrant and flawless: “Thy Law [not only “contains” but] is the truth” (Psa 119:142). “Every word of God is pure” (Pro 30:5). There are indeed in it “some things hard to be understood,” and not a little that is quite beyond our comprehension. It would be very strange were it otherwise, for the finite cannot comprehend the infinite. No amount of searching or inquiry by the keenest intellect can find out God to perfection, nor can it account for many of His ways or explain why He fore-ordained one unto salvation and not another, how the Eternal Three subsist in one essence, how the humanity of Christ never had a separate existence, but was from the first moment of its conception united to His divine person. These and other mysteries are to be reverently received, and humbly submitted to, for they are true—the mouth of the Lord has spoken them.

2. Second, this divine declaration “no lie is of the truth” ought to warn all those who profess to be called of God to preach, of their *solemn duty to be diligent in preaching* the preaching that the Lord bids them (Jon 3:2). “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it” (Deu 4:2). Otherwise, they are in grave danger of falling under that terrible indictment, “The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they speak unto you...the deceit of their heart” (Jer 14:14). “Christ is essential truth. His Gospel is so, in and throughout every part thereof. Therefore

no one thing, sentence, or call it doctrine if you will, which differs one hair's breadth from that which the Lord hath delivered to His church...can be other than a lie" (Pierce).

3. Third, "no lie is of the truth" was a *word of warning* against and an exposure of the method employed by those who seek to seduce the saints. It tells us that sophistries<sup>23</sup> and frauds are not necessary in order to support or propagate it. There is no deceit in the Gospel, and there should be none in the handling of it. It requires no fleshly help, and cannot be advanced by cunning and trickery. Alas, how few there are who really believe that unless the truth itself, under the blessing of God, convicts and converts men, nothing else will. Because they lack faith in the power of truth itself, preachers resort to all sorts of carnal devices to render their message more palatable to the unregenerate, and those devices are nothing more than lying deceits, dishonest arts. The lure and love of popularity is too strong to resist for those who seek the praise of men rather than the approbation of God. Such preachers think less of the Author of the Word than they do of rendering it acceptable to the carnal mind. Recourse is had to abstruse philosophies, displays of oratory, histrionics, or musical attractions and worldly allurements, rather than the plain and faithful preaching of the truth itself.

"For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but...as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ" (2Co 2:17), declared the beloved Paul. A most solemn proof is that of how early the Gospel was corrupted, and a portent of how extensively this evil was to spread among the professed servants of God and expounders of the truth. The word "corrupted" signified adulterated: the mixing of it with a foreign element. Few indeed preserve the purity of the truth, and fewer still preserve its holy balance or proclaim it in its fullness and entirety. Too many have sought to conciliate opposers by blunting the sharp edges of the Spirit's sword. They deliberately explain away the most distasteful aspects of divine revelation. Others resort to dishonest exegesis or attempt to "harmonize" the teaching of Holy Writ with the hypotheses of "science falsely so called" (1Ti 6:20). But the faithful minister is "sincere"—open, above board, without guile. Sent of God, he speaks in His name and conducts himself as in the divine presence, and refuses to stoop to any form of a lie in order to commend the truth.

Said the apostle again, We "have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2Co 4:2). The apostle disdained his own wisdom, discarded all artifices to win the esteem of his hearers, refused an appeal to the traditions of men, declined to mingle anything human with his divine message. He abjured and abhorred all dishonest tricks. His sole aim was to show himself approved unto God, and therefore he declared the whole of His counsel, keeping back nothing that was profitable. Even the winning of souls was made entirely subordinate to preaching the truth in its purity. He therefore used great plainness of speech, and sought to humble and not to flatter, directing his message to the conscience rather than to the intellect or the emotions.

"The veracity of God, and not the reasonableness of any doctrine, is the ground of our faith. It is the work of the Gospel to cast down reasonings against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ" (Reformed Presbyterian Testimony).

4. Fourth, taking the verse as a whole, its last clause points an *important practical lesson*. The apostle addressed himself unto the saints with the confidence that they would readily accept what he was writing to them, that they would—like himself—detest and refuse error. That confidence shows that men's reception or rejection of the truth turns mainly upon the state of their hearts.

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<sup>23</sup> **sophistry** – argumentation that is intentionally deceptive.

Sufficient evidence must indeed be advanced to carry conviction, but if the heart be right, then the mind readily perceives the force of the evidence; whereas if the heart be wrong—prejudiced—no amount of evidence will satisfy it. “Convince a man against his will, and he is of the same opinion still,” says the old proverb. It is the perversity of the will, which so often blinds the judgment; let that be properly disposed, and the understanding will function properly. If any doctrine of Scripture be hated, no demonstration of its verity by a hundred proof texts will be of any avail—unless God removes the enmity. On the other hand, if the Word be received “with all readiness of mind,” and the Scriptures searched daily whether these things be true (Act 17:11), assurance of them will soon be ours.

This deeply important practical lesson was inculcated by Christ when He declared, “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness” (Mat 6:22-23). The eye has no light of its own, but is merely the receptacle thereof, and the actions of the body are directed by the illumination it admits. The “eye” is here a figure of the understanding, and by its light conduct is regulated: “as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Pro 23:7). A “single” eye has but one object—God, the pleasing and glorifying of Him. At regeneration the heart is renewed and its vision rectified, the eye of faith is divinely opened, the understanding is spiritually illumined, and God becomes its all-absorbing object. In consequence, light is seen in God’s light (Psa 36:9), and all the faculties of the soul come under its benign<sup>24</sup> influence. A spirit of discrimination follows, so that the child of God discerns between the voice of Christ and that of a false shepherd (Joh 10:4-5), and by his spiritual judgment he distinguishes between truth and error, loving and heeding the one, eschewing and refusing the other.

But since the children of God be spiritually illumined and able to discern between the truth and error, why are there such differences of belief among them? In fact, there is far more agreement than disagreement—but why not entire unanimity? Because God is sovereign and bestows varying measures of light. But why should anyone who has the Holy Spirit for his teacher cling to or imbibe any error? Because of indwelling sin; the counteracting of the intellectual effects of the fall, like the nullifying of its moral effects, is not perfected in this life. Yet that is to our shame, and in no wise excuses us. There is nothing but light and truth in God’s most holy Word, and everything in it is expressed accurately. But alas, we do not receive our views wholly therefrom, nor are our minds so brought under the power and spiritual influence of the same as for its contents to be fixed in our understanding exactly as they are in the Scriptures. “No lie is of the truth”: error springs not therefrom, but from the darkness and sinfulness of our minds. Human depravity, acted upon by Satan, disposes men to put a false gloss<sup>25</sup> on one passage, to wrest another, and to receive false doctrine.

If we would avoid a lie, we must neither give heed to the reasonings of men upon the Word, nor put our own interpretation upon it. Instead, we are to “hold fast the form of sound words” (2Ti 1:13), expressing truth in our minds and with our lips precisely as it is formulated in Scripture. Our first concern should ever be a seeking to know the mind of the Spirit therein; and our second, to receive it meekly without any cavil or attempt to evade it’s meaning. It is men’s wrangling over the Word and altering the mode of God’s expression that leads so many into error, and renders them still more susceptible to Satan’s lies. The most effectual way to be preserved from false doctrine and practice is to accept God’s Word at its face value, to believe all that the Lord has spoken. “It should ever be our study and prayer, the utmost aim and bent of our minds,

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<sup>24</sup> **benign** – gracious; kind.

<sup>25</sup> **gloss** – deceptive interpretation.

to have the truths of God received into our minds and stated in our understandings exactly as they are in the Word; for there they are expressed as they are in God” (S.E. Pierce). Alas, men prefer their own reasonings and statements thereon, and then turn to the Word to support them.

“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son” (verse 22).

The Greek Interlinear and the Revised Version render it “Who is the liar,” not because any specific one is in view, but because the reference is to those who are guilty of the greatest falsehood of all. Who is the liar of all liars? John does not wait for a reply, but at once furnishes the answer: he that repudiates the Messiah, the Anointed of God—he is outstandingly the cheat of men, the false prophet, the imposter. Here then is the link between the two verses: when the apostle said, “no lie is of the truth,” he had particularly in view the antichrists or seducers of souls who were propagating that which was flatly contrary to the Gospel, and as far removed from it as darkness is from light. As Erich Haupt (1841-1910) pointed out, “‘No lie is of the truth’ seems so clear and self-evident as to require no explanation; but however plain theoretically, it very little governs the conduct of many professing Christians,” and therefore John is still more specific and amplifies his abstract aphorism<sup>26</sup> with a concrete example.

“*Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?*” Once again we find “the apostle of love” refuses to mince words. He calls things by their right names. Love for Christ and fidelity unto the saints required that he declare plainly what their enemies really were. “Such was his zeal for the truth, he makes no scruple of calling such by this term who would dare pronounce an untruth, let their profession and quality be what they might. We have had instances of this before: If any would venture to say they had fellowship with God, whilst they walked in darkness, he is bold to pronounce this to be a lie (1:6). If any professed they had no inward sinfulness, he declares this to be self-deceit; and it is also willful lying, and truth was not in such (1:8). If any professed himself to be in Christ, and lived carelessly, paying no regard to the Lord’s commandments, he pronounces such an one a liar (2:4). So here, having appealed to those unto whom he wrote concerning the truth of sound doctrine, and that no lie is of the truth, he goes on to express more fully what he had in his eye and would bring forward” (Pierce).

Note well the particular test here applied, the standard by which preachers are to be measured: namely, the person of Christ—the liar is the one who denies Him. Christ is Himself the Truth, and therefore anyone who disowns Him is a false prophet. If we form false conceptions of Him, we cannot rightly apprehend any part of the truth.

“The denial of Christ is the greatest of all sins. To deny Him is not merely to turn away from a truth, but is the forsaking of the truth. And to change the centre is to alter the whole circumference. If, then, Christ is not the centre of our life, no part of our life can be right. To break with Christ, therefore, is to part with truth, and of all lies, that which denies that Jesus is the Christ is the greatest” (L. Palmer).

*“What think ye of Christ is the test,  
To try both your state and your scheme;  
You cannot be right in the rest  
Unless you think rightly of Him.”*

The denial that Jesus is the Christ was the fearful and fatal sin of the Jewish nation. They rejected the claims of Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah promised in the Old Testament Scriptures: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (Joh 1:11). In so doing, they

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<sup>26</sup> **aphorism** – a brief and concise statement of truth or opinion.

sinned against the clearest light and fullest evidence. All the predicted marks were found in Him, but they were blinded by prejudice—from false teaching, their own conceits, and worldliness. He was the true light, but they, through their blindness, perceived it not: “For this people’s heart is waxed gross...their eyes they have closed” (Mat 13:15).

But to deny that Jesus is the Christ has yet both a deeper meaning and wider scope. It is necessary for us carefully to consider exactly what is connoted by “the Christ.” It means “The Anointed,” and as Robert S. Candlish (1806-1873) pointed out, “This appellation marks not only a certain relation to the Jewish Scriptures, but also, and still more, a relation to God, whose Christ He was.” This raises the question, For what was He anointed?

During the Old Testament economy, prophets, priests, and kings were set apart to their several offices by being anointed with oil. Therein they foreshadowed the Redeemer, who was the “Christ,” or Anointed One, from the moment of His birth (Luk 2:11) until His death (Rom 8:34). In this official character the Lord Jesus proclaimed Himself at the very beginning of His public ministry: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised...And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luk 4:18, 21). The blessed Spirit had anointed Him to be the Prophet, Priest, and King of His people, and it is to designate Him as bearing these offices that He is called “Christ.” He was owned as such by His disciples (Joh 1:41; 4:29) and by God (Act 2:36). Thus, to receive or reject Jesus as the Christ has respect to all His offices, and consequently to all the blessing that we may obtain or forfeit by accepting or refusing Him.

## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

### 84. Indolence, Part 2

Not a very appealing title for an article! Quite so, but the Bible does not flatter human nature, nor should God’s servant do so. However unpleasant, realities should be faced, and not shunned or denied. But, though our theme be unattractive, it is surely a timely one. Does not indolence stare us in the face on every side? Is there not a spirit of sloth and apathy apparent in all classes? Has there ever been such a generation as ours for loathing work and loving pleasure? The expression “organized labour” has become almost synonymous with “the shirking of duty”. It is a holding out of the nation to ransom in order to extract the maximum amount of money for the minimum expenditure of energy. On the other hand, any fair-minded man who is really acquainted with the social and economic conditions which prevailed a century ago must acknowledge that, because of the merciless greed of far too many employers, labour was virtually forced to organize itself to secure bare justice. But human nature being what it is, the pendulum has now swung to the opposite extreme, so that, in many cases, the employer can no longer obtain a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay.

As the Lord God informed man at the beginning, one of the consequences of his falling into sin was, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground” (Gen 3:19). A sentence from which men have sought to escape by their “labour-saving ” devices, generally to the promotion of indolence, the impairing of health, and often the loss of life. Yet, it is a mistake to suppose that all work has been entailed by the fall. Not so. In his sinless condition, man was put into the garden of Eden “to dress it and to keep it” (Gen 2:15). Whereas work was then a pleasure and easy, now it is distasteful and burdensome—never more so than in our day, when shorter hours and bigger pay is the demand—much of the pay being spent not in wholesome recreation, but in injurious dissipation. And how few there are who realize and recognize that this manual and industrial blight is traceable to a spiritual and *religious evil*. As we have pointed out more than once, social conditions are the repercussions of ecclesiastical ones. The state of the world is largely a reflection of the state of the churches. As the breakdown of parental authority in the home was preceded by lack of discipline in the assembly, the disregard of law in the state by the jettisoning of God’s Law by the pulpit, so the apathy of artisans is but a shadowing forth of the indolence of the majority of professing Christians.

It is true that perfection has never been found among the Lord’s people, yet, a relative healthiness and vigour *have* frequently marked them. But during the past century, there has been a steady and noticeable deterioration in spirituality and a sad decline in practical godliness. Power has diminished, love has cooled, less and less of the fruit of the Spirit, and works of righteousness have been produced. Instead of “always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1Co 15:58) (rendering universal obedience unto Him), the majority of those bearing the name of Christ were “at ease in Zion” (Amo 6:1). Instead of going forth to meet the Bridegroom with lamps trimmed and burning, the wise virgins, equally with the foolish ones, slumbered and slept (Mat 25:1-5). Instead of running the way of God’s commandments (Psa 119:32), too many sat still, waiting for God to “apply” the promises to their hearts. Instead of engaging in aggressive evangelism, most of the churches petted and pampered their own members. Instead of contending earnestly in the world for the Faith (Jud 1:3), other churches turned aside to bitter wrangling and profitless contentions among themselves. The Lord’s cause languished, and Satan was well pleased.

Among the contributing causes which have produced and promoted a generation of spiritual sluggards may be mentioned the following. First, the slackness of preachers. An ever-increasing number of men who sought a soft and easy job were attracted to the ministry, and few indeed burned the midnight oil in their studies, and spent themselves in the service of Christ. Second, unfaithful preaching, where there was an entirely one-sided emphasis—a concentrating upon blessings and privileges, and a neglecting of duties and obligations, a magnifying of the gifts of divine grace, but a minimizing of the requirements of God’s holiness. Third, the inculcation and encouragement of a spirit of fatalism, through failing to preserve the balance of truth between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility, between human ability and accountability, with the result that a race of do-nothings was produced—waiting for God to give them more grace, instead of using what He had already bestowed. Fourth, being too readily discouraged by the difficulties in the tasks assigned by God, walking too much by sight rather than faith, their zeal abating because they could perceive so little fruit produced. It is not without good reason that the Holy Spirit repeated in 11 Thessalonians 3:13 the exhortation of Galatians 6:9, “Be not weary in well doing”!

“And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance” (Jos 18:2). Why was this? Because some divine decree had blocked the way? Because “God’s time” for them to do so had not yet arrived? No indeed, from a very different



cause. It was due to their own indifference. The immediate sequel makes it very evident that there was no unwillingness on God's part. The indisposition was in them. Thus, this statement is more than an explanatory reference, namely, a word of reproach. In view of what is recorded in Jos 15:63 and 16:9-10, we see how infectious is the spirit of sloth. The evil which affected Judah and Ephraim had spread to the remaining tribes. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal 5:9), more especially so where the leaders are involved. When the principal tribes of men be dilatory, those of lower rank will quickly emulate them. These tribes were heedless of their privileges, too unconcerned to avail themselves of their advantages.

"And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the LORD God of your fathers hath given you?" (Jos 18:3). Thus did their leader reprove them for not bestirring themselves and securing their portions of Canaan. Such a reproof supplies confirmation of our remarks on the previous verse. It was due entirely to their own laziness, and not to anything in God, that they were not yet in happy possession of their possessions. True, the language of Joshua did not signify that those tribes could have occupied their portions before the same had been assigned them by the lot, but rather that they were to blame for not applying to the high court of Israel for the same. They had witnessed the allotments of the other two and a half tribes, yet had been too unconcerned to ask for theirs. This laxity was not confined to a single tribe, but had, like a dry rot, spread through the body politic. Not only is such an evil very contagious, but, when it has gripped a person or people, it cannot be easily and quickly thrown off, as Joshua's "How long?" shows.

How like the vast majority of modern church members were those Israelites! They had crossed the Jordan and set foot in Canaan, but they had become slack and failed to make their own the fair prospects before them. In like manner, countless thousands make a profession, join the Church, and, imagining that their sins have been forgiven and their souls delivered from the wrath to come, are satisfied with their case and complacently rest on their oars. They make no conscience of mortifying their lusts, no serious efforts to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord, no progress in the Christian life. They are drones, yea, stumbling-blocks to those who seek to be diligent in making their calling and election sure. They are deceived by Satan. Persuaded that they were saved some time in the past, they delude themselves into thinking that, however slack they be in resisting the devil and overcoming the world, they are eternally secure. They shirk the cross, yet imagine the crown is sure. They engage not in the good fight of faith, yet suppose they have laid hold of eternal life. They do not make the pleasing and obeying of God their daily concern, yet think to obtain the reward of the inheritance.

The fatal mistake made by so many is to think that, once assured their names are written in heaven, they may, with complete safety to themselves, lapse into a state of utter carelessness. Whereas, so long as he remains in this world, the Christian is required to "continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col 1:23), to take heed that there be not in him an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, and be on his guard against being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Heb 3:12-13), to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling (Phi 2:12), and to hearken unto the solemn warning of Christ, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luk 9:62). It is he who "endureth unto the end" that shall be saved (Mat 24:13), and not those who yield to their lusts and tempt Christ (1Co 10:10, 7-9). Christians are called upon to build up themselves on their most holy faith (Jude 1:20), and that is a work which demands labour and industry. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom 8:13).

“How long are ye slack to go to possess the land?” (Jos 18:3). No longer meeting with any open opposition, they had settled down to rest, though more than half of Israel had not yet obtained their inheritance. Those Israelites were “too well pleased with their present condition, liked well enough to live in a body together, had no mind to be scattered abroad. The spoil of the cities they had taken served them to live plentifully for the present, and they banished the thoughts of time to come. They were slothful: it may be they wished the thing done, but had no spirit to set about it or move toward the doing of it, though it was so much for their own advantage. The countries that remained to be divided lay at a distance, and some parts of them in the hands of the Canaanites. If they go to take possession of them, the cities must be built or repaired, they must drive their flocks and herds a great way, and carry their wives and children to strange places: and this will not be done without great care and pains, and breaking through hardships” (condensed from Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Again, we say, how we like unto their religious descendants. More than fifty per cent of professing Christians fail to fix their affections on things above and continually set themselves to the appropriation and enjoyment of them.

And Joshua said, “Give out from among you three men for each tribe, and I will send them, and they shall rise, and go through the land, and describe it according to the inheritance of them; and they shall come again to me” (Jos 18:4). Once more, we see that there was a human side, as well as a divine one, to this important transaction. This detail also serves to illustrate, and in a clear definite manner, the important truth that the fact of God’s sovereignty (in the “lot”) does not set aside the exercise of human responsibility. *They* were required to discharge their moral agency and act intelligently. Alas, how many hyper-Calvinists have sought to excuse their apathy by perverting and sheltering behind the divine decrees! How fearfully deceitful is the human heart in persuading not a few that they are displaying a commendable spirit of humility and meekness in “waiting God’s time” before they act, when, instead, they are guilty of shirking their duty. There is a terrible amount of humbuggery under a seemingly pious guise. There is no unwillingness on God’s part to give. The unwillingness to seek and take is always on our side. Then, let us be honest, and place the blame where it belongs.

Joshua did not wait for a reply from the people to his reproving question. “How long are ye slack?” but at once set them upon their duty. In the injunction which he gave them, we may perceive again that blessed *balance* which marks all the ways of God and of His servants when directed by Him—in this instance, between the exercise of *their* freedom and the discharge of their responsibility (in “give [or “choose”] out from among you three men for each tribe”) and the acting of *his* authority, “and I will send them.” The spiritual lesson for us, therein, is that the Christian is not to engage in any self-appointed tasks, but be directed in his service by the authoritative instructions of the antitypical Joshua. Their leader did not take it upon him to appoint the different individuals who were to serve in this matter, but left the selecting of them to the tribes, but when chosen, *he* gave them their commission. The same principle is to be observed under Christianity, “Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint [by setting them] over this business” (Act 6:3).

Though Joshua set these men to work, yet it was far from being either a difficult or an unpleasant task which he assigned them. “They shall rise and go through the land, and describe it according to the inheritance of them; and they shall come again to me. And they shall divide it into seven parts: Judah shall abide in their coast on the south, and the house of Joseph shall abide in their coasts on the north. Ye shall therefore describe the land into seven parts, and bring the description hither to me, that I may cast lots for you here before the LORD our God” (Jos 18:4-7). It was virtually an appeal to their cupidity, a stirring of them up to recognize their advantages and

privileges. It was a project by which they might behold for themselves what a goodly inheritance God had given them. By thus surveying the same, they would obtain a better knowledge of what awaited them, and then they would be more disposed, to bestir themselves and take possession thereof. If the believer's faith were more occupied with the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2Co 4:18), then he would be less dispirited by his "light affliction, which is but for a moment" (2Co 4:17). They were not to encroach upon the portions of Judah and Joseph, but rather to confine their attention unto what was available to them. Thus, a spirit of covetousness was disallowed.

"And the men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities into seven parts in a book, and came again to Joshua to the host at Shiloh. And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD and there Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel according to their divisions" (Jos 18:9-10). Aroused from their stupor, shamed by their leader's rebuke, they performed his bidding. As he had given them orders (Jos 18:4, 8), they delivered the results of their commission, not to their tribes, but to himself—just as the disciples made their report unto Christ (Luk 10:17), and as each of us must yet render an account unto Him (Rom 14:12). From this incident it seems clear that while the relative positions or general locations of the tribes were determined by the "lot," yet the proportion of land assigned to each one was decided (in some measure) by other considerations—as Joshua 17:17-18 shows, the lot did not preclude the exercise of individual enterprise and industry to improve the same—as everlasting glory is sure to all the redeemed, yet the degree thereof will be decided by their own zeal and fidelity.

# THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

## 12. Its Remedy, Part 3

God's choice of the person who was to be the Restorer of His honour, the Vanquisher of Satan, the Victor of death, and the Deliverer of His fallen people, was one that naught but omniscience itself had made. Who but One endowed with infinite wisdom had ever thought of selecting His only begotten Son for such a fearful undertaking? For Christ, as God, is one of the eternal Three who was offended by sin, and from whom men had revolted. They were His avowed enemies, and, of Him, they deserved infinite woe. Who, then, had conceived *of Him* as one who should set His heart upon depraved wretches, who should exercise infinite love and pity toward them, should be willing to provide an all-sufficient remedy for all their ills? But when that choice *was made*, insurmountable difficulties seemed to stand in the way of its realization. How was it possible for a divine person to enter the place of ruined sinners, to come under the law and render perfect obedience to it, and so work out a perfect righteousness for those who had none? And how could it be possible for the Holy One to be made a curse, for the Lord of glory to suffer the penalty of the broken law, for the Beloved of the Father to experience the fires of divine wrath, for the Lord of life to die? Such problems as those had for ever baffled all created intelligences. But divine wisdom found a solution.

First, the manifold wisdom of God ordained that His dear Son should be constituted the last Adam, that as He made a covenant of works with the first man who was of the earth, so He would make a covenant of grace with “the second Man,” who is the Lord from heaven. That as the first Adam stood as the covenant head and federal representative of all his posterity, so the last Adam should stand as the covenant Head and Representative of all His seed. But as the first Adam broke the covenant of works and brought ruin upon all those he acted for, so the last Adam should fulfil the terms of the covenant of grace, and thereby secure the everlasting felicity of all on whose behalf He transacted. Accordingly, a covenant was entered into between the Father and the Son, the Former promising a glorious reward upon the Latter’s meeting all the conditions thereof. That wondrous transaction is referred to in Psalm 89:3-5, “I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto [the antitypical] David [which means “the Beloved”] my servant, thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah. And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.” That passage, like Proverbs 8, takes us back to the eternal counsels of God, for Psalms 89:19 declares, “Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty”—fully able to accomplish My vast and gracious designs.

That covenant of grace was a mutual compact which was voluntarily entered into between the Father and the Son, the One promising a rich reward in return for the fulfilment of the terms agreed upon. The Other solemnly pledging Himself to carry out its stipulations. Many are the Scriptures which speak of Christ in connection with the covenant. In Isaiah 42:6, we hear the Father saying to Him, “I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will...give thee for a covenant of the people.” In Malachi 3:1, Christ is designated “the messenger of the covenant” because He came here to make known its contents and proclaim its glad tidings. In Hebrews 7:22, He is designated “a surety of a better covenant,” in Heb 9:15, “the mediator of the new testament,” while in Heb 13:20, we read of “the blood of the everlasting covenant.” In that covenant, the Son agreed to be the Head of God’s elect, and do all that was required unto the divine glory and the securing of their eternal blessedness. To that, reference is made in “His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2Ti 1:9)—a federal relation, then, subsisted between Christ and the Church, though the same was not made fully manifest until He became incarnate. It was then that the Son was appointed unto the mediatorial office, when He was “set up” or “anointed,” when He was “brought forth” from the everlasting decree (Pro 8:23-24), and given a covenant subsistence before the triune God.

It was proposed and freely agreed upon that the Beloved of the Father should take upon Him the form of a servant and be made in the likeness of sin’s flesh. Accordingly, when the fullness of time was come, He was “made of a woman,” taking a human spirit and soul and body into perpetual union with Himself. As the body of Adam was supernaturally made out of the virgin earth by God’s immediate hand, so the body of Christ was supernaturally made out of the Virgin’s substance by the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit. So, too, the union of soul and body in Adam shadowed forth the hypostatic union of our nature with the Son of God, so that He is not two persons in one, but one Person with two natures, those natures not being confounded, but each preserving its distinctive properties. Well did John Owen (1616-1683) remark, “His conception in the womb of the Virgin, as unto the integrity of human nature, was a miraculous operation of the divine power. But the prevention of that nature from any subsistence of its own, by its assumption unto personal union with the Son of God, in the first instance of its conception, is that which is above all miracles, nor can be designated by that name. A *mystery* it is, so far above the order of all creating or providential operations, that it wholly transcends the sphere of

them that are most miraculous. Herein did God glorify all the properties of the divine nature, acting in a way of infinite wisdom, grace and condescension.”

He, who was the Lord of all, and owed no service or obedience to any, being in the form of God and equal unto Him (Phi 2:6), descended into a condition of absolute subjection. As Adam deliberately forsook the place of complete submission unto God, which was proper to his nature and suited unto God, aspiring after lordship, so the Son of God left that state of absolute dominion which was His by right, and took upon Him the yoke of servitude. The Son’s descent involved far greater humiliation unto Himself than did the glory of that ascent unto which the first man aspired in his pride. As others have shown, this self-abasement of the Lord of glory unto an estate of entire subjection is referred to by the apostle in Hebrews 10:5, where Christ is heard saying “body hast thou prepared me.” Those words are an explanatory paraphrase of “mine ears hast thou opened”—margin “digged”—in Psalm 40:6—which, in turn, looks back to Exodus 21:6, where a statute was appointed to the effect that one who voluntarily gave himself up to absolute and perpetual service signified the same by having his ear bored with an awl. Thus, Hebrews 10:5, in the light of Psalm 40:6 and Exodus 21:6, imports that Christ’s body was prepared for Him with the express design of His absolute service unto God therein.

By His assumption of human nature, not only was Christ fitted to render subjection unto God, but He became qualified to serve as *Mediator* between God and men (1Ti 2:5). For it is required that a mediator be related unto *both* of the parties he would reconcile, and be the equal of each of them—*thus*, an angel would not be qualified for this office, since he possesses neither the divine nor the human nature. It was necessary for Christ to be real *man*, as well as God, in order to perform the work of redemption. The former so that He should be susceptible of suffering, qualified to offer Himself as a sacrifice, be capable of dying. So, too, the assumption of human nature fitted Christ to be *the substitute* of His people, to act not only on their behalf, but in their room and stead—actually to take their law-place and render full satisfaction thereto by obeying its precepts and enduring its penalty. But that, in turn, required that He be their Surety and Sponsor. That is, be so related to them legally and federally that He could fittingly serve as their Substitute. As there was a federal and representative oneness between the first Adam and those he stood for, so there must be a like oneness between the last Adam and those for whom He transacted. That as the guilt of the former was charged to the account of his posterity, so the righteousness of the Latter might be imputed unto all His seed.

Yet the truth concerning the position which the Son of God took is not fully expressed by the above statements. It is not sufficient to say that He became their Surety and Substitute, but we must go farther back and ask, “What was it that rendered it meet that He *should serve* as the Sponsor of His people before their offended Lawgiver and Judge?” And the answer is, “*Their covenant union.*” Christ served as their Surety and Substitute because He was one with them, and, therefore, could He, and did He, assume and discharge all their liabilities. In the covenant of grace, Christ had said to the Father, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me” (Heb 2:12-13). Most blessedly is that explained in what immediately follows, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same,” and, therefore, is He not ashamed to call them brethren. *Federation* is the root of this amazing mercy, *identification* the key which unlocks it. Christ came not to strangers, but to His “brethren.” He assumed human nature, not in order to procure a people for Himself, but to secure a people already His (Eph 1:4; Mat 1:21).

Since a union has existed between Christ and His people from all eternity, it inevitably followed that when He came to this earth He took upon Himself their debts, and now He has gone to heaven, they must be clothed (Isa 61:10) with all the rewardableness of His perfect obedience. This is very much more than a technicality of theology, being the strongest buttress of all in the walls of truth which protect the Atonement, though it is one of the most frequently and fiercely assailed by its enemies. Men have argued that the punishment of the Innocent *as though* He were guilty was an outrage upon justice. In the human realm, to punish a person for something when he is neither responsible nor guilty is, beyond question, unjust. But that objection is invalid and entirely pointless in connection with the Lord Jesus, for He voluntarily entered the place and lot of His people in such an intimate way that it could be said, “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one” (Heb 2:11). They are not only one in nature, but are also so united in the sight of God and before His law as to involve an identification of legal relations and reciprocal obligations and rights. “By the obedience of one shall many be made [legally constituted] righteous” (Rom 5:19).

It was required from the Surety of God’s people that He should not only render a full and perfect obedience to the precepts of the Law, and thereby provide the meritorious means of their justification, but that He should also make full satisfaction for their sins by having visited upon Him the curse of the Law. But, before that penalty could be inflicted, the guilt of the transgressors must be transferred unto Him. That is to say, their sins must be judicially imputed to Him. To that arrangement, the Holy One willingly consented, so that He who “knew no sin” was legally “made sin” for them (2Co 5:21). God laid upon Him the iniquities of them all, and then the sword of divine justice smote Him (Zec 13:7), exacting full satisfaction. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission. The blotting out of transgressions, procuring for us the favour of God, the purchase of the heavenly inheritance, required the death of Christ. That which demanded the death sentence was the guilt of our sins. Let *that* be removed, and condemnation for us is gone for ever. But how could guilt be “removed”? Only by its being transferred to another. The punishment due to the Church was borne by her Surety and Substitute. God charged upon Him all the sins of His elect and proceeded against Him accordingly, visiting upon Him His judicial wrath.

How marvelous are the ways of God! As death was destroyed by death—the death of God’s Son—so sin by sin, the greatest that was ever committed—the crucifixion of Christ—putting it away as far as the east is from the west. Because God imputed the trespasses of His people unto their Surety, He was condemned that they might be acquitted. Christ took upon Him their accumulated and incalculable debt, and, by His discharging the same, they are for ever free and solvent. By His precious blood, all their iniquities were expiated, so that the triumphant challenge rings out, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?” (Rom 8:33). Throughout His life and by His death, Christ was repaying and repairing all that injury which the sins of the Church had done unto the manifestative glory of God. God now remits the sins of all who truly believe in Christ, because deity has received a vicarious but full satisfaction for them in the person of their Substitute. Through Christ, they are delivered from the wrath to come. Necessarily so, for God’s acceptance of the Lamb’s sacrifice obtained the eternal redemption of all for whom it was offered. Just as a dark cloud empties itself upon earth and then melts away under the rays of the sun, so when the storm of divine judgment had exhausted itself upon the cross, our sins disappeared from before God’s face, and we are received into His everlasting favour.

Wondrous as was the work that the incarnate Son performed *for* His people, yet something more was still needed in order to provide a *complete* remedy for their complicated ruin, for *that*

covered only the *legal* aspects of their woe. A miracle of grace required to be wrought *in them* in order to make them experientially meet for everlasting glory. Yea, such is absolutely indispensable to fit them to commune with God in this life. His elect need to be quickened into newness of life, their enmity against God destroyed, their darkness dispelled, their wills freed, their love of sin and hatred of holiness rectified. In a word, they must experience a thorough change of heart, a principle of grace be communicated to them, and them made new creatures in Christ. That miracle of grace is performed by the Holy Spirit in those who are “by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph 2:3). But how little is this realized today. Insistence thereon has well-nigh disappeared from the modern pulpit, even in those who pride themselves upon being orthodox. The work of the Spirit *in the saving of sinners* has no place in the creed of the average church-goer, and where it be nominally acknowledged, it possesses no real weight and exerts no practical influence.

In the majority of places where the Lord Jesus is still formally owned as the only Saviour, the current teaching is that He has made it *possible* for men to be saved, but that they themselves must decide whether or not they *shall* be saved. And thus, the greatest of all God’s works is left contingent on the fickle will of men as to whether it be a success or a failure. Narrowing the circle to those places where it is still held that the Spirit has a mission and ministry in connection with the Gospel, the general idea prevailing is that, when the Word is faithfully preached, the Spirit convicts men of sin and reveals to them their need of a Saviour. But beyond that very few are prepared to go. The popular view is that the sinner has to *co-operate* with the Spirit. That he must yield himself to His “striving,” or he will not and cannot be saved. But such a pernicious and God-insulting concept repudiates two cardinal facts. To affirm that the natural man is capable of co-operating with the Spirit is to deny that he is “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1), for a dead man is powerless to do any good. While to say that the specific operations of the Spirit in a man’s heart and conscience are capable of being so resisted as to thwart His endeavours is to deny His omnipotence.

The solemn and unpalatable fact is, my reader, that were the Spirit of God to suspend His operations, not a single person on earth would savingly benefit from the redemptive work of Christ. The natural man is such an enemy to God and so obstinate in his rebellion that he dislikes a holy Christ, and remains opposed to *His* way of salvation until his heart be divinely renewed. That criminal darkness and delusion, which fills every soul wherein sin reigns, cannot be removed by any agent but God the Spirit—by His giving a new heart and enlightening the understanding to perceive the exceeding sinfulness of sin. There are indeed thousands of people ready to respond to the fatal error that sinners may be saved *without* throwing down the weapons of their warfare against God—who receive Christ as their Saviour, but who are unwilling to surrender to Him as their Lord. They would like His rest, but they refuse His “yoke,” without which His rest cannot be had. His promises appeal to them, but for His precepts they have no heart. They will believe in an imaginary Christ who is suited to their corrupt nature, but they despise and reject the Christ of God. Like the multitudes of old, they are pleased with His loaves and fishes, but for His heart-searching, flesh-withering, sin-condemning teaching, they have no appetite. Naught but the miracle-working power of the Spirit can change them.

“Man is utterly and entirely averse to everything that is good and right. ‘The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be’ (Rom 8:7). Turn you all Scripture through, and you will find continually the will of man described as being contrary to the things of God. What said Christ in that text so often quoted by the Arminian to disprove the very doctrine which it clearly states? What did Christ say to those who imagined that

men would come *without* divine influence? He said, first, ‘No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him’ (Joh 6:44); but He said something more strong—‘Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life’ (Joh 5:40). Herein lies the deadly mischief: not only that he is powerless to do good, but that he is powerful enough to do that which is wrong, and that his will is desperately set against everything that is right. Men will *not come*; you cannot force them to by all your thunders, nor entice them by all your invitations. Until the Spirit draw them, come they neither will, nor can” (Charles Spurgeon, 1834-1892).

The manifold wisdom of God is just as evident in the official task assigned the Holy Spirit as in the work that the Son was commissioned to perform. The miracles of regeneration and sanctification are as wonderful as the obedience and sufferings, the death and resurrection of Christ were. And the saint is as truly and as deeply indebted to the One as he is to the Other. If it was an act of amazing condescension for God the Son to leave heaven’s glory and assume unto Himself human nature, equally so was it for God the Spirit to descend to this earth and take up His abode in fallen men and women. And if God signalized the marvel and importance of the one by mighty wonders and signs, so did He in connection with the latter—the song of the angelic choir (Luk 2:13) having its counterpart in the “sound from heaven” (Act 2:2), the Shekinah “glory” (Luk 2:9) in the “tongues like as of fire.” If we admire the gracious and mighty works of Christ in cleansing the leper, strengthening the palsied, giving sight to the blind, and imparting life to the dead, no less is the Spirit to be adored for His supernatural operations in quickening lifeless souls, in illuminating their minds, delivering them from the dominion of sin, removing their enmity against God, uniting them to Christ, and creating in them a love of holiness.

From all that has been before us, it will be seen how complete and perfect is the remedy which the grace and wisdom of God have provided for His people. As they were federally in Adam, and, therefore, held responsible for what he did, so they are federally in Christ, and, therefore, enjoy all the benefits of His meritorious work. As they were ruined by the breaking of one covenant, so they are restored by the keeping of another. As they were rendered guilty by Adam’s disobedience being charged to their account, so they are justified before the throne of God because the righteousness of their Surety is imputed to them. As they fell under the curse of the law, were alienated from God, and became children of wrath, through Christ’s redemption, they are entitled to the reward of the law, reconciled to God, and restored to His favour. As they inherit a corrupt nature from their first head, so they receive a holy nature from their second Head. In every respect, the remedy answers to the malady.

# THE APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

## Part 3

Before turning to the positive side of our present subject, it was necessary for us to expose and denounce that teaching which insists that much in the Bible has no immediate application unto us today. Such teaching is a reckless and irreverent handling of the Word, which has produced the



most evil consequences in the hearts and lives of many—not the least of which is the promotion of a pharisaical spirit of self-superiority. Consciously or unconsciously, dispensationalists are, in reality, repeating the sin of Jehoiakim, who mutilated God’s Word with his penknife (Jer 36:23). Instead of “opening the Scriptures” (Luk 24:32), they are bent in closing the major part of them from God’s people today. They are just as much engaged in doing the devil’s work as are the Higher Critics, who, with their dissecting knives, are *wrongly* “dividing the word of truth” (2Ti 2:15). They are seeking to force a stone down the throats of those who are asking for bread. These are indeed severe and solemn indictments, but not more so than the case calls for. We are well aware that they will be unacceptable unto some of our own readers; but medicine, though sometimes necessary, is rarely palatable.

Instead of being engaged in the unholy work of pitting one part of the Scriptures against another, these men would be far better employed in showing the perfect *unity* of the Bible, and the blessed harmony which there is between all of its teachings. But instead of demonstrating the concord of the two Testaments, they are more concerned in their efforts to show the discord which they say there is between that which pertained unto “the Dispensation of Law” and that which obtains under “the Dispensation of Grace,” and, in order to accomplish their evil design, all sound principles of exegesis are cast to the wind. As a sample of what we have reference to, they cite “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (Exo 21:24) and then quote against it, “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), and then it is exultantly asserted that those two passages can only be “reconciled” by allocating them to different peoples in different ages. And with such superficial handling of Holy Writ, thousands of gullible souls are deceived, and thousands more allow themselves to be bewildered.

If those who possess a “Scofield Bible” turn to Exodus 21:24, they will see that in the margin opposite to it, the editor refers his readers to Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21, and cf. Matthew 5:38-44; 1 Peter 2:19-21; upon which this brief comment is made: “The provision in Exodus is *law* and righteous: the New Testament passages, *grace* and merciful.” How far Mr. Scofield was consistent with himself may be seen by a reference to what he states on page 989, at the beginning of the New Testament under the Four Gospels, where he expressly affirms, “The sermon on the mount is law, *not grace*” [italics ours]. Verily, “The legs of the lame are not equal” (Pro 26:7). In his marginal note to Exodus 21:24, Mr. Scofield cites Matthew 5:38-44, as “grace,” whereas in his Introduction to the Four Gospels, he declares that Matthew 5-7 “is law, and not grace.” Which of those assertions did he wish his readers to believe?

Still the question may be asked, “How are *you* going to reconcile Exodus 21:24 with Matthew 5:38-44?” Our answer is, there is nothing between them to “reconcile,” for there is nothing in them which clashes. The former passage is one of the statutes appointed for *public magistrates* to enforce, whereas the latter one lays down rules for *private individuals* to live by! Why do not these self-styled “rightly dividers” properly allocate the Scriptures, distinguishing between the different classes to which they are addressed? That Exodus 21:24 *does* contain statutes for public magistrates to enforce is clearly established by comparing Scripture with Scripture. In Deuteronomy 19:21, the same injunction is again recorded, and if the reader turns back to verse 18, he will there read, “And the judges shall make diligent inquisition,” etc. It would be real mercy unto the community if our judges today would set aside their sickly sentimentality and deal with conscienceless and brutal criminals in a manner which befits their deeds of violence—instead of making a mockery of justice.

Ere leaving what has been before us in the last three paragraphs, let it be pointed out that when our blessed Lord added to Matthew 5:38, “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you” (verse 44), He was not advancing a more benign precept than had ever been enunciated previously. No, the same gracious principle of conduct had been enforced in the Old Testament. In Exodus 23:4-5, JEHOVAH gave commandment through Moses, “If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.” Again in Proverbs 25:21, we read, “If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink.”

The same God who bids us, “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath” (Rom 12:17-19), also commanded His people in the *Old Testament*, “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD” (Lev 19:18). And therefore was David grateful to Abigail for dissuading him from taking vengeance on Nabal, “Blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand” (1Sa 25:33). So far was the Old Testament from allowing any spirit of bitterness, malice or revenge that it expressly declared, “Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee” (Pro 20:22). And again, “Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth” (Pro 24:17). And again, “Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work” (Pro 24:29).

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

Is it not amazing that one so renowned for his erudition and knowledge of the Scriptures should make such manifestly absurd statements as the above? In pitting Deuteronomy 6:25 against Romans 3:20, he might as well have argued that fire is “the very opposite” of water. They are indeed contrary elements, yet each has its own use in its proper place—the one to cook by, the other for refreshment. Think of one who set up himself as a teacher of preachers affirming that under the Mosaic economy “salvation depended on what man was to do.” Why, in that case, for fifteen hundred years not a single Israelite had been saved. Had salvation then been obtainable by human efforts, there had been no need for God to send His Son here! Salvation has never been procurable by human merits, on the ground of human performances. Abel obtained witness that he was righteous, because he offered to God a slain lamb (Gen 4:4; Heb 11:4). Abraham was justified by faith, and not by works (Rom 4). Under the Mosaic economy, it was expressly announced that “It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev 17:11). David

realized, “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand?” (Psa 130:3). And therefore did he confess, “I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only” (Psa 71:16).

By all means, let the Word of truth be “rightly divided.” Not be parceling it off to different “dispensations,” but by distinguishing between what is doctrinal and what is practical, between that which pertains to the unsaved and that which is predicated of the saved. Deuteronomy 6:25 is addressed not to alien sinners, but to those who are in covenant relationship with the Lord. Whereas Romans 3:20 is a statement which applies to every member of the human race. The one has to do with *practical* “righteousness” in the daily walk, which is acceptable to God. The other is a doctrinal declaration which asserts the impossibility of acceptance with God on the ground of creature doings. The former relates to our conduct in this life in connection with the divine government. The latter concerns our eternal standing before the divine throne. Both passages are equally applicable to Jews and Gentiles in all ages. “Our righteousness” in Deuteronomy 6:25 is a practical righteousness in the sight of God. It is the same aspect of righteousness as in “except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees” of Matthew 5:20, the “righteous man” of James 5:16, and the “doeth righteousness” of 1 John 2:29.

The Old Testament saints were the subjects of the same everlasting covenant, had the same blessed Gospel, were begotten unto the same celestial heritage as the New Testament saints. From Abel onwards, God has dealt with sinners in sovereign grace, and according to the merits of Christ’s redemptive work—which was retroactive in its value and efficacy (Rom 3:25; 1Pe 1:19-20). “Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen 6:8). That they were partakers of the same covenant blessings as we are is clear from a comparison of 1 Samuel 23:5 and Hebrews 13:20. The same Gospel was preached unto Abraham (Gal 3:8), yea, unto the nation of Israel after they had received the Law (Heb 4:2), and, therefore, Abraham rejoiced to see Christ’s day and was glad (Joh 8:56). Dying Jacob declared, “I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD” (Gen 49:18). As Hebrews 11:16 states, the patriarchs desired “a better country [than the land of Canaan, in which they dwelt], that is, an heavenly.” Moses “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter...esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt” (Heb 11:24-26). Job exclaimed, “I know that my redeemer liveth...in my flesh shall I see God” (Job 19:25-26).

When JEHOVAH proclaimed His name unto Moses, He revealed Himself as “the LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious” (Exo 34:5-7). When Aaron pronounced the benediction on the congregation, he was bidden to say, “The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: the LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the LORD lift up the light of his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace” (Num 6:24-26). No greater and grander blessings can be invoked today. Such a passage as that cannot possibly be harmonized with the constricted concept which is entertained and is being propagated by the dispensationalists of the Mosaic economy. God dealt *in grace* with Israel all through their long and chequered history. Read through the book of Judges and observe how often He raised up deliverers for them. Pass on to Kings and Chronicles and note His longsuffering benignity in sending them prophet after prophet. Where in the New Testament is there a word which, for pure grace, exceeds “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isa 1:18)? In the days of Hezekiah, “the LORD was gracious unto them” (2Ki 13:23). They were invited to say unto the Lord, “Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously” (Hos 14:2). Malachi bade Israel “beseech God that he will be gracious unto us” (Mal 1:9).

The conception which the pious remnant of Israel had of the divine character during the Mosaic economy was radically different from the stern and forbidding presentation made thereof by dispensationalists. Hear the Psalmist as he declared, “Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful” (Psa 116:5). Hear him again, as he bursts forth into adoring praise, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases...He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psa 103:2-3, 10). Can Christians say more than that? No wonder David exclaimed, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” (Psa 73:25-26). If the question be asked, “What, then, is *the great distinction* between the Mosaic and Christian eras?” The answer is, God’s grace was then confined to *one* nation, but now it flows out to *all* nations.

What is true in the general holds good in the particular. Not only were God’s dealings with His people during Old Testament times substantially the same as those with His people now, but *in detail*, too. There is no discord, but perfect accord and concord between them. Note carefully the following parallelisms. “His inheritance in the saints” (Eph 1:18)—“The LORD’s portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance” (Deu 32:9). “Beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation” (2Th 2:13)—“I have loved thee with an everlasting love” (Jer 31:3). “In whom we have redemption” (Eph 1:7)—“With him is plenteous redemption” (Psa 130:7). “That we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21)—“In the LORD have I righteousness and strength” (Isa 45:24). “Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings...in Christ” (Eph 1:3)—“Men shall be blessed in him” (Psa 72:17). “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1Jo 1:7)—“Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee” (Song 4:7).

“Strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man” (Eph 3:16)—“In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul” (Psa 138:3). “The Spirit of truth...will guide you into all truth” (Joh 16:13)—“Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them” (Neh 9:20). “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom 7:18)—“All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa 64:6). “I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims” (1Pe 2:11)—“Ye are strangers and sojourners” (Lev 25:23). “We walk by faith” (2Co 5:7)—“The just shall live by his faith” (Hab 2:4). “Strong in the Lord” (Eph 6:10)—“I will strengthen them in the LORD” (Zec 10:12). “Neither shall any pluck them out of my hand” (Joh 10:28)—“All his saints are in thy hand” (Deu 33:3). “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit” (Joh 15:5)—“From me is thy fruit found” (Hos 14:8). “He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it” (Phi 1:6, margin)—“The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me” (Psa 138:8). Innumerable other such harmonies might be added.

## WELCOME TIDINGS

Since there be so much without to distress and so much within to depress them, we deem it a duty as well as a privilege to share with Christian friends some of the encouraging words we so

often receive from our readers. That our gracious Master is pleased to bless this little messenger to one and another of His children “scattered abroad” (Joh 11:52) will be evident from the unsolicited testimonies that follow. Abundant cause has the editor to say, “O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together” (Psa 34:3). As Matthew Henry well remarked, “We should be as desirous of the assistance of our friends in returning thanks for mercies, as in praying for them.”

“The Lord has greatly blessed me as I have studied the various articles” (Northern Rhodesia). “The Studies provide rich pastures for the believer, and help greatly to hold fast in these momentous days” (Australia). “I am enjoying the articles on 1 John especially, and getting much help and blessing” (New Zealand preacher). “There is no doubt readers of the Studies are very thankful to God for giving you both enabling grace and strength to continue with them” (Australia). “I am most grateful to you for the Studies, which I enjoy more than I did at home” (India). “My husband spends a lot of time reading the Studies, and has derived much benefit from them” (Canada). “Your ministry is more deeply appreciated as time goes on. Some of my greatest times of inspiration and refreshment are associated with your written ministry” (One in the Forces).

“I have been refreshed and guided by them many a time throughout the past year” (Local). “We always appreciate them for their freshness and their closeness to God’s revealed will” (Stirling). “I would thankfully testify to the help received again and again in turning over pages of past volumes. I feel that our heavenly Father has provided us with rich food through the Studies” (Nurse). “I have enjoyed reading and proved them to be of much spiritual value” (Local). “I would find it hard to say which of your articles is the most helpful. I have enjoyed every paragraph on every page. Each article is so informative, so practical, so searching; each one so exalts the Most High, and abases self, that I am put in my proper place” (Annan). “I receive profit from your articles on ‘The Interpretation of the Scriptures’: they have given me more confidence in telling them out” (Scottish preacher).

“What appeals to me in the Studies is their perpetual freshness. Incidentally, I know of one or two places where they are read when no minister is present” (Manchester). “I realize that they involve you in unceasing labour—labour, of course, that is a delight. I have found that as I have kept the issues since 1935, I now have a valuable source of help and instruction on many passages. I turn back to them again and again with profit. May our Lord continue to enable you both for His glory” (English preacher). “I am always delighted when the new Studies arrive, for I know that a feast of fat things, full of marrow, awaits me” (Shrewsbury). “Just to say ‘Thank you’ to you and Mrs. Pink cannot really convey what I feel. They are a great source of help, inspiration, encouragement and deep enjoyment. I read them again and again” (Medical practitioner). “There is much material which I have found helpful in the Studies” (Ministerial student). “Your Studies are so spiritually instructive and helpful. I know the hours of search and study they must take to produce them” (London).

“The articles upon human depravity are sad reading, and sometimes fill me with despondency and gloom; but I am sure we need to be reminded of our innate wickedness. Thank you very much” (Bournemouth). “I always look forward to getting the Studies, as all the pieces are most helpful” (Belfast). “I appreciate your magazine very much. It is a real blessing to me. We sometimes sing ‘Make me a channel of blessing,’ and He has made *you* such to your readers” (Lurgan). “Thank you heartily for the Studies, with their heart-searching, soul-edifying and God-exalting messages. The Lord is worthy of our thanksgiving for His care and protection over yourself and Mrs. Pink in your labour of love. May He keep and guide you to His glory” (Wales).

“For another year I have feasted on the good things in the Studies, and do thank the Lord for them” (S. Dakota). “Your writings are opening the blind eyes all over this country, and causing a great stir among the church people” (Kentucky). “God bless you for the immeasurable good your books have brought to our despairing souls” (Arkansas). “Your Studies have been my meat and drink. Your articles never grow old” (Georgia). “I read three other periodicals, but yours is the only one that draws me down to my knees in thankfulness that He is God, and in supplications to Him to cover my nakedness” (Texas). “Praise to the glory of God for the blessings He has brought to me, using you as the human agent in your writings” (Alabama). “The great aid you are rendering those of us who would know more concerning the revealed will of God, you will never realize this side of eternity” (Florida). “I wish to tender my heartfelt thanks. I am quickened and inspired; you have the power from God to let the Word speak” (Germany).

Praise ye the Lord! Yours in the honour and joy of ministering to some of “His own.” A. W. and V. E. Pink.



# September

## THE LATE EDITOR'S LAST DAYS

The writing of an account of the late Editor's, my dear husband's, home call devolves upon me, and I feel so unqualified for such a sacred task that I tremble to attempt it. Making the words of the prophet my own, "I am not a prophetess, neither the daughter of a prophet," yet I feel the dear readers of STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES are friends and desire that we give them some details of his last days with us. I know their love will cover all mistakes found in this little piece. As he abominated flattery, I trust I shall give you a truthful report in my feeble way. Mr. Pink maintained a standard both in spirituality and diction which makes it difficult for one to emulate him, as it was a special gift for the work designed him. May He who once used a "little maid," be pleased to assist me now, and He shall have all the praise.

There is one verse of Scripture which impresses itself upon my mind more than any other as I seek to bring my thoughts to the object of these lines, and which has enabled me to frame the whole in my mind as to how I should present the following. In Hebrews 13:7, we read, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." Certainly there are not a few readers in the world who have regarded Mr. Pink as their spiritual ruler or guide into the truth, as many, many scores of letters abundantly testify, and I am sure he will be long remembered by each one of them who deeply mourn their loss. He sought to write unto you (and speak to those with whom he came into contact) the Word of God as it was given unto him, keeping back nothing he felt was profitable for our souls, whether it be exhortation, reproof or correction. We trust there are hundreds scattered here and there in the world who know the meaning of the next clause—"whose faith follow"—who do not need to be admonished by this poor scribe, but I need to turn those words into prayer that I may "do them." STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES is a living monument of his faith in the veracity of God's Word, Christ's great and glorious work of redemption, and the Holy Spirit's work in applying the truth to the soul in living power, and needs no word from me to confirm where he stood on the fundamentals of the faith.

He regarded the readers of STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES as friends, and was daily in prayer for all, showing that he had a real pastor's love. Up to the last three days of his life, he had a most keen interest in all letters which came to hand and would thank the Lord for the encouraging words contained therein. He was an ardent student of the Scriptures, often being so absorbed in his meditations as to lose all trace of time, or any consciousness of my being in the room. Often I have heard him exclaim, "Oh, that is wonderful. I never saw that before. I rejoice as those that find great spoil when the Lord is pleased to open His truth to me. It is inexpressibly

precious to have Him lead me into His truth. The more I study God's Word the more precious I find it, and the more I marvel at the inexhaustible treasures contained therein. How surpassingly glorious to think that we shall spend eternity with Christ, and He, our Teacher, unfolding the great mysteries of His 'Word which liveth and abideth for ever.' What I have just seen is only a foretaste which causes me to desire Him to hasten the day when I shall have done with all things mundane." He was so full of thanksgiving and praise for everything, and though very weak in body, "he was strong in faith, giving glory to God" continually. He was not unmindful of the many kindnesses shown him by the many dear friends who were bringing things to the door or sending. Feeling so unworthy of the least of all His mercies, he besought the Lord's richest blessing on every one who so lavishly ministered unto his temporal needs.

"Considering the end of their conversation." This is the purpose of this piece and there is much before me, nevertheless, it is hard for me, but I trust I may be enabled to write to *His* praise, for I well know my dear husband desired none for himself. His was the spirit of the apostle, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" Several months before the end, I saw he was failing and it worried me very much. Each time I made a reference to it he would always say, "It's old age, my dear. Thank the Lord it is so. I am thankful I am so near the end, and not just beginning life. I am heartily sorry for the young men of today who are just starting out. It will be terribly hard for those who are conscientious. The times are so dark and will get much darker for them, but the Lord will keep His own." Many times he appeared so weary and exhausted as he was losing his energy, that I would press him to rest and he would be better able to do his work. To which he would ever reply, "We must work while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work. I desire to be found at my post when the call comes." He would not stop except for the short intervals he was accustomed to go out each morning, which he continued until three weeks before his death.

He never ceased to praise the Lord for bringing us to the Island of Lewis, and for placing us in the home in which it has been our happy privilege to reside for twelve years. He felt it was a mark of distinguishing favour that we should be with those who love and honour the Sabbath as we, too, have always done. He loved the Sabbath. It was a sacred and holy day to him, and he loved those who had the same reverence for it. In the peace and quietness here in Lewis, he pursued and enjoyed his studies away from the madding crowds of the cities. More than once he told me that he had no desire whatever to be anywhere else and never expected to leave till the Lord took him to glory.

One night in May, he had a seizure which lasted several minutes. After it passed, he said, "I shall soon be home in glory. I cannot go soon enough. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name.' I am so happy I feel like singing through that psalm." He observed I was weeping, and asked, "My dear, why do you weep? You should be rejoicing that I shall soon be home." I told him I was weeping for myself at being left behind. I knew it was good for him, but I dreaded the separation. He gently said, "The Lord has been so wondrously good to us all these years and brought us safely through until now. He will not desert you in your hour of greatest need. Only trust Him with all your heart. He will not fail you."

After that night, he was making plans and getting all things in order for his departure, as if he was going on a long journey, and he would be telling me what to do. Among other things, he wanted me to publish in *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES* all the material he was leaving with me before closing down the magazine. As he saw his time was short, he applied himself more strenuously to composing articles so as to leave as much as he could and to complete as nearly as possible some series he was working on. "The Lord is good and doeth good" was daily on his



lips. He rested as few have on the sovereignty of God and seemed to be completely resigned to His will for him to such an extent that he said many times, "Let Him do with me as seemeth Him good." Once when we were speaking of the past and present dealings of the Lord in our pilgrim journey, he said, "'He hath done all things well.' *All* things, my dear, not *some* things."

On the Wednesday morning before his death the following Tuesday morning, while still in bed, and I about my duties in the room, he began to speak, "The darkness is past and the true light now shineth. Yes, it shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Lifting his hand toward the ceiling he said, "All is glory before me. I cannot say with Mr. Rutherford, 'Dark, dark hath been the midnight,' for my experience has been so different from his. But I can say, 'Dayspring is at hand, and glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land.' I am leaving the darkness behind to you who have still to finish your pilgrimage." I said to him, "That is all very beautiful for you." To which he quickly replied, "And it can be for you too if you will cast aside your doubts and fears and put your whole trust in Him." He sat in his chair most of the day dictating an article with great effort, for he was so desirous to finish it, but said he felt he had left it too late to get it done. We lacked only four sentences when he stopped, put down his paper and glasses, and said, "Put me to bed." I shall never know how I got him to bed, but by the Lord's mercy I did, supporting him for over an hour till he got relief and I could lay him down. After a few minutes' rest he said, "Get your glasses and paper and pencil and come to the bed, and I will give you the last four sentences and you can type them when I am gone." I took them down and when I had completed writing, he said, "My work is finished. My race is run. I am ready to go. I cannot go soon enough." He never rose after that, but still remained happy and praising the Lord.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm was almost constantly on his lips both to myself and the Christian nurse, and many wonderful things he said to us, among them being, "Not one good thing hath failed of all the good things He hath promised." Another time we heard him say, "He hath not dealt with me after my sins, nor rewarded me according to my iniquities." Again, "Wearisome nights are appointed me, but I have nothing to say, for the Lord has so wondrously spared me bodily pain all my life through till now." Once we heard him ask the nurse if she knew those lovely lines, "The King of love my Shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never; I nothing lack if I am His, and He is mine for ever." Once in great agony, he said, "O taste and see that the LORD is good, blessed is the man that trusteth in him." A dear friend came in to relieve the nurse and be with me and we beheld his face radiant many times, and we felt sure he was having visions of glory. Then we heard him say, which were his last words, "The Scriptures explain themselves," showing us what his mind was on. So having finished his course, and completed his work, he has gone to be with Him whom he loved and served for so many years. "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together."

I thank all the dear readers who have sent such loving letters of sympathy at this time of my sore bereavement, and earnestly covet the prayers of all in my hour of greatest need.

# EXPOSITION OF JOHN'S FIRST EPISTLE

## 33. Antichrists (2:22-23)

What an immense amount of unedifying and worthless rubbish has been written on “the antichrist”! Yet that is hardly a thing to be wondered at, since it supplies an object that makes a strong appeal to lovers of the bizarre and sensational. Moreover, it is a subject that offers an opportunity for every conceited tyro<sup>27</sup> to pose as a “deep student of prophecy.” Almost endless have been the conjectures as to the identity of “the antichrist”: whether an evil system or a separate individual; and if the latter, whether he has yet appeared on the stage of human action, or whether his advent is yet future. The Reformers and almost all of the Puritans held that “the man of sin” (which they regard as another title of this infamous character) signified the Papacy. Later, some who claimed to be more enlightened were quite sure that Napoleon Bonaparte was this son of perdition. Influenced by his early teachers and associations, this writer once deemed himself qualified to write a book of three hundred pages thereon (long since out of print), but trusts he has grown wiser with the passing of the years.<sup>28</sup>

During the last three decades many others have speculated upon the personality of “the antichrist.” Not a few who were regarded as eminent “Bible teachers” insisted that the Kaiser of Germany filled this iniquitous role, but when the closing years of his career falsified their theorizings, Mussolini (as “the restorer of the old Roman empire”) became their choice; then as he began to wane in power and be eclipsed by another, Hitler was preferred. Now [that] those men of evil renown have been called to meet their God, Stalin has occupied the prophetic limelight. And so, we suppose, it will continue to the end, for human nature changes not, either in its arrogance, blindness, gullibility, or refusal to acknowledge its ignorance. “Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass’s colt” (Job 11:12). There ever have been, and doubtless will continue to be unto the close of this world’s history, men who posed as being wise above that which is written, and a flock of admirers will credit their pretensions and receive as oracles their wild and profitless theorizings.

Disregarding all speculations and controversies upon prophecies, which may or may not bear upon the subject (for example, those in Daniel and The Revelation, to which so many appeal), let us concentrate upon the term itself. The actual word “antichrist” occurs only in John’s epistles. In other connections the prefix “anti” is used in various senses: e.g. over against, contrary to, a substitute for. Thus, abstractedly considered, “antichrist” might refer either to one who pretended to be the Messiah or to one who openly opposed Him: a pseudo Christ or a rival. It is by carefully observing how the term is used by the apostle and what he predicated thereof that we must determine its sense. It is true that our Lord announced, “Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many,” which He explained as “there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders” (Mat 24:5, 24)—but that is nothing to the

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<sup>27</sup> **tyro** – beginner in learning something; novice.

<sup>28</sup> Pink initially held to the doctrines of dispensationalism during his early years of writing.

point of our present inquiry: we consider that history shows those predictions were fulfilled in the first century AD.

First, John had said, “ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists...They went out from us, but they were not of us” (2:18-19). There we see that the early Christians had been forewarned that the Gospel of Christ would be opposed, that there were many such opposers by the close of the first century, and that such were apostates. “And hence we learn that antichrist is not a single person, but many: antichrist in the first clause is explained by antichrists in the latter” (John Gill, 1697-1771). Second, 2:22 identifies those antichrists by describing them as liars against the truth and repudiators of the Christ of God. Third, John affirmed, “And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist” (4:3). As “the spirit of the world” (1Co 2:12) has reference to that principle of carnal reason and gratification, which regulates its subjects, so “the spirit of antichrist” signifies that evil influence which produces hostility to Christ. Finally, he informs us, “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (2Jo 1:7). “From this it is clear that John understood by the word all those who denied that Jesus is the Messiah” (Albert Barnes, 1798-1870).

*“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?” (verse 22).*

To deny—either implicitly or explicitly—that Jesus is the Christ is to say that He is not the Messiah, the One announced and promised by the prophets of old. Second, it is to repudiate Him as the one appointed and endued by God to be the sole but sufficient Saviour of sinners. Third, it is the rejection of His person and official work, and that is a sin of the highest magnitude: “whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God” (2Jo 1:9). As Gill remarked, “The one who denied that Jesus is the Christ is not the only liar in the world, but he is the greatest of liars; this is a consummate lie, being opposed to a glaring truth.” It is the gainsaying of a fact clear and indisputable. It is opposed to the witness of the angels at His incarnation, and to that of His forerunner. It is opposed to the teaching of Him who is the truth itself, for He clearly manifested Himself to be the Messiah. It flies in the face of His miraculous credentials, which authenticated His claim. It is contrary to the declaration of His apostles, who were eye-witnesses of His miracles, and to the sure Word of God Himself.

The denial that Jesus is the Christ is a sin committed in many different ways and in varying degrees of culpability. Unitarians, who directly and explicitly repudiate His Godhead, are not the only liars and antichrists. There are many opposers in Christendom who indirectly and implicitly deny the Christ of God by devising a false Christ from their perverted imaginations. Thus, Pelagians,<sup>29</sup> and in a lesser degree Arminians, are guilty of this horrible crime, for they transfer to the creature almost all the honour that rightly belongs to the Redeemer alone. And as John Calvin, (1509-1564) pertinently remarked, “So the Papists at this day, setting up free will in opposition to the grace of the Holy Spirit, ascribing a part of their righteousness and salvation to the merits of works, feigning for themselves innumerable advocates, by whom they render God propitious<sup>30</sup> to them, have a sort of fictitious Christ I know not what; but the living and genuine image of God that shines forth in Christ they deform by their wicked inventions—they lessen His power, subvert and pervert His office. Christ is denied whenever those things that belong to Him are taken away from Him.”

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<sup>29</sup> **Pelagians** – those who (perhaps unknowingly) follow the teachings of the heretic Pelagius (c. 354-c. 420), a British monk who argued that people could reform themselves by free will and that they can take the first steps toward salvation without the assistance of God’s grace. His views were condemned as heresy by the Council of Ephesus (431).

<sup>30</sup> **propitious** – favorably inclined.

*“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.”*

Those terrible names of opprobrium<sup>31</sup> cannot but fill the renewed heart with holy horror. Yet no terms of infamy and condemnation can be too strong to designate the opposers and blasphemers of the Christ of God. To deny that Jesus is the Christ is to repudiate His virgin birth, His vicarious character, His redemptive work—for those things were predicated of the Messiah. In the preceding chapter we explained that “the Christ” means “the Anointed One” and expresses His threefold office. Thus any man who denies that Jesus is the great Prophet of the Church, the infallible Teacher, the essential Word of God, is an antichrist—an arch-heretic. Anyone who denies that Jesus is the great High Priest, the sole Mediator between God and men, by whose one perfect offering He has perfected forever the sanctified, is an antichrist—His open antagonist. Anyone who denies that Jesus is the King of the Church, the only one who has the right to command and be obeyed, is an antichrist—His avowed enemy.

Yet this is not all that is included: *“he is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son.”* The Messiahship of Christ is not an isolated fact; lying behind it is the all-important truth of the Holy Trinity. The denial of Christ is, at the same time, a repudiation of the mysterious and ineffable union [that] is between the members of the Godhead. There is a most intimate and unique relation subsisting between the Father and the Son, one that is entirely beyond finite comprehension, expressed in such terms as “the man...my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts” (Zec 13:7), so that “all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father” (Joh 5:23), for, as He expressly declared, “I and Father are one” (Joh 10:30)—co-essential, co-eternal, co-glorious; “His own Son” (Rom 8:32) in a way that the regenerate are not: really, though incomprehensibly,

*“His own Son.”* Now unless Christ be owned in this highest relation, He is virtually denied in all. Scripture presents the Father and the Son in eternity past, as engaged in mutual council (Zec 6:13). “A great covenant is negotiated. The Father and the Son, with the Spirit, are, if one may dare say so, in solemn conference together. From the bosom of the Father, in which He is dwelling evermore, the Son receives a commission to come forth.

“He is appointed Heir of all things. Creation is assigned to Him as His proper work. All providence is to be His care; and, above all, the providence of this spot of earth. Here on this earth, from among a fallen race, He is to purchase for Himself, and for His Father, at a great price, a seed given Him by the Father, and to share with Him the blessedness of His being the Son. So it is announced between the Father and the Son from everlasting; the Holy Spirit being a party to the arrangement, as He is to have a large share in carrying it out. And so, accordingly, in the fullness of time, the Son appears among men. He appears as the Son: on the Father’s behalf, entrusted with His Father’s commission, to be about His Father’s business. He is the Son not merely in respect of His being the Holy Jesus, receiving proofs and pledges of God’s fatherly presence and approval, as any holy being might. He is the Son also, and chiefly, in respect of the work or office with a view to which He is the Christ. He is the Son consenting to be the Father’s Servant, and as such anointed for the accomplishment of the Father’s purpose. Only, therefore, in so far as you acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, do you really receive Him as the Son.

“And denial, whether practical or doctrinal, of the proposition that Jesus is the Christ, is tantamount to a disowning of His personality as the Son. It is only when you recognize Him as anointed to do His Father’s will in the sacrifice of Himself, that you really own Him as the Son. Such, then, is the importance and significancy of the proposition that Jesus is the Christ,

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<sup>31</sup> **opprobrium** – that which brings shame or disgrace.

considered in itself; and such it's bearing on the owning of His person as the Saviour and as the Son. It is a proposition that so vitally affects the essential character of Him to whom it relates, that the denial of it is virtually a denial of Himself...For, in a word, the completeness of this illustrious personage depends on a full and adequate recognition of His double relation: to us as sinners, as our Jesus, and to God the Father as His Son. Set aside His being Christ—the anointed Sacrificer and anointed Sacrifice, the anointed Priest and anointed Victim, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world...and we have neither any Jesus fit to be our Saviour, nor any Son of God worth the owning...Hence he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ is not only a liar, he is antichrist. And being antichrist—setting himself against the Christ—he, as antichrist, denies the Father and the Son” (Robert S. Candlish, 1806-1873).

Let none aspire to more “liberality and charity” than the one who was favoured to lean on the Master’s bosom; those who are opposed to the person, doctrine, gospel, and kingdom of Christ are liars and antichrists. Those who array themselves against Him and hold doctrines that are hostile to His Godhead, His official character, His redemptive work, are His adversaries. Yet there is no truth so sacred and well attested, but there have ever been those who controverted it. Some have denied the Saviour’s deity, some have explained away the reality and uniqueness of His humanity, and so the reality of His sufferings; while others set themselves against His headship and kingly authority—yet professing themselves to be and retaining the name of Christians, imposing their falsehoods on their deluded followers. In their bitter antagonism to the Lord Jesus, we may discover something more than an ebullition<sup>32</sup> of human depravity, namely the agency of Satan. It is the enmity of that old serpent the devil against the woman’s Seed. It demonstrates his age-long hatred of Christ and His gospel.

*“He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son.”* How little is this realized today! Scriptural views of the Father cannot be ours if we err concerning the Son. “No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” (Mat 11:27). The Father cannot be known apart from the Son, for He is the One who has “declared him” (Joh 1:18), or made Him known. There is such an ineffable union between Them that He could aver, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father...I am in the Father, and the Father in me” (Joh 14:9, 11). Where Christ be denied, the whole revelation of God in and through Him (Heb 1:1-2; 2Co 5:19) is set aside.

“As God has given Himself to us to be enjoyed only in Christ, He is elsewhere sought for in vain; or (if anyone prefers what is clearer) as in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Deity, there is no God apart from Him. It hence follows that Turks, Jews, and such as are like them, have a mere idol and not the true God. For by whatever titles they may honour the God that they worship, still, as they reject Him without whom they cannot come to God, and in whom God has really manifested Himself to us, they have but some creature or fiction of their own” (Calvin).

*“Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father” (verse 23).*

How wide and sweeping is this solemn statement! No matter what his profession and pretensions, if he in any way denies the Son, he cuts himself off from the Father. The Father can only be known (Joh 17:3), approached (Joh 14:6), worshipped (1Pe 2:5), and glorified (Col 3:17) in and through His incarnate Son. Despite their boasted orthodoxy, Jesus Christ said to the Jews, “Ye neither know me, nor my Father; if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also” (Joh 8:19). To be without the One is to be without the Other. That is abundantly demonstrated in heathendom: their religions are godless because they are Christless! In like

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<sup>32</sup> **ebullition** – sudden outburst.

manner, all who acknowledge “the Supreme Being,” “the Architect of the universe,” or even “the Almighty,” and at the same time refuse the Mediator, believe in one who has no existence. Moreover, if wrong views be entertained of the Son, erroneous conceptions of the Father are necessarily entertained. If Christ be the Son only by adoption, God is not His Father. If He be Son merely by office, equally so is the Father. If He be Son only by incarnation or resurrection, the Father is denied.

“Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father” as his “Father.” This at once gives the lie to one of the most popular and widely accepted errors of the last century, namely “the universal fatherhood of God.” In the spiritual and highest sense God is the Father of none save of Christ and His redeemed: “For ye [namely the saints] are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26). Where there be no faith in Christ Jesus, there is no spiritual sonship; and where that be absent, God cannot rightfully be regarded as our Father. Christ made that very plain when He exposed the empty boast of the unbelieving Jews, who claimed, “we have one Father, God,” and to whom He replied, “If God were your Father, ye would love me” (Joh 8:41-42). How can one who despises and rejects the Son have God for his Father—have a filial relation to Him—when there is no bond of union between them? The Father thinks far too highly of His Son to love any who hate Him. He will not set a premium upon those who so grievously insult Him by disdain His Beloved, for “him hath God the Father sealed” (Joh 6:27).

*“But he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also”* (verse 23). We have placed that sentence in italics, for so it is found in the Authorized Version. As most of our readers are aware, that is to indicate that such words are not found in the Greek, but have been supplied by the translators. This instance serves to manifest the scrupulous fairness of those who produced that edition of the Bible: because it was found in some of the ancient manuscripts, they gave it a place; as it was omitted by others, they marked it as doubtful. The Revised Version includes it in the text without any question, and, we believe, warrantably so. The editorial note in Calvin’s commentary says, “The words are found in most of the manuscripts, and in most of the versions, and in many of the Fathers. Besides, they wholly comport with the usual style of the apostle, whose common practice it was to state things positively and negatively, and vice versa. See 5:12.” A. Barnes tells us that this passage “is found in the Vulgate, the Syriac, the Ethiopian, the Armenian, and Arabic versions; and in the critical editions of Griesbach, Tittman, and Hahn. It is probable, therefore, that it should be regarded as a genuine portion of the sacred text.”

Gill pointed out that the second half of verse 23 “confirms and illustrates what is before said; for as he who denies the sonship of Christ cannot hold the paternity of God, so he who owns the sonship of Christ, the second person, maintains the paternity of the first—for those two are correlates and mutually put or take away each other. No mention is made of the Spirit, because, as yet, no controversy had arisen concerning Him.” To which we would add, in Scripture, repetition is always for the purpose of emphasis, and often the same thing is stated both negatively and positively (as in 1:6-7) in order to impress us more deeply with that which is of first importance—as many of our Lord’s weightiest utterances were prefaced with a double “verily.” The fundamental truth of our present verse cannot be too clearly and emphatically stated or too frequently inculcated: that only by faith’s acceptance of Christ can we obtain any saving knowledge of God; and that all who believingly receive the Lord Jesus have in fact become the sons and daughters of the Almighty, and are made heirs of eternal life.

*“But he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.”* “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1Pe 3:18). By Christ all that believe are united to the Father, so that He could say, “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father”

(Joh 20:17). As there is a most intimate relation between the Father and the Son, so there is in the doctrine and knowledge of Them. And as we cannot have the One without the Other, so on Christ's becoming our Saviour we are received into the Father's favour. The Father gives Himself to us in His Son, and by receiving the Latter we receive the Former. "He hath the Father" for his everlasting portion: to commune with, to enjoy, to supply all his need. Thus, not only is the honour of Christ involved in our apprehensions of Him, but our blessings and privileges are bound up therein.

## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

### 85. Final Dispositions

In our last, we dwelt upon the rebuke by Israel's leader unto those seven tribes which were slack in going up to possess that land which the Lord God of their fathers had given them. How that he bade them appoint three men of each tribe to go and make a thorough survey of those sections of Canaan which had not yet been distributed. They were required to furnish something after the order of a map, supplying a detailed description of the country, fully sectionalized, and return unto the commander with their report. They duly performed their task, "The men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities into seven parts in a book, and came again to Joshua to the host at Shiloh." And we are told, "And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD: and there Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel according to their divisions" (18:9-10). The order of their allotments accorded neither with their seniority nor with their numerical strength.

It is to be borne in mind that two and a half of the tribes, namely the Reubenites, the Gaddites, and half of Manasseh, had been assigned their places and portions by Moses on the eastern side of the Jordan (Num 32:33), and in Joshua 13, the boundaries of the same had been carefully defined and stated. After Caleb had put in his lawful claim to mount Hebron, and had been granted the same, the tribes of Judah, Joseph, and the second half of Manasseh were given their allotments, a full enumeration of the places which they were to occupy being furnished in Joshua 15, 16, and 17; at which we have already glanced. What was done for them by Eleazar and Joshua at Gilgal was now done for their fellows at Shiloh. We shall not attempt any detailed examination of their respective territories, for there is little in the geographical description which lends itself to the making of edifying comments thereon. On the other hand, it would be improper for us to ignore the same entirely. We shall therefore content ourselves with an occasional remark thereon.

First, "And the lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up according to their families: and the coast of their lot came forth between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph" (18:11). Two striking predictions had been made concerning this tribe, which, though the one almost appears to clash with the other, were manifestly fulfilled, as the verses now before us, and the subsequent history of this tribe, demonstrate. The earlier one was made by dying Jacob, "Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall

divide the spoil” (Gen 49:27). It is evident from this language that the patriarch followed not his natural inclinations on this occasion, for Benjamin was his youngest and most dearly beloved son. No, it was under divine impulse that he uttered this remarkable prophecy. Yet, it is to be observed that while the wolf is characterized mainly by its ferociousness, it is also marked in its fortitude and courage. Benjamin was indeed the fiercest and most warlike of the tribes. The reference to what he should do “in the morning” and “at night” intimates that there is a distinct reference here to both the earlier and later history of the tribe.

The fierceness and cruelty of the men belonging to this tribe appeared conspicuously in the horrid treatment which they meted out to the Levite’s concubine. Their warlike character and ability and tenacity in fighting were seen in their singly withstanding the combined forces of all the other tribes in two pitched battles, in one of which 20,000 of them defeated the opposing army of 400,000, and later refused to yield until they were almost completely destroyed (Jdg 19:14-30; 20:12-14). King Saul, who so fiercely persecuted David, was of this tribe. Other examples of their fierceness and valour are found in 11 Samuel 2:15-16; 1 Chronicles 8:40; 10:2; 11 Chronicles 17:17. In their later history, Benjamin allied himself to Judah, and thus “divided the spoil,” sharing in their privileges. Esther and Mordecai were also of this tribe, and through them the enemies of Israel were destroyed (Est 7-10). But the most renowned and honourable of them all was Saul of Tarsus (Phi 3:5), and, most remarkably, were the terms of Jacob’s prophecy made good in him. For in the morning of his career, when persecuting the early Christians, he ravened as a wolf, but at the close, by his evangelistic labours, he delivered the devil’s prey.

The later prediction concerning this tribe was made through Moses, “Of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders” (Deu 33:12), which had reference chiefly to the favoured and honoured position or portion which that tribe would occupy. As others before have pointed out, it was here intimated that the temple, in which JEHOVAH would dwell, would be situated within the territory of this tribe. And such was indeed the case, for Jerusalem, the holy city, was in the lot of Benjamin (Jos 18:28). “Though Sion, the city of David, is supposed to belong to Judah, yet mount Moriah, on which the temple was built, was in Benjamin’s lot. God is Himself said to dwell ‘between his shoulders’ because the temple stood on that mount as the head of a man upon his shoulders” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Thus, Benjamin was under the protection of the divine sanctuary, adumbrating the grand truth that “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever” (Psa 125:2).

“The coast of their lot came forth between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph” (Jos 18:11). Herein we behold the gracious ruling of divine providence in arranging for “little Benjamin” (Psa 68:27) to be located between two of the most powerful of the tribes. It is to be observed that in the prophetic benedictions of Moses, that of Benjamin came right after that of Judah and immediately before Joseph’s (Deu 33:7-17)—Levi having no separate portion or lot in Canaan—so that there may be (as frequently in Scripture) a *double* meaning in the words, “He shall dwell between his shoulders” (Deu 33:12)—the place of strength (Isa 9:6) and of security (Luk 15:5). There was also a peculiar propriety in this appointment, for Benjamin was Joseph’s own brother, and later was the tribe which united with Judah in adhering to the throne of David and the temple at Jerusalem. Finally, we see in this arrangement the wisdom of God in the lot, for nothing was more likely to secure a *united Israel* than to make Benjamin the link between the two most powerful and naturally rival tribes—it was through the mutual affection of Judah and Joseph



for Benjamin, as their father's youngest and dearest son, that the brethren were reconciled in Genesis 44:18-45:24.

"And the second lot came forth to Simeon, for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families: and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah" (Jos 19:1). The portion which had been given to Judah was more extensive than was required by that tribe. "It seems that, without murmuring, Judah renounced his claim, at the instance of Joshua and those who had been nominated to the work of dividing the land" (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). This is borne out by what is stated in verse 9, "Out of the portion of the children of Judah was the inheritance of the children of Simeon: for the part of the children of Judah was too much for them therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of them." There were more cities than they could fill, more land than they could cultivate. It is worthy of note that this is the only recorded instance of their portion being too large for any of them. And it is surely significant that it was *Judah's* which proved to be the exception, for it was the tribe from which, according to the flesh, our Lord sprang. Thus, we have here adumbrated that grand truth of the *fullness* of Christ, that in Him there is an abundance of grace, inexhaustible riches available for the saints to draw upon!

It is striking to note that this second lot fulfilled the prophecy of Jacob. He had linked together Simeon and Levi in judgment, who earlier had been united in wickedness (Gen 34:25), saying, as God's mouthpiece, "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel" (Gen 49:5-7). Because of his noble conduct subsequently, the curse upon Levi was revoked and displaced by the blessing of the Lord, and he, who was originally joined to his brother in sin and cruelty, was eventually joined to the Lord in grace and honour, so that there was made with his seed "The covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel" (Num 25:6-13). Nevertheless, the terms of the patriarch's prediction were accomplished, for the Levites had as their portion in Canaan forty-eight cities, which were scattered throughout the inheritance of the other tribes (Num 35:8; Jos 14:4; 21:3). So, too, in the case of Simeon, his descendants received not a separate territory in the promised land, but had their portion within the allotment of Judah, and, as Joshua 19:2-8 shows, the tribe of Simeon was widely "scattered," being dispersed among many different cities.

"And the third lot came up for the children of Zebulun according to their families" (19:10). The part played by Zebulun in the history of the nation was not a prominent one, but though referred to rarely as a tribe, each time that mention *is* made of them, it is of a highly creditable nature. First, we read of them in Judges 5, where Deborah celebrates in song the notable victory over Jabin and Sisera, and recounts the parts played therein by the different tribes. In verse 18, we read, "Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardized their lives unto the death in the high places of the field." In 1 Chronicles 12, where we have enumerated those who "came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him," we are told, "Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: they were not of double heart" (1Ch 12:23, 33). So, too, they were among those who brought a rich supply of provisions for the feast on that occasion (1Ch 12:40).

But that which mainly characterized it was the *maritime* nature of this tribe, for Jacob foretold, "Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be a haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon" (Gen 49:13). Moses also, "And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and Issachar, in thy tents. They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand" (Deu 33:18-19). And so it came to pass, for Joshua 19:11 goes on to say of the lot of

Zebulun, “and their border went up toward the sea”—a statement of seemingly little importance and easily overlooked by the casual reader, yet one which announced the literal fulfilment of prophecies made centuries before. The expressions “thy going out” and “they shall suck of the abundance of the seas” received their accomplishment in their ocean life and trading in foreign parts.

But that which is of interest to the Christian in connection with Zebulun’s portion is the honourable place which it receives in the New Testament, for if the character of the people was praiseworthy, even more notable was the *position* they occupied in Palestine. Matthew 4:15-16 informs us that “the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali” (which adjoined it) was none other than “Galilee of the Gentiles,” concerning which it is said, “The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.” Nazareth, where the Saviour spent so much of His time when He tabernacled here among men, was in its borders, and it was also on the shores of its sea that He did so much of His preaching and wrought so many miracles. Well might the voice of prophecy bid Zebulun “Rejoice” (Deu 33:18). Therein also we may perceive the deeper and spiritual allusion in the words, “Rejoice in thy going out....They shall call the people unto the mountain” (Deu 33:19), i.e., the kingdom of the Messiah (Isa 2:2), which was done by the preaching of Christ and His *apostles*—which means those who *go out*. It is remarkable that, with the lone exception of Judas, all of the twelve apostles were men of Galilee! Zebulun was also “for a haven” (Gen 49:13), and it was in its borders that Joseph and Mary, with the Christ child, found a haven after their return from Egypt (Mat 2:22), and it afforded Him shelter when the Jews sought to kill Him in Judea (Joh 7:1).

“And the fourth lot came out to Issachar” (19:17). Since this tribe was united with Zebulun in blessing (Deu 33:18-19), there is the less need for us to offer separate remarks thereon. The “in their tents” was in apposition to the “ships.” They would be a pastoral people rather than a sea-going one, cultivating the land. Their inheritance was the fertile plain of Jezreel, with its surrounding hills and valleys, afterwards known as lower Galilee—it extended from Carmel to the Jordan and in breadth to mount Tabor. Shunem (2Ki 4:8, etc.) was one of its cities, and Naboth’s vineyard was within its lot. Matthew Henry pointed out how that we may see both the sovereignty and the wisdom of divine providence in appointing not only the bounds of men’s habitations, “but their several employments for the good of the public; as each member of the body is situated and qualified for the service of the whole. Some are disposed to live in cities, some in the countryside, others in sea-ports. The genius of some leads them to the pen, some to trading, others to mechanics. ‘If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?’” (1Co 12:17).

“And the fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher” (19:24). It was pointed out in the opening paragraph that the order in which the tribes are here mentioned is not that of seniority. Rather is it a spiritual one, according to the meaning of their names as given in Genesis. Benjamin signifies “the son of the right hand” (35:18), Simeon “hearing” (29:33), Zebulun “dwelling” (30:20), Issachar “hire” or “reward” (30:18), Asher “happy” (30:13), Naphtali “wrestling” (30:8), Dan “judging” (30:6). Combined we get: The son of the right hand (the place of honour and power) is the hearing one (the new birth precedes believing!), dwelling (no longer tossed about like the restless sea) in Christ; great is his reward, for he is happy or blessed. Such a one is marked by wrestling against (instead of submitting to) the powers of evil, and by unsparingly judging himself. And of what does the happiness of the spiritual Asher consist? The meanings (taken from Young’s concordance) of the towns mentioned in 19:25-26 (omitting the second, “Hali,” which is unknown), are: portion, height, dedicated, the king’s oak (strength and durability), a station, depression (mourning for sin), fruitful place, glass river (Rev 22:1).

“And the sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali” (19:32). This is also of most interest to us because of its New Testament connections. Its territory adjoined that of Zebulun (Mat 4:13), yet each had its own distinct interest. Jacob likened Naphtali to “a hind let loose” and foretold, “He giveth goodly words” (Gen 49:21). While Moses spoke of him as “full with the blessing of the LORD” (Deu 33:23). In the title to Psalm 22, our Lord is likened to “The hind of the morning,” because of His swiftness to do His Father’s will and work. The cities of Capernaum and Bethsaida were in the borders of Naphtali, which were indeed filled with the blessing of the Lord, for it was there that Christ and His apostles did most of their preaching and gave forth “goodly words.”

“And the seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan” (19:40). Genesis 30:1-6 records his lowly origin. As this tribe brought up the rear of the congregation when they were on the march, so they were the last to receive their inheritance. Jacob likened Dan to a serpent. Moses to a “lion’s whelp.” Samson was of this tribe, and in him both characters were combined. Dan was the first tribe to fall into idolatry (Jdg 18:30), and apparently remained in that awful condition for centuries, for we find the apostate king Jeroboam setting up his golden calves in Bethel and Dan (1Ki 12:28-29, cf. 2Ki 10:29).

“When they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts, the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun among them: according to the word of the LORD they gave him the city which he asked, Timnath-serah in mount Ephraim: and he built the city, and dwelt therein” (19:49-50). Blessed is it to see that, though the greatest and boldest among them, the one who had led Israel to the conquest of Canaan, instead of seeking first his own portion, he waited till all had received theirs. Thus did he put the public good before his private interests, seeking theirs and not his own. “Our Lord Jesus thus came and dwelt among us, not in pomp, but in poverty, providing rest for us, yet Himself not having where to lay His head” (Matthew Henry). Nor did Joshua seize his portion as a right, but, like his grand Antitype, “asked” for it (Psa 2:8). And as Christ built the Church and indwells it, so Joshua built his city.

# THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

## 13. Conclusion

The entrance of evil into the domain of God is admittedly a deep mystery, nevertheless, sufficient is revealed in the Scriptures to prevent our forming erroneous views thereon. For instance, it is flatly contrary to the Word of truth to entertain the notion that either the fall of Satan and his angels or that of our first parents took God by surprise, or wrecked His plans. From all eternity, God designed that this earth should be the stage on which He would display His perfections in creation, in providence, and in redemption (1Co 4:9). Accordingly, He foreordained everything which comes to pass in this scene (Act 15:18; Rom 11:36; Eph 1:11). God is no idle spectator, looking on from a far-distant world at the happenings of this earth, but is Himself ordering and shaping everything to the ultimate promotion of His glory—not only in spite of the

opposition of men and Satan, but by means of them, everything being made to serve His purpose. Nor did the introduction of evil into the universe take place simply by the bare permission of the Most High, for nothing can come to pass that is contrary to His decretive will. Rather must we believe that, for wise and holy reasons, God foreordained to suffer His mutable creatures to fall, and thereby afford an occasion for Him to make a further and fuller exhibition of His attributes.

From *God's* standpoint, the result of Adam's probation was left in no uncertainty. Before He formed him out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, He knew exactly how the appointed testing of him would eventuate. But more—He had *decreed* that he should eat of the forbidden fruit. That is certain from 1 Peter 1:19-20, which tells us that the shedding of Christ's blood was verily "foreordained before the foundation of the world" (cf. Rev 13:8). As Herman Witsius (1636-1708) rightly affirmed of Adam's sin, "If foreknown, it was also predestinated. Thus Peter joins together 'the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God'" (Act 2:23). In full harmony with that fact, it is to be remembered that it was God Himself who placed in Eden the tree of the knowledge of good and evil! Moreover, as the celebrated Moderator of the Westminster Assembly asked, "Did not the devil provoke Eve and Adam to sin against God in paradise? Could not God have kept the devil off? Why did He not? Doth it not manifestly appear that it was God's will to have them tempted, to have them provoked unto sin? And why not?" (W. Twisse, 1653). God overruled it unto a higher manifestation of His glory. Just as without night, we could not admire the beauty of day, sin was necessary as a dark background on which the divine grace and mercy should shine forth the more resplendently (Rom 5:20).

It has been asserted, most dogmatically, by Romanists and Arminians, that God would not have prevented the fall of our first parents without reducing them to mere machines. It is argued that since the Creator endowed man with a free will, he must be left entirely to his own volitions—that he cannot be coerced, still less compelled, without destroying his moral agency. That may sound to be good reasoning, yet it is refuted by Holy Writ! God declared unto Abimelech concerning Abraham's wife, "I also withheld thee from sinning against me, therefore suffered I thee not to touch her" (Gen 20:6). Thus it is very plain that it is *not impossible* for God to exert His power upon man without destroying his responsibility, for *there* is a case in point where He restricted man's freedom to do evil and prevented him from committing sin. In like manner, He *prevented Balaam* from carrying out the wicked desires of his heart (Num 22:38; 23:2, 20); yea, He prevented kingdoms from making war upon Jehoshaphat (2Ch 17:10). Why, then, did not God exert His power and prevent Adam and Eve from sinning? Because their fall the better served His own wise and blessed designs.

But does that make God the Author of sin? The culpable Author, no, for as Johannes Piscator (1546-1625) long ago pointed out, "Culpability is a failing to do what ought to be done." Clearly, it was the divine will that sin should enter this world, or it had not done so, for not only had God the power to prevent the same, but nothing ever comes to pass save what He has decreed. "Though God's decree made Adam's fall infallibly necessary *as to the event*, yet not by way of efficiency, or by force and compulsion on the will" (J. Gill). Nor did God's decree in any wise excuse the wickedness of our first parents, or exempt them from punishment. They were left entirely free to the exercise of their nature, and therefore, fully accountable and blameworthy for their actions. While the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the solicitations of the serpent to eat thereof were *the occasions* of their sinning, yet they were *not the cause* thereof—that lay in their voluntarily ceasing to be in subjection to the will of their Maker and rightful Lord. God is not the efficient Author of the sins of men as He is of whatever works of holiness they perform.

That God decreed sin should enter this world was a secret hid in Himself. Of it, our first parents knew nothing, and that made all the difference so far as their responsibility was concerned, for had they been informed of the divine purpose and the certainty of its fulfilment by their actions, the case had been radically altered. They were quite unacquainted with the Creator's secret counsels. What concerned them was God's *revealed* will, and *that* was quite plain. He had forbidden them to eat of a certain tree, and that was enough. But He went farther. The Lord even warned Adam of the dire consequences which should follow his disobedience—death would be the penalty. Thus, transgression on his part was entirely excuseless. God created him morally “upright,” without any bias toward evil. Nor did He inject any evil thought or desire into Eve. No, “God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (Jam 1:13). Instead, when the serpent came and tempted Eve, God caused her to remember His prohibition! Admire, then, the wonderful wisdom of God, for though He had predestinated the fall of our first parents, yet in no sense was He the Instigator or Approver of their sins, and their accountability was left entirely unimpaired.

These two things we must believe if the truth is not to be repudiated—that God has foreordained everything that comes to pass, and that He is in no way blameable for any of man's wickedness—the criminality thereof being wholly his. The decree of God in no wise infringes upon man's moral agency, for it neither forces nor hinders man's will, though it orders and bounds its actions. Both the existence and operations of sin are subservient to the counsels of God's will, yet that lessens not the evil of its nature or the guilt of its committers. “Though He esteemeth not evil to be good, yet He accounteth it good that evil should be” (W. Perkins, 1587). Nevertheless, sin is “that abominable thing” (Jer 44:4) which the Holy One ever hates. In connection with the crucifixion of Christ, there was the agency of God (Joh 19:11; Act 4:27-28), the agency of Satan (Gen 3:13; Luk 22:53), and the agency of men. Yet God neither concurred nor co-operated with the internal actions of their wills, and God charged the latter with the wickedness of their deed (Act 2:23). God overrules evil unto good (Gen 45:8; Psa 76:10), and therefore, He is as truly sovereign over sin and hell as He is over holiness and heaven.

God cannot will or do anything that is wrong. “The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works” (Psa 145:17). He therefore stands in no need whatsoever of vindication by any of His puny creatures. Yet even the finite mind, when illumined by the Spirit of truth, can perceive how that God's admittance of evil into this world provided an occasion for Him to display His ineffable perfections in a manner and to a degree which otherwise He had not, to magnify Himself by bringing a clean thing out of an unclean, and by securing to Himself a revenue of praise from redeemed sinners such as He receives not from the unfallen angels. Horrible and terrible beyond words was the revolt of man against his Maker, and fearful and total the ruin which it brought upon him and all his posterity. Nevertheless, the wisdom of God contrived a way to save a part of the human race in such a manner that He is more glorified therein than in and by all His works of creation and providence, and so that the misery of sinners is made the occasion of their greater happiness. Such is a never-ending wonder.

That way of salvation was determined and defined in the terms of the everlasting covenant of grace. It was one by which each of the divine persons is exceedingly honoured. As the renowned Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) long ago pointed out, “Herein the work of redemption is distinguished from all the other works of God. The attributes of God are glorious in His other works, but the three persons of the Trinity are *distinctly glorified* in no other work as in this of redemption. In this work, every distinct person has His distinct parts and offices assigned Him. Each one has His particular concernment in it agreeably to Their distinct personal properties,

relations, and economical offices. The redeemed have an equal concern with and dependence upon each person in this affair, and owe equal honour and praise to each of Them. The Father appoints and provides the Redeemer, and accepts the price of redemption. The Son is the Redeemer and the price—He redeems by offering up Himself. The Holy Spirit immediately communicates to us the thing purchased. Yea, and He is the good purchased. The sum of what Christ purchased for us is holiness and happiness. Christ was ‘made a curse for us...that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith’ (Gal 3:13-14). The blessedness of the redeemed consists in partaking of Christ’s fullness, which consists in partaking of that Spirit which is not given by measure unto Him. This is the oil that was poured upon the Head of the Church, which ran down to the members of His body (Psa 133:2).”

It is a serious mistake to regard the Lord Jesus as our Saviour to *the excluding* of the saving operations of both the Father and the Spirit. Had not the Father eternally purposed the salvation of His people, chosen them in Christ and bestowed them upon Him, had He not entered into an everlasting compact with Him, commissioned Him to become incarnate, and redeem them, His Beloved had never left heaven in order that He might die, the Just for the unjust. Accordingly, we find that He who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (Joh 3:16) has ascribed unto Him the salvation of the Church, “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). Equally necessary are the operation of the Holy Spirit to actually apply to the hearts of God’s elect the good of what Christ did for them. He it is who convicts of sin and imparts faith to them. Therefore is their salvation also ascribed to Him, “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2Th 2:13). A careful reading of Titus 3:4-6 shows the three Persons acting together in this connection. “God our Saviour” in verse 4 is plainly the Father, and “He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (verse 5), “which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour” (verse 6)—compare the doxology of 11 Corinthians 13:14!

It is very blessed to ponder the many *promises* which the Father made unto and respecting Christ. Upon the Son’s acceptance of the exacting terms of the covenant of grace, the Father agreed to invest Him with a threefold office, thereby authenticating His mission with the broad seal of heaven—to the prophetic (Deu 18:15, 18 and see Act 3:22), to the priestly (Heb 5:5; 6:20), and to the kingly (Jer 23:5; Psa 89:27). Thus Christ did not run without being sent. He promised to furnish and equip the Mediator with a plentiful effusion of the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit (Isa 42:1-2 and see Act 10:38; Mat 12:28). He promised to strengthen Christ, supporting and protecting Him in His execution of the tremendous work of redemption (Isa 42:1, 6; Psa 89:21). His undertaking would be attended with such difficulties that creature power, though unimpaired by sin, would have been quite inadequate for it. Therefore did the Father assure Him of all needed help and succour to carry Him through the opposition and trials He would encounter. Precious it is to mark how the incarnate Son rested upon those promises—Psa 22:10; Isa 49:4-7; Psa 16:1; Isa 50:6-8.

The Father promised to *raise* the Messiah from the dead (Psa 21:8; 102:23-24; Isa 53:10), and most blessed is it to observe how Christ laid hold of the same (Psa 16:8-11). Promise of His *ascension* was also made to Him (Psa 24:3, 7; 68:18; 89:27; Isa 52:13): that too was appropriated by the Saviour while still on earth (Luk 24:26). Having faithfully fulfilled the terms of the covenant, Christ was highly exalted by God, and made to be Lord and Christ (Act 2:36), God seating Him at His own right hand (Heb 10:12). That is an economical lordship, a dispensation

committed to Him as the God-man. The One whom men crowned with thorns, God has crowned with glory and honour. The “government” is upon His shoulder (Isa 9:6).

Christ was assured of a “seed” (Isa 53:10)—His crucifixion must not be regarded as an infamy unto Him, since it was the very means ordained by God whereby He should propagate a numerous spiritual progeny. Unto this He referred in John 12:24. The “seed” promised Christ occupies a prominent place in Psalm 89, see verses 3, 4, 31-36 and cf. 22:30. Thus, from the outset, Christ was assured of the success of His undertaking. As there were two parts to the covenant, so the elect were given to Christ in a twofold manner. As He was to fulfil its terms, they were entrusted to Him as a *charge*; but in fulfilment thereof the Father promised to bestow them upon Him as a *reward*. In the former sense, they are regarded as fallen, and Christ was held responsible for their salvation. They were committed to Him as strayed and lost sheep (Isa 53:6), whom He must seek out and bring into the fold (Joh 10:16). In the latter sense, they are viewed as the fruit of His travail, the trophies of His victory over sin, Satan, and death, as His crown of rejoicing in the day to come (when He shall be “glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe”—2Th 1:10), as the beloved wife of the Lamb.

Finally, God made promise of the *Holy Spirit to Christ*. He rested upon Him during the days of His flesh, anointing Him to preach the Gospel (Isa 61:1) and work miracles (Mat 12:28). But He received the Spirit after another manner (Psa 45:7; Act 2:33) and for a different purpose after His ascension, namely, that the God-man Mediator has been given the *administration* of the Spirit’s activities and operations both worldward in providence and Churchward in grace. John 7:39 and 16:7 make it clear that the Spirit’s advent was dependent upon Christ’s exaltation. That assurance was also appropriated by Christ ere He left this scene. On the point of His departure, He said unto His disciples, “Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you” (Luk 24:49), which was duly accomplished ten days later. In full accord with what has just been pointed out, we hear the Saviour saying from heaven, “These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God” (Rev 3:1)—“hath” to communicate unto His redeemed individually, and to His churches corporately.

The grand design in the Spirit’s descent to this earth is to glorify Christ (Joh 16:14). He is here to witness unto the Saviour’s exaltation, Pentecost being God’s seal upon the Messiahship of Jesus. The Spirit is here to take Christ’s place. That is clear from His own words to the apostles, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (Joh 14:16). Until then the Lord Jesus had been their Comforter, but He was on the eve of returning to heaven. Nevertheless, He graciously assured them, “I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you” (Joh 14:18, marginal rendering)—fulfilled spiritually in the advent of His Deputy. The Spirit is here to further Christ’s cause. The word *Paraclete* (translated “Comforter” in John’s Gospel) is rendered “advocate” at the beginning of the second chapter of his epistle, and an advocate is one who appears as the *representative* of another. The Spirit is here to interpret and vindicate Christ, to administer for Christ in His kingdom and Church. He is here to make good His redeeming purpose, by applying the benefits of His sacrifice unto those in whose behalf it was offered. He is here to endue Christ’s servants (Luk 24:49).

It is of first importance to recognize and realize that the Lord Jesus not only obtained for God’s people redemption from the *penal* consequences of sin, but has also secured their *personal sanctification*. Alas, how little is this emphasized today! In far too many instances, those who think and speak of the “salvation” which Christ has purchased, attach no further idea thereto than that of deliverance from condemnation, *omitting* deliverance from the love, dominion, and power of sin. But the latter is no less essential, and is as definite a blessing as the former. It is just as

necessary for fallen creatures to be delivered from the pollution and moral impotency which they have contracted as it is to be exempted from the penalties which they have incurred. So that when reinstated in the favour of God, they may at the same time be capacitated to love, serve, and enjoy Him for ever. And in this respect also, the divine remedy meets all the requirements of our sinful malady (see 2Co 5:15; Eph 5:25-27; Ti 2:14; Heb 9:14). This is accomplished by the gracious operations of Christ's Spirit—begun in regeneration, continued throughout their earthly lives, consummated in heaven.

Not only is the triune God more honoured by redemption than He was dishonoured by the defection of His creatures, but His people also are *greatly the gainers*. How that too magnifies the divine wisdom! It had been wonderful indeed had they been merely restored to their original estate, but it is far more wonderful that they should be brought to a much higher state of blessedness—that the fall should be the occasion of their exaltation! Their sin deserved eternal woe, yet everlasting bliss is their portion. They are now favoured with a greater manifestation of the glory of God and a fuller discovery of His love than otherwise they would have had, and in those two things their happiness principally consists. They are brought into a much closer and endearing relation to God. They are now not merely holy creatures, but heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. The Son having taken their nature upon Him, they have become His “brethren,” members of His body, yea, His spouse. They are thereby provided with more powerful motives and inducements to love and serve Him than they had in their unfallen condition. The more we apprehend of God's love, the more we love Him in return. Throughout eternity the knowledge of God's love in giving His dear Son to and for us, and Christ's dying in our stead, will fix our hearts upon Him in a manner which His favours to Adam had never done.

Now, it is in *the Gospel* that the wondrous remedy for all our ills is made known. That glorious Gospel proclaims that Christ is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. It tells us that the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. It announces that *sinners*, even the chief of sinners, are the ones that are freely invited to come. It publishes liberty to Satan's captives and the opening of doors to sin's prisoners. It reveals that God has chosen the greatest of sinners to be the everlasting monuments of His mercy. It declares that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses believers from all sin. It furnishes hope to the most hopeless cases. The prodigies which Christ performed on the bodies of men were types of His miracles of grace on sinners' souls. No case was beyond His healing. He not only gave sight to the blind and cleansed the leper, but delivered the demon-possessed and bestowed life on the dead. He never refused a single appeal made to His compassion. Whatever be the reader's record, if he will trust in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, he will be saved, now and for ever.



# THE APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

## Part 4

As it is particularly the Old Testament promises of which dispensationalists would deprive the Christian, a more definite and detailed refutation of this error is now required—coming, as it obviously does, within the compass of our present subject. We will here transcribe what we wrote thereon almost twenty years ago.

1. Since the fall alienated the creature from the Creator, there could be no intercourse between God and men but by some promise on His part. None can challenge anything from the Majesty on high without a warrant from Himself, nor could the conscience be satisfied unless it had a divine grant for any good that we hope for from Him.

2. God will in all ages have His people regulated by His promises, so that they may exercise faith, hope, prayer, dependence upon Himself. He gives them promises so as to test them, whether or not they really trust in and count upon Him.

3. The Medium of the promises is the God-man Mediator, Jesus Christ, for there can be no intercourse between God and us except through the appointed Daysman. In other words, Christ must receive all good for us, and we must have it at second hand from Him.

4. Let the Christian ever be on his guard against contemplating any promise of God apart from Christ. Whether the thing promised, the blessing desired, be temporal or spiritual, we cannot legitimately or truly enjoy it except in and by Christ. Therefore did the apostle remind the Galatians, “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal 3:16). In quoting Genesis 12:3, Paul was not proving, but *affirming*, that God’s promises to Abraham respected not all his natural posterity, but only those of his spiritual children—those united to Christ. All the promises of God to believers are made to Christ, the Surety of the everlasting covenant, and are conveyed from Him to us—both the promises themselves and the things promised. “This is *the* [all-inclusive] promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (1Jo 2:25), and, as 1 John 5:11 tells us, “This life is in his Son”—so grace, and all other benefits. “If I read any of the promises, I found that all and every one contained Christ in their bosom, He Himself being the one great Promise of the Bible. *To Him* they were all first given; *from Him* they derive all their efficacy, sweetness, value, and importance; *by Him* they are brought home to the heart; and *in Him* they are all yea, and amen” (Robert Hawker, 1753-1827).

5. Since all the promises of God are made in Christ, it clearly follows that none of them are available to any who are out of Christ, for to be out of Him is to be out of the favour of God. God cannot look on such a person but as an object of His wrath, as fuel for His vengeance. There is no hope for any man until he be in Christ. But it may be asked, “Does not God bestow any good things on them who are out of Christ, sending His rain upon the unjust, and filling the bellies of the wicked with good things” (Psa 17:14)? Yes, He does indeed. Then, are not those temporal

mercies *blessings*? Certainly not! Far from it! As He says in Malachi 2:2, “I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart” (cf. Deu 28:15-20). Unto the wicked, the temporal mercies of God are like food given to bullocks—it does but “prepare them for the day of slaughter” (Jer 12:3, and cf. Jam 5:5).

Having presented above a brief outline on the subject of the divine promises, let us now examine a striking, yet little-noticed, expression, namely, “the children of the promise” (Rom 9:8). In the context, the apostle discusses God’s casting of the Jews and calling of the Gentiles, which was a particularly sore point with the former. After describing the unique privileges enjoyed by Israel as a nation (verses 4 and 5), he points out (verses 6-9) *the difference* there is between them and the antitypical “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16), which he illustrates by the cases of Isaac and Jacob. Though the Jews had rejected the Gospel and had been cast off by God, it must not be supposed that His word had failed of accomplishment (verse 6), for not only had the prophecies concerning the Messiah been fulfilled, but the promise respecting Abraham’s seed was being made good. But it was most important to apprehend aright what or *whom* that “seed” comprised. “For they are not all Israel [spiritually speaking], who are of Israel [naturally]: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (verses 6 and 7).

The Jews erroneously imagined (as modern dispensationalists do) that the promises made to Abraham concerning his seed respected all of his descendants. Their boast was, “We be Abraham’s seed” (Joh 8:33), to which Christ replied, “If ye were Abraham’s children ye would do the works of Abraham” (verse 39 and see Rom 4:12). God’s rejection of Ishmael and Esau was decisive proof that the promises were not made to the natural descendants as such. The selection of Isaac and Jacob showed that the promise was restricted to an elect line. “The children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted [regarded] as the seed. For this is the word of promise. At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son” (Rom 9:8-9). The “children of God” and the “children of the promise” are one and the same, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. As Isaac was born supernaturally, so are all of God’s elect (Joh 1:13). As Isaac, on that account, was heir of the promised blessing, so are Christians (Gal 4:29; 3:29). “Children of the promise” are identical with “the heirs of promise” (Heb 6:17 and cf. Rom 8:17).

God’s promises are made to the *spiritual children* of Abraham (Rom 4:16; Gal 3:7), and none of them can possibly fail of accomplishment. “For all the promises of God in him [namely Christ] are yea, and in him amen” (2Co 1:20). They are deposited in Christ, and in Him they find their affirmation and certification, for He is the sum and substance of them. Inexpressibly blessed is that declaration to the humble-minded child of God—yet a mystery hid from those who are wise in their own conceits. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Rom 8:32). The promises of God are numerous: relating to this life and also that which is to come. They concern our temporal well-being, as well as our spiritual, covering the needs of the body as well as those of the soul. Whatever be their character, not one of them can be made good unto us except in and through and by Him who lived and died for us. The promises which God has given to His people are absolutely sure and trustworthy, for they were made to them in Christ; they are infallibly certain of fulfilment, for they are accomplished through and by Him.

A blessed illustration, yea, exemplification, of what has just been pointed out above is found in Hebrews 8:8-13 and 10:15-17, where the apostle quotes the promises given in Jeremiah 31:31-34. The dispensationalist would object and say that those promises belong to the natural

descendants of Abraham, and are not to us. But Hebrews 10:15 prefaces the citation of those promises by expressly affirming, “Whereof the Holy Spirit is [not “was”] a witness to us.” Those promises extend to Gentile believers also, for they are the assurance of grace founded in Christ, and in Him believing Jews and Gentiles *are one* (Gal 3:26). Before the middle wall of partition was broken down, Gentiles were indeed “strangers unto the covenants of promise” (Eph 2:12), but when that wall was removed, Gentile believers became “fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph 3:6)! As Romans 11 expresses it, they partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree (verse 17)! Those promises in Jeremiah 31 are made not to the Jewish nation as such, but to “the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16), that is to the entire election of grace, and they are made infallibly good unto all of them at the moment of their regeneration by the Spirit.

In the clear light of other New Testament passages, it appears passing strange that anyone who is familiar with the same should deny that God has made this “new covenant” with those who are members of the mystical body of Christ. That Christians *are* partakers of its blessings is plain from 1 Corinthians 11:25, where quotation is made of the Saviour’s words at the institution of His supper, saying, “This cup is the new testament [or “new covenant”] in my blood.” And again by 11 Corinthians 3:6, where the apostle states that God “hath also made us able ministers of the new testament,” or “covenant,” for the same Greek word is used in those passages as in Hebrews 8:8 and 10:16, where it is translated “covenant.” In the very first sermon preached after the new covenant was established, Peter said, “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off,” i.e., the Gentiles (Act 2:39). Ephesians 2:13 qualified by “as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Furthermore, the terms of Jeremiah 31:33-34 *are* most certainly made good unto all believers *today*—God is their covenant God (Heb 13:20), His law is enshrined in their affections (Rom 7:22), they know Him as their God, their iniquities are forgiven.

The Holy Spirit’s statement in 11 Corinthians 7:1, must, for all who bow to the authority of Holy Writ, settle the matter once and for all of the Christian’s right to the Old Testament promises. “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” *Which* promises? Why, those mentioned at the close of the preceding chapter. There we read, “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2Co 6:16). And where had God said this? Why, as far back as Leviticus 26:12, “And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.” That promise was made to the nation of Israel in the days of Moses! And again we read, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2Co 6:17-18), which words are a manifest reference to Jeremiah 31:9 and Hosea 1:9-10.

Now observe very particularly what the Holy Spirit says through Paul concerning those Old Testament promises. First, he says to the New Testament saints, “Having these promises.” He declared that those ancient promises are *theirs*. That they have a personal interest in them and title to them. That they were theirs, not merely in hope, but in hand. Theirs not by mere “accommodation,” but their own actual possession. Theirs to make full use of, to feed upon and enjoy, to delight in and give God thanks for the same. Since Christ Himself be ours, *all things* are ours (1Co 3:22-23). Oh, Christian reader, suffer no man, under pretence of “rightly dividing the word,” to cut you off from, to rob you of, any of “the exceeding great and precious promises” of your Father (2Pe 1:4). If *he* is content to confine himself unto a few of the New Testament

epistles, let him to do so—that is his loss. But allow him not to confine *you* to so narrow a compass. Second, we are hereby taught to use those promises as motives and incentives to the cultivation of personal piety, in the privative work of mortification and the positive duty of practical sanctification.

A striking conclusive proof that the Old Testament promises belong unto present-day saints is found in Hebrews 13:5, where practical use is again made of the same. There Christians are exhorted, “Let your conversation be without covetousness: be content with such things as ye have.” That exhortation is enforced by this gracious consideration: “for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Since the living God be your portion, your heart should rejoice in Him, and all anxiety about the supply of your every need be for ever removed. But what we are now more especially concerned with is the promise here cited, “For he hath said, I will never leave thee,” etc. And to whom was that promise first given? Why, to the one who was about to lead Israel into the land of Canaan—as a reference to Joshua 1:5 shows. Thus, it was made to a particular person on a special occasion, to a general who was to prosecute a great war under the immediate command of God. Facing that demanding ordeal, Joshua received assurance from God that His presence should ever be with him.

But if the believer gives way to unbelief, the devil is very apt to tell him, “That promise belongs not unto you. *You* are not the captain of armies, commissioned by God to overthrow the forces of an enemy. The virtue of that promise ceased when Canaan was conquered and died with him to whom it was made.” Instead, as John Owen (1616-1683) pointed out in his comments on Hebrews 13:5, “To manifest *the sameness* of love that is in all the promises, with their establishment in the one Mediator, and the general concern of believers in every one of them, howsoever and on what occasion given to any, this promise to Joshua is here applied to the condition of the weakest, meanest, and poorest of the saints—to all and every one of them, be their case and condition what it will. And doubtless, believers are not a little wanting in themselves and their own consolation, that they do no more particularly close with those words of truth, grace, and faithfulness, which upon sundry occasions and at divers times have been given out unto the saints of old, even Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and the residue of them, who walked with God in their generation. These things in an especial manner are recorded for *our* consolation.”

Let us now observe closely *the use* which the apostle made of that ancient but ever-living promise. First, he here availed himself of it in order to enforce his exhortation unto Christians to the duties of mortification and sanctification. Second, he draws a logical and practical inference from the same, declaring, “So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb 13:6). Thus, a double conclusion is reached. Such a promise is to inspire all believers with confidence in God’s succour and assistance, and with boldness and courage before men—showing us to what purpose *we* should put the divine pledges. Those conclusions are based upon the character of the Promiser. Because God is infinitely good, faithful, and powerful, and because He changes not, I may trustfully declare with Abraham, “God will provide” (Gen 22:8); with Jonathan, “There is no restraint to the LORD” (1Sa 14:6); with Jehoshaphat, “None is able to withstand him” (2Ch 20:6); with Paul, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31). The abiding presence of the all-sufficient Lord ensures help, and, therefore, any alarm at man’s enmity should be removed from our hearts. My worst enemy can do nothing against me without my Saviour’s permission.

“So that we may boldly say [freely, without hesitating through unbelief], The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb 13:6). Note attentively the change in

number from the plural to the singular, and learn, therefore, that general principles are to be appropriated by us in particular, as general precepts are to be taken by us personally—the Lord Jesus individualized the “Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God” of Deuteronomy 6:16, when assailed by Satan, saying, “It is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Mat 4:7). It is only by taking the divine promises and precepts unto ourselves personally that we can “mix faith” with the same, or make a proper and profitable use of them. It is also to be carefully noted that once more the apostle confirmed his argument by a divine testimony, for the words, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” are not his own, but a quotation of those used by David in Psalm 118:6. Thus again, we are shown that the language of the Old Testament is exactly suited to the cases and circumstances of Christians today, and that it is their right and privilege freely to appropriate the same.

“We may boldly say” just what the Psalmist did when he was sorely pressed. It was during a season of acute distress that David expressed his confidence in the living God, at a time when it looked as though his enemies were on the point of swallowing him up. But viewing the omnipotence of JEHOVAH and contrasting His might with the feebleness of the creature, his heart was strengthened and emboldened. But let the reader clearly perceive what that implied. It means that David turned his mind away from the seen to the unseen. It means that he was regulated by faith, rather than by sight—feelings or reasonings. It means that his heart was occupied with the Almighty. But it means much more. He was occupied with *the relationship* of that omnipotent One unto himself. It means that he recognized and realized the spiritual bond there was between them, so that he could truly and rightly aver, “The LORD is my helper” (Psa 118:7). If He be my God, my Redeemer, my Father, than He may be counted upon to undertake for me when I am sorely oppressed, when my foes threaten to devour me, when my barrel of meal is almost empty. That “my” is the language of faith, and is the conclusion which faith’s assurance draws from the infallible promise of Him that cannot lie.



# October

## LIFT UP

“He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill” (1Sa 2:8). What an amazing stoop of love is that—from His throne in the heaven of heavens, the Lord reaches down to the dunghills of earth that He may deliver those who are in a mean and loathsome estate. Nothing is here ascribed to free will or attributed to the creature. “I will extol thee, O LORD, for thou hast lifted me up” (Psa 30:1). Man is a fallen creature, and so wretched is his plight that he is quite incapable of raising himself. He must be divinely lifted out of that horrible pit into which sin has plunged him. Said the Psalmist, “Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death” (Psa 9:13), and that is the acknowledgment of every regenerate and instructed soul. As one well expressed it, when referring to the extreme misery and helplessness of fallen mankind, “If one good thought would save them from hell, it is wholly out of their power to conceive, much less think it.”

What has been pointed out above was blessedly illustrated by the demon-possessed youth, whose case baffled the apostles, and of whom we are told, “Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up” (Mar 9:27). But 1 Samuel 2:8 tells us of something yet more wonderful than the grace which seeks out filthy objects who are a mass of corruption, making known *how high* it elevates them, “To set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.” God does nothing by halves. He exalts beggars to the status of “dear children.” He takes them into the place of nearness unto Himself. He brings them into union with His dear Son, making them “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17). He takes them out of the miry clay of an unregenerate state and sets them upon the rock. Marvellous transition and exaltation is that! Translated from the most abject condition to the highest possible dignity! Shame is displaced by honour, filthy rags by the robe of righteousness, poverty by the unsearchable riches of Christ.

We rightly marvel at the goodness and power of God in raising us from such depths to such heights, but let us also be awed and solemnized by recalling afresh *the awful price* which had to be paid before that could righteously be done. The abasement of the Son of God was necessary in order to the advancement of vile worms of the earth. He who was rich had to sound the lowest level of poverty before we could be made rich. The Beloved of the Father had to be “lifted up” ere we could be raised—not by an honourable elevation, but by being made an object of shame. The Lord of glory must die in order for hell-deserving sinners to be made alive. “Lifted up” was He upon a convict’s gibbet. Lifted up to be a spectacle of derision to His enemies! Lifted up to be smitten by the hand of divine justice! But also “lifted up” that all men might be drawn unto Him (Joh 12:32)—that is, men of all sorts and conditions, of all nations, of all classes, of all ages.

Lifted up to be the Object of faith, that serpent-bitten victims might look unto Him and be healed (Joh 3:14-15).

And what should be *our response* to the abounding grace of God and the knowledge-passing love of Christ? Why, having tasted and seen that the Lord is good, to delight ourselves in Him, to fix our affections on Him, and set Him “as a seal upon the heart” (Song 8:6). We should be engaged with His perfections and seek closer and more intimate communion with Him. As those who have been supernaturally lifted up, we should do as David, “Unto thee, O LORD, do I *lift up my soul*” (Psa 25:1). That is an act of adoration, for the soul of worship is the worship of the soul. It is the owning of God as the Fountain of our happiness. This is confirmed by, “Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul” (Psa 86:4). That is much more than a lifting of the voice, namely a deep and fervent longing to be moulded according to the divine will. It is only God who can put real gladness into the heart, and if we are to experience a continuation thereof we must be careful to maintain communion with Him.

In order for the continuance of that communion, we have to heed God’s precepts and determine, “My hands also will I lift up *unto thy commandments*, which I have loved” (Psa 119:48). That is the gesture of one who longed to embrace the objects of his desire and esteem, of one who hungered and thirsted after (practical) righteousness. How it rebukes the indifference of many professing Christians toward the divine statutes, and makes manifest the enmity of the carnal mind, which stigmatizes obedience to God’s commandments as “legalism” and “bondage.” It was a resolution unto a determined observance of them, signifying I will put forth my utmost endeavours to obey; and that is ever the case where God’s will is delighted in. This is confirmed by the next clause, “and I will meditate in thy statutes” (Psa 119:48). I will apply my mind to them, thinking out how to heed them in all the details of my life. Knowledge and commendation must terminate in practice—compare James 2:12, “So speak *and do*.” Obedience must be serious and diligent, making it our first concern and labour.

Yet love’s resolution cannot be carried out without the requisite strength, and that has to be sought definitely from above. “Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I *lift up my hands* toward thy holy oracle” (Psa 28:2). The lifting up and spreading abroad of the hands is mentioned frequently in the Old Testament as a posture of prayer, Exodus 9:29, 33; 1 Kings 8:22; Psalm 88:9; 141:2, etc. In the New Testament also, “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1Ti 2:8). It is an attitude of earnest supplication. It is an emphatic expression which imports entire dependence of soul upon God, when all looking to the creature is renounced. It is the act of a beggar imploring alms that he may obtain help and succour. It betokens a sense of need, a seeking the supply of felt wants. It signifies an endeavour to “take hold” of the Lord (Isa 64:7), that we may draw upon His fullness—compare Mark 5:28, 30! It is also an attitude of expectancy, a reaching forth to receive the things promised and asked for.

That we may be better fitted to do so in confidence, faith must be definitely and diligently occupied with its Object. “I will *lift up mine eyes* unto the hills, from whence cometh my help” (Psa 121:1)—those unmovable, durable, unchanging products of God’s hands—themselves the symbols of His immutability and power. We are exhorted, “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth” (Isa 40:26). What we see in creation should ever raise our thoughts to the Creator, and draw out our hearts in homage to Him. “Lift up your eyes to the heavens” (Isa 51:6) and view them, seeing His perfections as they are reflected in them, proclaiming His eternal power and Godhead. Consider

what might and wisdom He must possess, what dazzling light He must dwell in, what glory He must be compassed with. That is the language of assurance, as persons abashed and ashamed cannot look up (Luk 18:13), those who walk with Him exclaim, “Our eyes are unto thee” (2Ch 20:12 and cf. Psa 25:15).

“Wherefore *lift up the hands which hang down*, and [strengthen] the feeble knees” (Heb 12:12). Christians should ever remember that they are fellow members of one body; hence, when those who are comparatively hale and hearty spiritually see some of their brethren or sisters in a feeble and forlorn case, it is both their duty and privilege to extend a helping hand to them. As both Ezekiel 7:16-17 and 21:7 show, hands that hang down and feeble knees are figures of faintheartedness. Because of opposition and persecution, some become dejected, others faint under the chastening rod of God, others become discouraged because of unrealized hopes. But whatever be the cause, when a believer perceives any of his fellows giving way to a spirit of sloth and becoming wearied in well-doing, he should pray for them, set before them an example of faith, courage and cheerfulness, and endeavour to give them a word in season. “Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God” (Isa 35:4). Remind them of the divine faithfulness and sufficiency, quote some of His promises, relate to them some of the gracious dealings and powerful deliverances which you have personally experienced at the Lord’s hand. To those who are groaning under the burden of sin, tell them of the blood and intercession of Christ.

“Cry aloud, spare not, *lift up thy voice* like a trumpet, and show My people their transgressions” (Isa 58:1). That is a word to the preacher, and a most timely one for the present hour. God sees sin in His people, and is displeased therewith. But often they are unwilling to recognize it, and must be shown. The work of ministers is many sided. Tenderness is to be combined with firmness, compassion with boldness, love for souls with concern for God’s glory. They are not only to comfort His people (Isa 42:1), but to “*lift up thy voice like a trumpet*” (Isa 58:1), sound the alarm, spare not hypocrites, put forth thy strength in so doing. Flatter and deceive them not. However unpopular it makes you, exert yourself and make your voice heard in rebuking the worldliness and carnality, the coldness and formality of the saints. There will be no improvement in the pew unless the pulpit once more performs this duty.

## EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

### 34. The Application (2:24)

*“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.”*

In our present verse John proceeded to make what the Puritans were wont to designate the “improvement” of the subject under discussion, by which they did not mean “to better,” but rather to employ to advantage. In present-day language, the apostle made a practical application of what



he had written in verses 18-23. There he had treated of antichrists, and had explained how it was that believers had been preserved from those deceivers: they had received an unction from the Holy One, by which they had obtained the true knowledge of divine and spiritual things. Consequently, he addressed them not as those who were ignorant, but as those who were personally acquainted with the truth. Then, for their fuller information and guidance, he had plainly defined what an antichrist was. Now he made an appeal unto his readers that was based upon the foregoing. In so doing he turned from the false to the true. In the Greek the transition is more marked,<sup>33</sup> for the pronoun “you” is placed at the beginning of the sentence, for the purpose of emphasis:

“Ye therefore what ye have heard from the beginning, in you let it abide: if in you should abide what from the beginning ye heard, also ye in the Son and in the Father shall abide.”

Our present text, then, is an exhortation unto the Lord’s people to persevere in the faith, to part not with the truth, to heed not those who sought to entice them away from it. Thus we see once more that it was John’s aim not only to inform and establish his readers, but also to move them unto the performance of duty. That was the design of all the Epistle writers: urging the saints not to be content with a bare theoretical knowledge of the Gospel, but to seek to get their hearts fired therewith, so that faith and love should be active and the works of holiness produced. They constantly intermingled doctrinal instruction with moral injunctions, so that the saints should be neither barren nor unfruitful in their knowledge of the Lord Jesus. So again in what immediately follows, for John at once passes from exhortation to remind them of the great promise, and then strikes afresh a note of warning. Therein we may perceive the spiritual wisdom of the apostles in holding so carefully the balance of truth, and the admirable example which they have left preachers and writers to follow: to weave together that which illumines the mind *and* that which calls for the action of the will.

“*Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.*” As intimated above in the literal translation of our verse, the words “abide,” “remain,” and “continue” are the same in the original, and, had a uniform rendition been given, the repetition had shown more clearly the deep importance that John attached to this precept—a case where exactness was unwarrantably sacrificed to variety. The expression “let that abide in you” is designedly antithetical to “the truth is not in us” or “in you” (1:8; 2:4), which means far more than that they were ignorant or unacquainted with it, namely that the truth was *not present* as a vital principle in the soul, as an animating force in their lives. It is not sufficient to hear sound preaching and become mentally acquainted with God’s Word: the same must find a permanent lodgment in the heart if we are really to be benefited by it. Human nature being what it is—weak and unstable—there is a real danger of relinquishing the truth under pressure of persecution for the Gospel’s sake, or through being absorbed with the “cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life” (Luk 8:14), and thus being only a thorny-ground hearer; yea, such is certain to be the outcome unless we be divinely preserved—by God’s stirring us up to guard against the same, and by a diligent performance of our duty.

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip,” or as the margin renders it, “run out as leaky vessels” (Heb 2:1). If they do so, the fault is entirely their own, through failing to give the more earnest heed to them. It is by being believed that the Gospel becomes efficacious, and “it cannot be believed unless it is understood; it cannot be understood, unless it be attended to. Truth must be kept

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<sup>33</sup> **marked** – clear; significant.

before the mind in order to its producing an appropriate effect; and how can it be kept before the mind, but by our giving heed to it?" (John Brown, 1722-1787). There needs to be a serious and diligent fixing of the thoughts upon that which we hear, a bowing and bending of the will to yield unto it, a placing of the affections upon it, a bringing of the entire man into conformity with it. Knowledge of the Word must be accompanied by faith therein, obedience thereto, and all other due respects which in any way concern it. Otherwise, it will soon pass out of the mind, like water out of a leaky utensil. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain" (1Co 15:1-2).

*"Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning,"* namely that Gospel which you have embraced and confessed, that Gospel wherein the person and offices, the atoning sacrifice, and justifying righteousness of the God-man Mediator is proclaimed, and wherein the example that He has left His disciples to follow is made known. The Gospel and its ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper contain a full revelation of the same. As Paul declared to the Galatians, "before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently [plainly] set forth crucified among you" (3:1). He is the glorious Object exhibited therein. The Gospel is the chariot in which He rides in His majesty. It is the glass in which He shines forth, by means of which He is seen by the eye of faith, through which His glory is reflected, and by which the adoring beholder is "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2Co 3:18). The excellency, dignity and pre-eminence of His person are there set forth. His fathomless love and abounding grace are there published. His perfect and vicarious obedience, His everlasting righteousness, His cleansing blood, the abiding efficacy of His sacrifice, are expressly declared. His finished work, His blessed victory over the powers of darkness, His triumph over death and the grave, are plainly announced. The Gospel makes known the unsearchable riches of Christ, the glorious inheritance that He purchased for His people, His coming again to take them to be forever with Himself.

*"Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning."* Here we see how the apostle magnified the great ordinance of preaching, by indicating the way in which the good news had been communicated unto them. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17). Christ Himself was anointed to preach the Gospel (Isa 61:1), and commenced His ministry by so doing (Luk 4:21-22). Concerning Him, the Father said, "Hear ye him" (Mat 17:5). When He had completed His ministry, He committed the same work unto His ambassadors, saying, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mar 16:15), and ever since it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1Co 1:21). Now it is a very great favour to hear the Gospel proclaimed, to sit under the ministry of one who exalts the Son of God as the sole and all-sufficient Saviour of sinners. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance" (Psa 89:15); whereas those who know it not sit in darkness and in the region of the shadow of death (Mat 4:16). Still better is it to know it in the heart and understand the reality of it. But best of all: for us to abide in the acknowledgment of the truth and for it to abide in us as a regulating principle.

Every privilege carries with it a corresponding obligation, and therefore those who treat the Gospel lightly incur deeper guilt. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luk 12:48). Solemn indeed is the case of those who hear sermon after sermon that faithfully and searchingly warns them of the wrath to come and bids them flee from the same, yet regard them as no more to be remembered than ordinary discourses. Parlous<sup>34</sup> the condition of all

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<sup>34</sup> parlous – dangerous; perilous; risky.

who listen to the preaching of God's Word merely as a tale that is told, to be no more affected and influenced by it, to go on in their giddy way, as though they had never heard it; to lay aside all thoughts of it as that which little concerns them; to stifle convictions, withstand reproofs, neglect exhortations, refuse the duties enjoined, reject the offers made, and continue in the very sins they hear reproofed. Such close their ears to the truth, shut Christ out of their hearts, are possessed of Satan, and heap to themselves wrath against the day of wrath. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven" (Heb 12:25).

Then "let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning." Of Lydia we are told, "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (Act 16:14). She not only listened to but gave heed unto the same, with readiness and resolution. In due proportion to our valuation of the truth will be our earnestness and efforts to make it our own. "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God" (Pro 2:3-5). Silver and gold lie not on the surface of the ground to be picked up by any lazy person, but can be reached and secured only by hard work and persevering toil. Likewise, in order to learn God's will as He has revealed it, the Scriptures must be searched (Joh 5:39), searched daily (Act 17:11), one part carefully compared with another (1Co 2:13). And in order for that Word to quicken, govern, and make us fruitful, it has to be prayed over, meditated upon day and night (Psa 1:2-3), made the food of the soul (Jer 15:16), and put into practice (Jam 1:22), and thereby are we "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2Ti 3:17).

This exhortation, "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning," is no casual or trivial one, but one that in varied language occurs and recurs throughout the Scriptures. "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life" (Deu 4:9, and cf. verse 23; 8:11). "Let thine heart retain my words...Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth." "Take fast hold of instruction: let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life" (Pro 4:4, 5, 13): that "Take fast hold of" implies that there must be deep interest, determination of purpose, perseverance of effort. "My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart" (Pro 4:20-21), yes, "in the midst of thine heart" and not merely on the threshold of it; there only will it be operative, for "out of the heart are the issues of life."

"Let these sayings sink down into your ears" (Luk 9:44), by storing them in your memory and ruminating on the same, which is what the mother of our Lord did: "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (Luk 2:19). That was in sharp and blessed contrast with the rocky-ground hearers, who though they "receive the word with joy" yet "have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luk 8:13). It is not enough to believe or receive the truth: it must have a permanent place in the soul. As Paul informed the Colossians, Christ would yet present them unblamable and unreprouvable to the Father: "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (1:23). In order thereto we need to make the Gospel our constant study, to become thoroughly acquainted with the Scriptures, and cordially assent to them, to receive the truth in the love of it, to feed daily thereon, so that our judgments are formed by its teaching, our hearts cast into the mould of it, our consciences directed by it. Thereby shall we be enriched with true spiritual wisdom and knowledge, and be enabled to walk acceptably before God and adorn the doctrine we profess.

*“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.”* The “therefore” has in view what the apostle treated of in verses 18-23, and points a solemn warning, as well as presses an urgent duty. Alas, the majority of professing Christians have nothing more than a few notions floating about in their heads, and consequently they are easily swayed by any plausible deceiver, carried hither and thither by every wind that blows, tossed about like a ship with no ballast in its hold. It is not by deliberate *intention* that so many depart from the faith and give heed to seducing spirits, but through *inattention* to what they heard at the beginning, because of their indolence and failure to make the truth their own. The seed that remains on the surface of the ground is quickly devoured by the fowls of the air; only as it becomes “the engrafted word” is it able to save our souls (Jam 1:21). And in order thereto we must be able to say with David, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psa 119:11). Only as God’s Word is stored and treasured in the heart will the heart be preserved from apostasy.

*“Let that therefore abide in you”* as a peculiar treasure, as a welcome guest, as your guide by day and companion by night. Imbibe it as the dry ground does the refreshing showers. Yield your entire being to its sway, so that it nourishes your soul, enlightens your understanding, purifies your affections, regulates your will. Let it so abide in you that it is reduced to practice. Let it abide in you by the exercise of faith, by constant contemplation, by affectionate esteem. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Col 3:16). The word “dwell” there means “to keep house,” to have authority over its arrangements, as having the right to control. We are to be governed by it, to receive our instructions and directions from it. The word “richly” signifies “largely,” as a whole, in its utmost compass; in contrast with sparsely or fragmentally. Make it your food and drink, your sustenance and strength, your comfort and joy: only by so doing will it have its proper influence over you. Then will the Word abide in you not merely as a fact in the brain, but as that which is actually realized in your experience.

*“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.”* The second clause conveys a double idea. *First*, it is an exhortation having the same force as that of Revelation 3:11, “Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown,” or shame you by despoiling you of your spiritual glory. You need to be constantly awake and on the alert, for the devil will seek to rob your soul of that which is more precious than gold or rubies. If, in view of the fact that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived,” Timothy needed the injunction, “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of” (2Ti 3:14), much more so do the writer and the reader. Having bought the truth, sell it not. Our adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour (1Pe 5:8); but every believer ought to be able to say, “by the word of thy lips I have kept *me* from the paths of the destroyer” (Psa 17:4). But in order thereto he must store up that Word in his mind, in his affections, in his conscience, so that it is ever ready to hand when needed—as in the case of our Lord when tempted of Satan.

*Second*, this exhortation imports,<sup>35</sup> Forsake not for any novelties those things you heard at the beginning and which were blessed to your conversion. Be not like the Athenians, who “spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (Act 17:21); but rather “ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jer 6:16). Of old God complained that false prophets caused His people “to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up” by His appointment (Jer 18:15). So too He foretold that a day would come in this Christian era “when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2Ti

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<sup>35</sup> **imports** – means; signifies.

4:3). It was because of this evil tendency that we find the apostles went about “confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith” (Act 14:22). “Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning” means, Give it not up for any new doctrine propagated by antichrists, but cherish the truth and incorporate it into your life. Spiritual progress, or growth in grace, does not mean that you will ever outgrow the Gospel, yet how many come to despise foundational truth and prefer human speculations on prophecy!

*“If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.”* There is much difference of opinion among the commentators as to whether the “if” should be regarded as a conditional or a declaratory one; personally, we consider it is both. That it is conditional is clear from the verb employed in the last clause: it is not “if that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also do continue in the Son,” but “ye also shall” do so—providing you meet the required stipulation the latter will follow. In other words, the truth remaining and operating in the soul as a vital principle, exerting a practical power in the life, is the means of maintaining communion with the Son and the Father. As there can be no knowledge of Christ except *through* or *by means of* the Gospel, so there can be no fellowship with Him but by believingly and adoringly cleaving to the Gospel. As Christ will not walk with those who pursue a course of self-will, neither will He have any concord with one who gives ear to His enemies and treads the path of error. Only by faith in and obedience to the Word is preserved our experiential union with the Lord.

On the other hand, in view of the context, it is equally plain that the “if” of our present verse is evidential or demonstrative. Speaking of some who had apostatized from the faith John declared, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us” (verse 19): it was the turning of their backs upon the truth which made it manifest that they never had any vital union with Christ. So too taught the Lord Himself: unto those who professed to believe in Him, He said: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed” (Joh 8:31); that is, your perseverance in the faith will demonstrate you to be such in truth—not that they became His disciples by so doing, but that they supplied evidence that they were such as He owned. And again, He averred: “If a man love me, he will keep my words” (Joh 14:23), for true love ever endeavours to please its object. If there be no keeping of His words, no cleaving fast to His Gospel, no walking according to His precepts, no living upon His promises, then the claim to love Him is a false one. Thus steadfastness in the faith and obedience are the marks of our saving oneness with the Son.

*“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.”* That clearly presupposes that they had previously received the truth in the love of it, but that they are exhorted to fix and fasten the same “as a nail in a sure place”—by mixing faith therewith, setting their affections upon it and delighting therein. That which you received at the time of your conversion concerning the person, work, and salvation of Christ, must be the touchstone by which all that you hear and read is to be tested. Great will be the benefits from so doing: thereby you will be fortified against false teachers. As one pithily put it, “Revise the old Gospel and you devise another.” We must reserve for the opening paragraphs of the next chapter a further remark on the last half of our verse.

# THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

## 86. Type and Antitype

In Numbers 34:17, we learn that JEHOVAH gave orders, “These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you: Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun,” and, as we have seen, that divine commandment was duly obeyed (Jos 14:1). The careful student will observe that in 17:4; 19:51; and 21:1, mention is again made of “Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun.” The repeated reference to these two men in a book which is so rich in its typical teaching, and especially since the order of mentioning their names varies not—Eleazar being mentioned before Joshua in each case—intimates that this is a detail which calls for our careful consideration. Even on the surface, the spiritual significance is apparent—Joshua alone, as the one appointed by God to be the commander and leader of His people, was not sufficient to portray the fullness of the blessed truth foreshadowed in this section of the Word—he must be supplemented by the presence of the high priest. It is in the conjoint persons and combined actions of both together that we have the complete shadowing forth of the offices and functions which were united in the Lord Jesus Christ. Reference was made to this in the twenty-third and twenty-fourth articles of this series, and we must now fulfil the promise made there of amplifying the same.

As we pointed out when pondering the early chapters of this book, a prominent place was given unto *the priests* as they bore the sacred “ark of the covenant” in connection with the crossing of the Jordan and the capture of Jericho (Jos 3:6, 6:4). Therein, we are shown the nation of Israel in its primary relation to God. In the central books of the Pentateuch, we learn of the order of things which the Lord established among His people, and the revelation of His will through Moses, who was alike the divinely appointed commander and mediator, while Aaron was His and their high priest. As his immediate successor, that relationship was reaffirmed at the beginning of Joshua’s public career, “As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee” (Jos 1:5), and, in addition thereto, there was the necessary continuance of the Levitical priesthood in Israel’s midst, for the service connected with the ark and the worship of the tabernacle, which neither Joshua nor his men of war were suffered to touch. Each of those great functionaries held their respective appointments directly from the Lord, and the two, in inseparable conjunction, whether in the divine sanctuary or the camp of Israel, executed the declared will of JEHOVAH and maintained His majesty and holiness as well as His grace and mercy.

On the one hand, the tabernacle and the priesthood was the divinely appointed way for them to approach the Most High as worshippers. On the other hand, the ark of the covenant was the visible symbol of JEHOVAH’s presence with His people in the sight of all their enemies (1Sa 4:4-7). As Moses and Aaron had been inseparable in their ministrations at the exodus from Egypt and in the wilderness, so both the priest and the captain were required at the door of the tabernacle in Shiloh for the settlement of the twelve tribes in the promised land. To repeat what we said earlier, not only were those two orders and services established by God at the beginning (hinted at in Exodus 4:14-15), but upon the death of Aaron, Moses stripped him of his garments and in the sight of all the congregation put them on Eleazar his son (Num 20:27-28). So too, as

the death of Moses approached, he besought the Lord to “set a man *over* the congregation,” and he was bidden to take Joshua and “lay thine hand upon him [the symbol of identification]; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight” (Num 27:16-19). The connection and contrast between them was intimated thus, “And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in” (verse 21).

It has been more or less generally recognized that Joshua was (as his very name intimates) one of the outstanding Old Testament characters who in many respects foreshadowed the Lord Jesus. But it has been perceived by very few that Eleazar was a type of Him in the exercise of His sacerdotal office, and that the two must be viewed in conjunction in order to contemplate the completeness of their joint administrations. That should at once be apparent from their immediate predecessors, for we require to join together Moses and Aaron in order to obtain the divinely designed prefiguration of Him who was both “the Apostle and the High Priest of our profession. Christ Jesus” (Heb 3:1). Thus it was also with Eleazar and Joshua, so often seen together in this book. So too, the priests with the ark of the covenant, as well as Eleazar and the tabernacle at Shiloh, have a more prominent place in this portion of the Scriptures than is commonly recognized, and which not a few would find difficult to apply unto Christians. And still more difficult were they to attempt to trace the parallel between the book of Joshua and the Pauline epistles. Yet the parallel, a most real and blessed one, *is* to be found there, as another before us has shown.

The key to the spiritual application unto Christians of so much that is found in the Old Testament lies in recognizing that the history of Israel, from their deliverance from the house of bondage to their establishment in the land, was a *typical* one. The two great crises in their history occurred at the Red Sea and the Jordan, between which there is both a comparison and a contrast. In connection with the former, Israel neither left twelve stones in its bed nor took twelve out with them unto the other side—as they *did* on the latter occasion (Jos 4:9, 20). Instead, Pharaoh and his captains, with their horses and chariots, lay dead at the bottom of the sea, as a witness that the mighty power of the enemy, which held Israel captive in Egypt, had been overthrown and that the depths covered them. “But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on the left” (Exo 14:28-29). Thus, the Lord saved them that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, whom they saw dead upon the shore; while He put a song in their mouths, saying, “The LORD hath triumphed gloriously” (Exo 15:1).

The Red Sea then was a memorial between JEHOVAH and His people, that the antagonistic power, which held them captive and refused to let them go, had been broken in pieces. But at the Jordan, there was overthrown an opposing power of the enemy that refused to let the people enter into their inheritance. It is in these two ways particularly that we need to be constantly upon our watch against the devil. At the Red Sea, God brought Israel unto Himself and taught them redemption by power—His right hand having dashed in pieces the enemy. But at the Jordan, a further lesson was taught them, namely, that the people thus brought to God must pass through *their own* death and resurrection—figured by the twelve stones left *in* the river and the twelve stones taken *out* and placed on the other side. They were to begin a fresh chapter in their history, with the Ark of the Covenant, with their new circumcision at Gilgal, with Joshua and the Passover, and the captain of the Lord’s host with the drawn sword. In contrast with Pharaoh and his hosts at the Red Sea, no Canaanites were in the Jordan, nor was a single foe overthrown there, but it was sanctified to the Lord and to Israel by the priests and the Ark of the Covenant for glory and victory.

Now, it is most important and blessed for us to see that the epistles of Paul take up the types from Exodus and Joshua and show how the substance of them is realized in Christ for all believers. The former is developed in Romans, where their spiritual deliverance and eternal redemption—adumbrated at the Red Sea—are fully set forth. So too, the fulfilment of what was prefigured at the Jordan—the Christian’s *own* (legal) death and resurrection, by virtue of his federal oneness with the Surety—are declared in Ephesians and Colossians. While the tabernacle at Shiloh in the land of Canaan and Eleazar the high priest find their similitudes throughout that wondrous epistle to the Hebrews, where we behold our great High Priest ministering within the veil, maintaining the relationship of God with His redeemed below, on the ground of His all-sufficient sacrifice for sin. As the tabernacle with its priesthood was necessary for Israel in Joshua’s day for the enforcing of God’s holiness and to provide a way of approach unto Himself, so the priestly ministry of Christ on high is indispensable for upholding the requirements of God’s throne, and giving access thereto to those who are made partakers of the heavenly calling.

Three objects are outstandingly prominent in the book of Joshua. First, Joshua himself, as the commander of Israel, the divinely appointed captain over them. Second, the ark of the covenant, which was not only the witness of JEHOVAH’s presence in the midst of His people, but also the symbol of His relations with them. Third, the person and functions of Eleazar, the high priest. In connection with the second, there is a most striking word in Numbers 10:33, “and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them in the three days’ journey, to search out *a resting place* for them.” That is the key passage, and it should be carefully borne in mind when reading the early chapters of our present book. It had reference to Israel’s journey across the wilderness, but was indicative and anticipative of what took place upon their entrance into Canaan. The appellation there given to the sacred coffer is to be carefully noted, namely, “the ark of *the* covenant of the LORD.” Thus, it was the visible emblem and reminder of His peculiar relationship to them.

Accordingly, we find that, in connection with the crossing of the Jordan and Israel’s entrance into the promised land, God gave express orders to Joshua, “Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people” (Jos 3:6), and then Joshua said unto the people, “Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD *your* God....Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites....Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan” (Jos 3:9-11). Thus, every eye of the congregation was fixed upon the ark of the covenant of the Lord their God, who had gone before them to find a resting place for them (cf. 2Ch 6:41-42), and an inheritance worthy of Himself, for them to share His delights with His chosen people. Before the ark, the waters “stood and rose up upon an heap,” so that “all the Israelites passed over on dry ground” (Jos 3:16-17). What anointed eye can fail to see here that blessed One whom the ark ever foreshadowed—Him who declared, “When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth *before* them,” “I go to prepare *a place* for you,” and “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am” (Joh 10:4; 14:2; 17:24)? As the all-sufficient One, Christ has gone before His people to prepare a place for them in the Canaan above.

That ark of the covenant wondrously foreshadowed the Lord Jesus. The two materials of which it was composed, namely the shittim wood and gold, pointed to the duality of His person—His incorruptible humanity and His glorious deity. Its wondrous contents (described in Hebrews 9:4) tell of the provisions which God has made for His people in Christ while they are journeying through the wilderness. First, “the golden pot that had manna” speaks of Him as the Bread of life, the food of His pilgrim people. Second, “Aaron’s rod that budded” pointed to Christ’s



resurrection and the life which we have in Him. Third, the two tables of stone, on which were written the Ten Commandments, placed within the ark for safe custody, announce that the law was fully realized in Christ, who kept it perfectly in thought and word and deed, His obedience being reckoned to the account of each one who believes in Him. Likewise, its dimensions, its staves and rings, coverings, names, career, and, above all, the place of supreme honour assigned it in the holy of holies, all pointed to spiritual realities which are found in Him who came forth from God, full of grace and truth, to tabernacle among men, and to provide an eternal resting place for His people.

And where in the Epistles do we find the Holy Spirit setting before us the substance of those shadows? Where but in *the Hebrews*? It opens with the grand announcement that God, who in time past fragmentally declared His mind through the prophets, is now fully and finally revealed in and by His Son. It then goes on to describe the divine perfections of the God-man Mediator, whom God has appointed to be Heir of all things, He being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person. Before mention is made of the angels, Moses, Aaron or Melchizedek, there is presented to our view the One by whom the worlds were made, who upholds all things by the word of His power, and who is set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb 1). There we have, unmistakably, the antitype of what was adumbrated not only in Joshua 3, but again in the sixth chapter, which also tells of the prominent and honourable place which was accorded the ark—designated “His glory” in 1 Samuel 4:22 and cf. Psalm 78:61—as it was borne by the priests in front of Israel’s armed men as they encompassed the walls of Jericho.

If the first chapter of Hebrews exhibits the “gold” or the divine perfections of Him who is the antitypical ark, equally so does the second chapter display its “wood” or the nature and reality of His humanity. For there we read of the Son being made a little lower than the angels, of His becoming partaker of flesh and blood, of His being made in all things like unto His brethren, of His being tempted and suffering. But more. Hebrews 2 informs us that He thus voluntarily humbled Himself in order that “*through death* he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” There we behold the solemn fulfilment of what was foreshadowed fifteen hundred years previously—the antitypical ark going down into the Jordan, and that at the time when it “overfloweth all his banks” (Jos 3:15), so that the suffering One cried in anguish, “All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me” (Psa 42:7). And what is the substance of the whole of Hebrews 3 and 4 but a continuous exhortation for the true Israel of God to *follow the ark*, to fix their eyes upon and their hearts steadfastly to cleave unto the One who will lead them into an everlasting rest (Heb 3:1; 6:14; 4:1, 11)?

Not only is it the antitypical ark which is before us in Hebrews, but specifically as “the ark of *the covenant*”—the actual term occurring there no less than seventeen times. The same Greek word is found in all of the following passages, though unhappily our translators used the term “testament” in some of them—we have rendered it uniformly. “Jesus was made a surety of a better covenant” (Heb 7:22). “He is the mediator of a better covenant” (Heb 8:6). Then, we read of “the blood of the covenant wherewith he [the Son of God] was sanctified” (Heb 10:29 and cf. Joh 17:19), yea, “the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb 13:20). While reference is twice made there to “the new covenant” which the Lord makes with His people (Heb 8:10; 10:16), in which He puts His laws into their minds and writes them on their hearts, promises to be a God unto them, brings all to know Him vitally and experientially, is merciful to their unrighteousness and remembers their sins and iniquities no more. As the nation of Israel owed all their temporal blessings unto JEHOVAH’s covenant relationship to them, so do Christians owe all their spiritual

blessings to His covenant relationship unto them. Alas, that covenant truth is so little preached and apprehended today. Nothing is left to chance. Everything is “ordered in all things and sure” (2Sa 23:5) according to that compact of grace which the Father entered into with the Son ere the foundations of the world were laid.

Last, but by no means least, this wondrous epistle to the Hebrews sets forth Christ not only as the Captain of our salvation (Heb 2:10), the antitypical Joshua, but as our “great High Priest” (Heb 4:14), the antitypical Eleazar. As in the book of Joshua, the priest and the priesthood are accorded a most distinguished place—not only in bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, but also in connection with the securing of their inheritance—so in this epistle, the priesthood of Christ is opened up to us as it is nowhere else in the New Testament. What signal honour did God put upon the priesthood when He caused the waters of the Jordan to stand still immediately the priests’ feet touched its brim, and, then, as soon as they stepped on the Canaan shore, the waters returned again to their banks! It was through the high priest that they received the mind of the Lord (Jos 17:4; 21:1), and that Joshua took his orders (Num 27:21). The land was distributed under his supervision (Jos 19:51). And not only does Christ appear no less than fifteen times in His sacerdotal character in Hebrews, but Hebrews 8:1 and 2, announces, “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.”

# THE APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

## Part 5

In these articles, we are seeking to show the use which believers should make of God’s Word. Or more particularly, how that it is both their privilege and their duty to receive *the whole* of it as addressed immediately *unto* themselves, and to turn the same unto practical account, by appropriating its contents to their personal needs. The Bible is a book which calls not so much for the exertion of our intellect as it does for the exercise of our affections, conscience, and will. God has given it to us not for our entertainment, but for our education, to make known what He requires from us. It is to be the traveller’s guide as he journeys through the maze of this world, the mariner’s chart as he sails the sea of life. Therefore, whenever we open the Bible, the all-important consideration for each of us to keep before him is, “What is there here *for me today*? What bearing does the passage now before me have upon my present case and circumstances—what warning, what encouragement, what information? What instruction is there to direct me in the management of my business, to guide me in the ordering of my domestic and social affairs, to promote a closer walking with God?”

I should see myself addressed in every precept, included in every promise. But it is greatly to be feared that, through failure to appropriate God’s Word unto their own case and circumstances, there is much Bible reading and study which is of little or no real benefit to the soul. Nothing else

will secure us from the infections of this world, deliver from the temptations of Satan, and be so effectual a preservative from sin, as the Word of God received into our affections. “The law of his God is *in his heart*; none of his steps shall slide” (Psa 37:31) can only be said of the one who has made personal appropriation of that Law, and is able to aver with the Psalmist, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psa 119:11). Just so long as the truth is actually working in us, influencing us in a practical way, is loved and revered by us, stirs the conscience, are we kept from falling into open sin—as Joseph was preserved when evilly solicited by his master’s wife (Gen 39:9). And only as we personally go out and daily gather our portion of manna, and feed upon the same, will there be strength provided for the performing of duty and the bringing forth of fruit to the glory of God.

Let us take Genesis 17:1 as a simple illustration. “And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect” or “sincere.” *How* is the Christian to apply such a verse *unto himself*? First of all, let him note to whom this signal favour and honour was shown, namely, to him who is the “father of all them that believe” (Rom 4:11, 12, 16)—and he was the first person in the world to whom the Lord is said to have appeared! Second, observe when it was that JEHOVAH appeared unto him, namely, in his old age, when nature’s force was spent and death was written on the flesh. Third, mark attentively the particular character in which the Lord was now revealed to him, “the Almighty God,” or more literally “*El Shaddai*”—“the all-sufficient God.” Fourth, consider the exhortation which accompanied the same, “Walk before me, and be thou sincere.” Fifth, ponder those details in the light of the immediate sequel, God’s making a promise that he should beget a son by Sarah, who was long past the age of child-bearing (Gen 17:15-19). Everything that is *for* God must be effected by His mighty power. He can and must do everything—the flesh profits nothing, no movement of mere nature is of any avail.

Now, as the believer ponders that memorable incident, *hope* should be inspired within him. *El Shaddai* is as truly *his* God as He was Abraham’s! That is clear from 11 Corinthians 7:1, for one of those promises is, “I...will be a Father unto you...saith the Lord *Almighty*” (2Co 6:18), and from Revelation 1:8, where the Lord Jesus says unto the churches, “I am Alpha and Omega...the Almighty.” It is a declaration of His omnipotence, to whom all things are possible. “The all-sufficient God” tells of what He is in Himself—self-existent, independent. And what He is unto His people—the Supplier of their every need. When Christ said to Paul, “My grace *is sufficient* for thee” (2Co 12:9), it was all one with what JEHOVAH said unto Abraham. Doubtless the Lord appeared unto the patriarch in visible (and human) form. He does so to us before the eyes of faith. Often, He is pleased to meet with us in the ordinances of His grace, and send us on our way rejoicing. Sometimes He “manifests” Himself (Joh 14:21) to us in the retirements of privacy. Frequently, He appears *for us* in His providences, showing Himself strong on our behalf. “Now,” says He, “walk before me sincerely” in the believing realization that I am all-sufficient for thee, conscious of My almightiness, and all will be well with thee.

Let us now adduce some of the many *proofs* of the assertions made in our opening sentences, proofs supplied by the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus in the application which They made of the Scriptures. It is very striking indeed to discover that the very first moral commandment which God gave to mankind, namely, that which was to regulate the marriage relationship, was couched in such terms that it comprehended a divine law which is *universally and perpetually* binding. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh” (Gen 2:24)—quoted by Christ in Matthew 19:5. “When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath

found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement” (Deu 24:1). That statute was given in the days of Moses, nevertheless, we find our Lord referring to the same and telling the Pharisees of His day, “For the hardness of your heart he wrote *you* this precept” (Mar 10:5).

The principle for which we are here contending is beautifully illustrated in Psalm 27:8, “When thou saidst, Seek *ye* my face; my heart said unto thee, thy face LORD, will *I* seek.” Thus, he made particular what was general, applying to himself personally what was said to the saints collectively. That is ever the use each of us should make of every part of God’s Word—as we see the Saviour in Matthew 4:7, changing the “*ye*” of Deuteronomy 6:16 to “*thou*.” So again in Acts 1:20, we find Peter, when alluding to the defection of Judas, altering the “let *their* habitation” of Psalm 69:25 to “let *his* habitation be desolate.” That was not taking an undue liberty with Holy Writ, but, instead, making a specific application of what was indefinite.

“Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men: for better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither: than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen” (Pro 25:6-7). Upon which Thomas Scott (1747-1821) justly remarked, “There can be no reasonable doubt but that our Lord referred to those words in His admonition to ambitious guests at the Pharisee’s table (Luk 14:7-11), and was understood to do so. While, therefore, this gives His sanction to the book of Proverbs, it also shows that those maxims may be applied to similar cases, and that we need not confine their interpretation exclusively to the subject which gave rise to the maxims.” Not even the presence of Christ, His holy example, His heavenly instruction, could restrain the strife among His disciples over which should be the greatest. Loving to have the pre-eminence (3Jo 1:9-10) is the bane of godliness in the churches.

“I the LORD have called thee...and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.” “I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth” (Isa 42:6; 49:6). Those words were spoken by the Father unto the Messiah, yet in Acts 13:46-47, we find Paul saying of himself and Barnabas, “Lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded *us*; saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth”! So again in Romans 10:15, we find the apostle was inspired to make application unto Christ’s servant of that which was said immediately of Him, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of *Him* that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace” (Isa 52:7). “How shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of *them* that preach the gospel of peace” (Rom 10:15). “He is near that justifieth me...who is he that shall condemn me? (Isa 50:8-9). The context shows unmistakably that Christ is there the speaker, yet in Romans 8:33-34, the apostle hesitates not to apply those words unto the members of His body, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?”

The unspeakably solemn commission given to Isaiah concerning his apostate generation (Isa 6:9-10) was applied by Christ to the people of His day, saying, “And *in them* is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah” (Mat 13:14-15). Again, in Isaiah 29:13, Isaiah announced that the Lord said, “This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me.” While in Matthew 15:7-8, we find Christ saying to the scribes and Pharisees, “Hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy *of you*, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth,” etc. Even more striking is Christ’s rebuke unto the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection of the body. “Have ye not read that which was *spoken unto you* by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the

dead, but of the living” (Mat 22:31-32). What God spoke immediately to Moses at the burning bush was designed equally for the instruction and comfort of all men unto the end of the world. What the Lord has said unto a particular person, He says unto everyone who is favoured to read His Word. Thus does it concern us to hear and heed the same, for by that Word we shall be judged in the last great day (Joh 12:48).

The fundamental principle for which we are here contending is plainly expressed again by Christ in Mark 13:37, “And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” That exhortation to the apostles is addressed directly to the saints in all generations and places. As John Owen (1616-1683) well said, “The Scriptures speak to every age, every church, every person, not less than to those to whom they were first directed. This sheweth us how we should be affected in reading the Word. We should read it as a letter written by the Lord of grace from heaven, *to us by name*.” If there be any books in the New Testament particularly restricted, it is the “pastoral epistles,” yet the exhortation found in 1 Timothy 2:19 is generalized, “*Let every one* that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” Those who are so fond of restricting God’s Word would say that, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2Ti 2:3) is addressed to the minister of the Gospel, and pertains not to the rank and file of believers. But Ephesians 6:10-17 shows (by necessary implication) that it applies to *all* the saints, for the militant figure is again used, and used there without limitation. The Bullinger school insists that James and Peter—who gave warning of those who in the last time should walk after their own ungodly lusts—wrote to Jewish believers only. But Jude (addressed to all the sanctified) declares they “told *you*” (Jude 1:18).

“Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord” (Heb 12:5). That exhortation is taken from Proverbs 3:11, so that here is further evidence that the precepts of the Old Testament (like its promises) are not restricted unto those who were under the Mosaic economy, but apply with equal directness and force to those under the new covenant. Observe well the tense of the verb “which *speaketh*.” Though written a thousand years previously, Paul did not say “which hath spoken”—the Scriptures are a living Word through which their Author speaks *today*. Note too, “which speaketh *unto you*”—New Testament saints. All that is contained in the book of Proverbs is as truly and as much the Father’s instruction to Christians as the contents of the Pauline epistles. Throughout that book, God addresses us individually as “My son” (Pro 2:1, 3:1; 4:1; 5:1). That exhortation is as urgently needed by believers now as by any who lived in former ages. Though children of God, we are still children of Adam—wilful, proud, independent, requiring to be disciplined, to be under the Father’s rod, to bear it meekly, and to be exercised thereby in our hearts and consciences.

A word now upon *transferred application*, by which we mean giving a literal turn to language which is figurative, or vice versa. Thus, whenever the writer steps on to icy roads, he hesitates not to literalize the prayer, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe” (Psa 119:117). “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety” (Psa 4:8) is to be given its widest latitude, and regarded as both the rest of the body under the protection of Providence and the repose of the soul in the assurance of God’s protecting grace. In 1 Corinthians 8:14, Paul urges that there should be an equality of giving, or a fair distribution of the burden, in the collection being made to relieve the afflicted saints in Jerusalem. That appeal was backed up with, “As it is written, he that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack” (2Co 8:15). That is a reference to the manna gathered by the Israelites (Exo 16:18). Those who gathered the largest quantity had more to give unto the aged and feeble.

So rich Christians should use their surplus to provide for the poor of the flock. But great care needs to be taken lest we clash with the Analogy of the Faith. Thus, “the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker” (2Sa 3:1) certainly does not mean that “the flesh” becomes enervated as the believer grows in grace, for universal Christian experience testifies that indwelling sin rages as vigorously at the end as at the beginning.

A brief word upon *double application*. Whereas preachers should ever be on their guard against taking the children’s bread and casting it to the dogs (Mat 15:26), by applying to the unsaved, promises given to or statements made concerning the saints. On the other hand, they need to remind believers of the *continuous force* of the Scriptures and their present suitability to their cases. For instance, the gracious invitations of Christ, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mat 11:28), and “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (Joh 7:37), must not be limited to our first approach to the Saviour as lost sinners, but as 1 Peter 2:4 says, “to whom coming”—in the present tense. Note too, the “mourn” and not “have mourned” in Matthew 5:4 and “hunger” in verse 6. In like manner, that self-abasing word, “Who maketh thee to differ!” (1Co 4:7) today—first from the unsaved, second from what *we* were before the new birth, and third from other Christians with less grace and gifts? Why, a sovereign God, and, therefore, you have nothing to boast of and no cause for self-glorying.

A word now upon *the Spirit’s application* of the Word unto the heart, and our task is completed. This is described in such a verse as, “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance” (1Th 1:5). That is very much more than having the mind informed or the emotions stirred, and something radically different from being deeply impressed by the preacher’s oratory, earnestness, etc. It is for the preaching of the Gospel to be accompanied by the supernatural operation of the Spirit, and the efficacious grace of God, so that souls are divinely quickened, convicted, converted, delivered from the dominion of sin and Satan. When the Word is applied by the Spirit to a person, it acts like the entrance of a two-edged sword into his inner man, piercing, wounding, slaying his self-complacency and self-righteousness—as in the case of Saul of Tarsus (Rom 7:9-10). This is the “demonstration of the Spirit” (1Co 2:4), whereby He gives proof of the truth by the effects produced in the individual to which it is savingly applied, so that he has “much assurance”—i.e. he *knows* it is *God’s Word* because of the radical and permanent change wrought in him.

Now the child of God is in daily need of this gracious working of the Holy Spirit to make the Word work “effectually” (1Th 2:13) within his soul and truly regulate his life, so that he can thankfully acknowledge, “I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast *quickened me*” (Psa 119:93). For that quickening, it is his duty and privilege to pray (Psa 119:25, 37, 40, 88, 107, 149, etc.). It is a fervent request that he may be “renewed day by day” in the inner man (2Co 4:16), that he may be “strengthened with might by His Spirit” (Eph 3:16), that he may be revived and animated to go in the path of God’s commandments (Psa 119:35). It is an earnest petition that his heart may be awed by a continual sense of God’s majesty, and melted by a realization of His goodness, so that he may see light in God’s light, recognizing the evil in the things forbidden and the blessedness of the things enjoined. “Quicken thou me” is a prayer for vitalizing grace that he may be taught to profit (Isa 48:17), for the increasing of his faith, the strengthening of his expectations, the firing of his zeal. It is equivalent to “Draw me, we will run after thee” (Song 1:4).

# THE DOCTRINE OF MORTIFICATION

## 1. Introduction

What! Yet another series of *doctrinal* articles? Yes, and we offer no apology for the same, for though they will not increase the popularity of this magazine, they should its value. We do not expect them to be widely welcomed, for our lot is cast in a time when the rank and file of professing Christians “will not endure sound doctrine” (2Ti 4:3). Yet, it is to be duly noted that in the verse immediately preceding, the servant of God is enjoined to “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove [carnality and worldliness], rebuke [hypocrites and graceless professors], exhort [unto piety and practical holiness] with all longsuffering [ever bearing in mind the infinite patience of God unto your own dullness and tardiness] and *doctrine*” (2Ti 4:2)—no matter how unfavourably it be received. Like the beloved apostle, let this writer, and every preacher who reads these pages, make it his aim to keep “back nothing that was [is] profitable” (Act 20:20) unto his readers and hearers. Only thus will he faithfully discharge his commission and show himself approved unto his Master.

It is the studied judgment of this writer, and he is by no means alone therein, that *doctrinal preaching* is the most pressing need of the churches today. During the past fifty years, a lot has been said about and much prayer has been made for a God-sent *revival*, but it is to be feared that that term is often used very loosely and unintelligently. Unless we are mistaken, if the question were put, “A ‘revival’ of *what*?”—a considerable variety of answers would be given. Personally, we would say a revival of old-fashioned piety, of practical godliness, of fuller conformity to the holy image of Christ. The “revival” we need is a deliverance from that spiritual apathy and laxity which now characterizes the average Christian, a return to self-denial and closer walking with God, a quickening of our graces, and the becoming more fruitful in the bringing forth of good works. Whether or not Scripture predicts such a revival we know not. Two things we are sure of—that whatever the future may hold for this world, God will maintain a testimony unto Himself (Psa 145:4; Mat 28:20) and preserve a godly seed on earth, until the end of human history (Psa 72:5; Isa 27:3; Mat 16:18). Second, that there must be a return to doctrinal preaching before there will be any improvement in practice.

Both the teaching of God’s Word and the testimony of ecclesiastical history testify clearly to the deep importance and great value of doctrinal instruction, and the lamentable consequences of a prolonged absence of the same. Doctrinal preaching is designed to enlighten the understanding, to instruct the mind, to inform the judgment. It is that which supplies motives to gratitude and furnishes incentives unto good works. There can be no soundness in the Faith if the fundamental articles of the Faith be not known and, in some measure at least, understood. Those fundamental articles are denominated “the first principles of the oracles of God” (Heb 5:12) or basic truths of Scripture, and are absolutely necessary unto salvation. The divine inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures, the ever-blessed Trinity in unity (Joh 17:3), the two natures united in the one person of the Lord Jesus Christ (1Jo 2:22 and 4:3), His finished work and all-sufficient sacrifice (Heb 10:14), the fall, resulting in our lost condition (Luk 19:10), regeneration (Joh 3:3), gratuitous justification (Gal 5:4)—these are some of the principal pillars which support the temple

of truth, and without which it cannot stand. Of old, God complained, “My people are destroyed [cut off] for lack of knowledge” (Hos 4:6), and declared, “Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst” (Isa 5:13). When He promised, “I will give you pastors according to mine heart,” He described the same as those “which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding” (Jer 3:15), and that knowledge is communicated first and foremost by a setting forth of the glorious doctrines of divine revelation. Doctrinal Christianity is both the ground and the motive of practical Christianity, for it is *principle* and not *emotion* or impulse which is the dynamic of the spiritual life. It is *by the truth* that men are illuminated and directed, “O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles” (Psa 43:3). We are saved by a knowledge of the truth (Joh 17:3; 1Ti 2:4), and by faith therein (2Th 2:13). We are made free by the truth (Joh 8:32). We are sanctified by the truth (Joh 17:17). Our growth in grace is determined by our growth in the knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus Christ (2Pe 1:2 and 3:18). It is mercy and truth that preserve us (Psa 61:7; Pro 20:28)—“Understanding shall keep thee” (Pro 2:11).

Pertinently is the inquiry made, “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psa 11:3). The Hebrew word for “foundations” occurs only once more in the Old Testament, namely, in Isaiah 19:10, where it is rendered “and they shall be broken in *the purposes* thereof.” As it is from our purposes that our plans and actions proceed, so it is from the “first principles” of the Word that its secondary truths are derived, and upon them both, precepts are based. “The principles of religion are the foundations on which the faith and hope of the righteous are built” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). While those foundations cannot be totally and finally removed, yet God may suffer them to be so relatively and temporarily. In such case, the righteous should not give way to despair, but instead betake themselves unto prayer. “Some thing the righteous ones may do, and should do, when men are attempting to undermine and sap the foundation articles of religion. They should go to the throne of grace, to God in His holy temple, who knows what is doing, and plead with Him to put a stop to the designs and attempts of such subverters of foundations, and they should endeavour to build one another up on their most holy faith” (John Gill, 1697-1771).

During the past century, there was an increasingly marked departure from doctrinal preaching. Creeds and confessions of faith were disparaged and regarded as obsolete. The study of theology was largely displaced by engaging the mind with science, psychology, and sociology. The cry was raised, “Give us Christ, and not Christianity,” and many superficial minds concluded that such a demand was both a spiritual and pertinent one. In reality, it was an absurdity, an imaginary distinction without any vital difference. A Scriptural concept of Christ in His theanthropic person, His mediatorial character, His official relations to God’s elect, His redemptive work for them, can be formed only as He is contemplated in His essential Godhead, His unique humanity, His covenant headship, and as the Prophet, Priest and King of His Church. Sufficient attention has not been given to that repeated expression “the doctrine of Christ” (2Jo 1:9), which comprehends the whole teaching of Scripture concerning His wondrous person and His so-great salvation. Nor has due weight been given to those words “the mystery of Christ” (Col 4:3), which refer to the deep things revealed of Him in the Word of truth.

The most conclusive evidences for the divine origin of Christianity, as well as the chief glory, appear in its doctrines, for they cannot be of human invention. The ineffable and incomprehensible Trinity in unity, the incarnation of the Son of God, the death of the Prince of life, that His obedience and sufferings satisfied divine justice and expiated our offences, the Holy



Spirit making the believer His temple, and our union with Christ are sublime and lofty truths, holy and mysterious, which far surpass the highest flight of finite reason. There is perfect harmony in all the parts of the doctrine of Christ. Therein a full discovery is made of the manifold wisdom of God, the duties required of us, the motives which prompt thereto. It is in perceiving the distinct parts and aspects of truth, their relation to one another, their furtherance of a common cause, their magnifying of the Lord of glory, that the excellence and beauty of the whole are apparent. It is because many apprehend only detached fragments of the same that some things in it appear to be inconsistent to them. What is so much needed is a view and grasp of the whole—acquired only by diligent and persevering application.

There is much preaching, but sadly little *teaching*. It is the task of the teacher to declare all the counsel of God, to show the relation of one part of it to another, to present the whole range of truth. Thereby will the hearer's mental horizon be widened, his sense of proportion promoted, and the beautiful harmony of the whole be demonstrated. It is his business not only to avow, but to evince, not simply to affirm, but to establish what he affirms. Of the apostle, we read that he "*reasoned* with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead" (Act 17:2-3). He was eminently qualified for such a task both by nature and by grace. He was not only a man of God, but a man of genius and learning. He made considerable use of his reasoning faculty. He did not ask his hearers to believe anything that he averred without evidence, but furnished *proof* of what he taught. He usually preached on the basic and essential doctrines of the Gospel, which he felt ought to be verified by plain and conclusive reasoning.

"And he *reasoned* in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks" (Act 18:4, 19). Because such reasoning may be abused, it does not follow that it should have no place in the pulpit. To reason fairly is to draw correct consequences from right principles, or to adduce clear and convincing arguments in support thereof. In order to reason lucidly and effectively upon the truth of a proposition, it is usually necessary to explain it, then to produce arguments in support of it, and finally to answer objections against it. That is the plan Paul generally follows, as is evident from both the Acts and his Epistles. When he preached upon the existence of God, the first and fundamental truth of all religion, he reasoned simply yet impressively, "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we *ought not to think that* the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Act 17:29). "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen" (Rom 1:20). When he enforced the doctrine of human depravity, he *proved* it first by a lengthy description of the character and conduct of the whole heathen world, and then by quotations from the Old Testament, and concluded, "We have before *proved* both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin" (Rom 3:9).

It is the teacher's task to explain, to prove, and then to apply, for hearts are reached through the understanding and conscience. When he appeared before Felix, the apostle "*reasoned* of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" so powerfully that the Roman governor "*trembled*" (Act 24:25). But alas, solid reasoning, exposition of Scripture, doctrinal preaching, are now largely things of the past. Many were (and still are) all for what they term *experience*, rather than a knowledge of doctrine. And today, we behold the deplorable effects of the same, for our generation lacks even a theoretical knowledge of the truth. That which was termed experimental and practical preaching displaced theological instruction, and, thus, the grand fundamentals of the Gospel were brought into contempt. No wonder that popery has made such headway in the countries once Protestant. It may be that that satanic system will yet prevail more awfully. If it

does, none will be able to overthrow it by any *experiences* of their own. Nothing but sound doctrinal preaching will be of any use.

No wonder, either, that practical godliness is also at such a low ebb, for the root which produces it has been unwatered and has withered. “Where there is not the *doctrine* of Faith, the *obedience* of Faith cannot be expected....On the other hand, doctrine without practice, or a mere theoretical and speculative knowledge of things, unless reduced to practice, is of no avail....Doctrine and practice should go together, and in order both to know and to do the will of God, instruction in doctrine and practice is necessary; and the one bringing first light will lead to the other” (J. Gill). That is the order in 1 Timothy 3:16, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable [first] for doctrine, [and then] for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Thus, Paul exhorted Timothy, “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 4:16). So too, he enjoined Titus, “This is a faithful saying, and these things [namely the doctrines of verses 3-7] I will that thou affirm constantly, that [in order that] they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works” (Ti 3:8).

Alas, very, very few now preach the doctrine of Christ in all its parts and branches, in all its causes and effects, in all its bearings and dependences. Yet, there can be no better furniture for the spiritual mind than right and clear apprehensions thereof. Our preservation from error lies therein. Our spiritual fruitfulness depends thereon. Doctrine is the mould into which the mind is cast (Rom 6:17), from which it receives its impressions. As the nature of the seed sown determines what will be the harvest, so the substance of what is preached is seen in the lives of those who sit regularly under it. Where are the purity, the piety, the zeal, that close walking with God and uprightness before men, which were so pronounced in Christendom during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Yet the preaching of the Reformers and Puritans was principally *doctrinal*, and, under God, it produced such a love of the truth that thousands willingly suffered persecution and great privations, and hazarded their lives, rather than repudiate the doctrines and ordinances of Christ. To say it matters not what a man believes so long as his practice is good is utterly erroneous. Indifference to the truth betrays a heart that is not right with God.

It also requires to be pointed out that those men whose ministry was most owned and used of God during last century were those who followed in the steps of the Puritans. C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892), Caesar Malan (1787-1864), Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1843), and the great leaders of the Scottish Free Church disruption gave a prominent place to doctrinal instruction in all of their preaching. An observant eye will soon perceive that there is a distinct *spirit* which attends different types of preaching, manifesting itself more or less plainly in the regular attenders thereof. There is a solidity and soberness, a stability and godly fear seen in real Calvinists, which are not found among Arminians. There is an uprightness of character in those who espouse the truth which is lacking in those who imbibe error. Where the sovereignty of God is denied, there will be no holy awe of Him. Where the total depravity of man is not insisted upon, pride and self-sufficiency will obtain. Where the impotence of the natural man is not stressed, there will be no dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Where the holy demands of God be not maintained, there will be the absence of its effects on the heart and life.

Thus may we judge and determine the truth of preaching, “Whatsoever doctrine doth depress and humble man and advance the glory of God, is true. It answers the design of the Gospel, which all centres in this—that man is to be laid low, and God to be exalted as the chief cause. It pulls man down from his own bottom, and transfers all the glory man would challenge into the hands of God. It lays man in the dust at God’s footstool. That doctrine which crosses the main design of

the Gospel, and encourages pride in man, is not a spark from heaven. No flesh must glory in God's presence (1Co 1:29). The doctrine of justification by works is thrown down by the apostle with this very argument as a thunderbolt. 'Where is boasting then? It is excluded...by the law of faith' (Rom 3:27), that is by the doctrine of the Gospel. Boasting would be introduced by ascribing regeneration to nature, as much as it is excluded by denying justification by works. The doctrine of the Gospel would contradict itself to usher in boasting with one hand whilst it thrust it out with the other. Our Saviour gave this rule long ago, that the glorifying of God is the evidence of truth in persons, 'He that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true' (Joh 7:18). By the same, reason also in things and doctrines" (Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680).

Turning from the general to the particular, in taking up our present subject (D.V.), we shall endeavour to make good a half-promise given by us seventeen years ago. For we stated then, in these pages, that if we were spared, we hoped to devote a series of articles to this important truth. Some of our readers may be inclined to challenge the accuracy of our present title, considering that the duty of mortification pertains far more to the practical side of things than to the doctrinal. The objection would be well taken if the popular distinction were valid, but like so many of the expressions now in vogue, this one will not stand the test of Scripture. The term "doctrine" has a much wider meaning in the Word of God than is usually accorded it today. It includes very much more than the "five points" of Calvinism. Thus, we read of "the doctrine which is *according to godliness*" (1Ti 6:3), which is very much more than a species of intellectual propositions intended for the instructing of our brains, namely, the enunciation of spiritual facts and holy principles, for the warming of the heart and the regulating of our lives.

"The doctrine which is according to godliness" at once defines the *nature* of divine doctrine, intimating as it does that its design or end is to inculcate a right temper of mind and deportment of life Godwards. It is pure and purifying. The objects which are revealed to faith are not bare abstractions which are to be accepted as true, nor even sublime and lofty concepts to be admired. They are to have a powerful effect upon our daily walk. There is no doctrine revealed in Scripture for a merely speculative knowledge, but all is to exert a powerful influence upon conduct. God's design in all that He has revealed to us is to the purifying of our affections and the transforming of our characters. The doctrine of grace teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Ti 2:11-12). By far the greater part of the doctrine (Joh 7:16) taught by Christ consisted not of the explication of mysteries, but rather that which corrected men's lusts and reformed their lives. Everything in Scripture has in view the promotion of *holiness*.

If it be an absurdity to affirm that it matters not what a man believes so long as he does that which is right, equally erroneous is it to conclude that if my creed be sound it matters little how I act. "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1Ti 5:8), for he shows himself to be devoid of natural affection. Thus it is possible to deny the Faith *by conduct* as well as by words. A neglect of performing our duty is as real a repudiation of the truth as is an open renunciation of it, for the Gospel, equally as the Law, requires children to honour their parents. Observe how that awful list of reprehensible characters mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:9-10 are said to be "contrary to sound doctrine"—opposed to its salutary nature and spiritual tendency; i.e. that conduct which the standard of God enjoins. Observe too how that the spirit of covetousness or love of money is designated an *erring* "*from the faith*" (1Ti 6:10). It is a species of heresy, a departure from the doctrine which is according to godliness—an awful example of which we have in the case of

Judas. Mortification, then, is clearly one of the practical doctrines of Holy Writ, as we hope to show abundantly in what follows.



# November

## HIS DELIGHTS

God, as God, being all-sufficient, delights *in Himself*, in all His perfections and the manifestation of them before His creatures. But there is one of His attributes in which He takes especial delight, namely, His *mercy*. “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy” (Mic 7:18). Those words express deep admiration of the Lord’s incomparable goodness in His pardoning mercy. They emphasize the blessed contrast there is between His character and that which the heathen conceive of their gods, for they are regarded as objects of cruelty and not of complacency, are known for their terrors instead of their benefits, and are dreaded for their revenges rather than loved for their excellencies. Whereas, with the living and true God, judgment is “His strange work” (Isa 28:21). Acts of punishment are never performed by Him spontaneously, or of His own accord, but because they are provoked by us; but acts of mercy flow from Him freely, uncaused, unmoved by anything in their recipients.

Had God been unwilling to show us mercy, Christ would not have taught us to ask for pardon (Mat 6:12). So far from bestowing it grudgingly, He does so freely, for He *delighteth therein*, and this it is which causes His people to exclaim, “Who is a God like unto thee?” those words show us what should most move our hearts; not so much God’s acts of power as those of His grace—though the former be more obvious to our apprehensions, the latter should most fire our affections. Everything about God is indeed marvellous, but particularly so His mercy. His very throne is designated “the mercy-seat” (Exo 25:20; 1Sa 4:4), and His elect are denominated “vessels of mercy” (Rom 9:23). He is entitled “the Father of mercies” (2Co 1:3), for they issue from His very nature and are therefore both His offspring and His delights. God is “abundant in mercy” (1Pe 1:3). It cannot be computed or measured. He bestows it not by halves, but fully, “Thou wilt cast *all* their sins into the depths of the sea” (Mic 7:19). “O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever” (Psa 136:1). For this perfection of the divine character, which God has so much pleasure in exercising, He is greatly to be praised. Three times over in as many verses, the Psalmist called upon the saints to give thanks unto the Lord for this adoring attribute.

Considered as the God-man Mediator, *the Lord Jesus Christ* is the Object of the Father’s delight (Isa 42:1). Referring to the counsels of eternity, He declared, “Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him” (Pro 8:30). Those words tell us of the blessed union and communion which existed between the Father and the Son (not excluding the Holy Spirit) before He became incarnate, yet, in view thereof. From all eternity

there was an inconceivable intercourse of bliss between them, and an interchanging of love. They tell us of the ineffable joy the Father had in His dear Son, that He was an Object of infinite satisfaction to Him. Such are His person, glory, perfections, fullness, that the heart of the Father has in Him an Object of absolute complacency, one which gratifies His vast mind for ever. When Christ declared He was “in the bosom of the Father” (Joh 1:18), He used language of greatness, dearness and intimacy (Joh 13:23), signifying that He was the Darling of His heart.

His delight in the Mediator is seen in those remarkable words of Isaiah 49:1, “The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name”. Christ’s name being continually in JEHOVAH’s mouth shows it was His joy to be always thinking of and speaking about Him. Says the Father, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth” (Isa 42:1). Those words express the most ardent love and evince that He was completely wrapped up in Him. He bore testimony thereto when He declared audibly from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat 3:17). He was so because in Christ was found perfect holiness of heart, and because He did “always those things that please him” (Joh 8:29). Every faculty of His soul and body was constantly employed in the flawless performance of the whole will of God.

The Father’s delight in His Son appeared in His appointing of Him to the office and work of mediatorship, anointing Him to be Prophet, Priest, and Potentate, saying, “I have laid help upon one that is *mighty*” (Psa 89:19). The Father beheld the Son of His love with infinite delight while He hung suspended upon the cross of shame. Though divine justice was never more terribly incensed against sin than it was then, yet, the divine holiness was infinitely satisfied with the offering of Christ for sin, “It *pleased* the LORD to bruise him” (Isa 53:10). The death of Christ, considered merely in itself, could not please the Lord, but, as it respected those ends and designs to be accomplished by it—the manifestation of God’s love to the world, the magnifying of His Law, the redemption of His people, the bringing in of an everlasting righteousness for them—He was well pleased. And when the Son had completed His work upon earth, the Father gave full proof of His delight in Him by saying, “Sit thou at my right hand” (Psa 110:1), where a state of mutual enjoyment ensues between Them which is altogether beyond our conception.

The next object of the divine complacency is *the Church*. Speaking by the language of prophecy, Christ referred to its favoured members as “The saints that are in the earth, and the excellent, in whom is all my delight” (Psa 16:3). What an amazing thing it is that creatures like ourselves can give the all-sufficient One delight! Yet, we are told that Enoch “pleased God” (Heb 11:6), and he was a man like unto ourselves. It is to be duly noted that in Psalm 16:3, Christ speaks thus of His people unto the Father Himself. There is none upon earth or in heaven that He values like them. He delights in them because they were chosen by the Father and bestowed upon Him as His love gift. He delights in them as the members of His mystical body. He delights in them as those in whom His glory shall yet be fully displayed, and who are to dwell with Him forever. Despite all their infirmities, He delights in them as His own children—the travail of His soul.

As Proverbs 8 reveals, the saints were on the heart of Christ and in His eye from before the foundation of the world (Pro 8:23-31). As He then viewed them in the glass of God’s decrees, He declared, “My delights were with the sons of men.” The renowned Hebraist, John Gill (1697-1771), tells us, “Delights not only in the plural number, but its first two letters are *doubled*, which, in the Hebrew language, increased the signification of the word, and so expressed the exceeding great delight and pleasure which Christ took in His people from everlasting.” His delights were not with the holy angels, but with those given to Him by the Father, whose cause

He should espouse, whose nature He should assume, and for whom He should shed His blood. *They* were “the joy set before him” when He endured the cross (Heb 12:2). It was the strength of His love to the Father and to His saints which brought Him down from heaven’s glory to earth’s humiliation.

It is in the Song of Solomon that we have most fully revealed the high regard which Christ has for His spouse. There, we hear Him saying, “Behold, thou art fair, my love: behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves’ eyes. Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant” (Song 1:15-16). What endearing titles are those! In what great esteem does He hold her! “How fair”—incomparably and inexpressibly so in His eyes. Is Christ “fairer than the children of men” (Psa 45:2)? So to Him is His bride “fairest among women” (Song 1:8). His estimate of them is the very opposite of theirs. They count themselves nobodies, but He makes much of them, and says, “I will rejoice over them to do them good” (Jer 32:41). “How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!” (Song 7:6). He exclaims—comely and lovely in His esteem. He has made her so inherently by the new birth, and there is nothing so lovely in all the world to Him as grace in a believer. She is so judicially, because cleansed by His blood. She will be so experientially when He shall “present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Eph 5:27). Because He delights in her, He has gone to prepare a place for her (Joh 14:2), and when she enters the same, we are told, “He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love” (Zep 3:17).

Yes, “the LORD taketh pleasure in his people” (Psa 149:4). He does so because He has taken them into covenant relationship, accepted them in the Beloved, quickened them by His Spirit. So highly are they valued by Him that He has numbered the very hairs of their heads (Mat 10:30), orders their steps (Psa 37:23), and makes all things work together for their good. Lack of space prevents us from making more than a bare comment on, “Such as are upright in their way are his delight” (Pro 11:20), because they sincerely desire and resolve to keep His commandments. “The prayer of the upright is his delight” (Pro 15:8), because it is inwrought by His Spirit, comes out of unfeigned lips, is the cry of the humble, is perfumed with the incense of Christ’s merits, and because they ascribe all blessings unto divine grace and express thankfulness for mercies received. Oh, that the Spirit may impress our minds with a real sense of the whole of the above, fill our souls with wonderment, and lead us to admire the Lord increasingly.

## EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

### 35. The Promise (2:25)

*“And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.”*

*“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning”* (verse 24) means, in the light of the context, Suffer no enemy of Christ to rob you of the Gospel which was blessed to your conversion; but rather see to it that it becomes more deeply rooted in your hearts. It is of the utmost importance that the perfect revelation of God that has been made in and by Christ should have a permanent dwelling in your souls. Make it your deep concern that it abides in your

minds and regulates your thoughts; in your consciences, to convict of sin and restrain it, and by stirring you up to the practice of holiness; in your affections, melting you with sorrow for sin, promoting a higher esteem of Christ and spiritual things; in your wills, bringing them into compliance with those things which are pleasing to God. Let it abide just as you first received it, living thereon. You need not any new revelation from God, but rather a better understanding and closer conformity to what He has vouchsafed to you. “If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father.” Here John names one of the benefits derived from obedience to the foregoing precept, namely *maintenance of fellowship with God*.

Many are the blessings, great the advantages that issue from a steadfast adherence to the hope of the Gospel and the ordering of our lives thereby. *First*, it secures us against being deceived by the plausible lies of false teachers. He who feeds upon and delights in wholesome and sweet fruits will refuse that which is bitter and poisonous. He who drinks from the River of life, “clear as crystal,” will disdain foul and brackish water. *Second*, it provides sure evidence of our saving oneness with Christ, and preserves and promotes our communion with Him. The privilege mentioned in the second half of the verse follows, obviously and necessarily, from the performance of the duty enjoined in the first half. The one cannot be without the other: where the Gospel is believingly received and affectionately cherished in the heart, there is fellowship with Christ; but where the former occurs not, the latter is unknown. The Lord Himself joined both together when He said, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you” (Joh 15:7). It is by means of the Word that we receive Christ into our understandings, and by exercising faith thereon that He dwells in our hearts, and thereby we continue in fellowship with Him. The Son is the Medium and Mediator by whom we are one with the Father.

Other passages make known further results of the Word abiding in the soul. For instance, “The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide” (Psa 37:31). As Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) expressed it, “The best thing in the best place, producing the best results.” Where holiness is loved and obedience is predominant we are delivered from the slippery paths of sin and error. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psa 119:11), for taking heed thereto the heart is cleansed (verse 9). “My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandment: for length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee” (Pro 3:1-2). Herein lies our interest, not less than our obligation. Long life is the highest earthly good, especially so when peace be added. “My son, let them not depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: so shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck” (Pro 3:21-22). If the divine precepts be kept as thy much-loved treasure, as thy daily companion and guide, thou shalt find them to quicken thy soul and adorn thy profession. “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (Joh 15:7), for then our desires are regulated spiritually, and we ask not amiss. If the Word dwell in us richly, “all wisdom” is ours (Col 3:16); strength too, and we “overcome the wicked one” (1Jo 2:14).

“*And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life*” (verse 25). The commentators differ as to whether this statement is to be understood as receiving its fulfillment in the present or in the future: whether it has reference to that which is made good in the believer’s experience in this life, or to the celestial bliss in the life to come. That this verse is closely linked to the one immediately preceding is intimated by its opening word. There, two distinct things are in view: an exhortation, and an incentive to heed the same. Personally, it seems to us that the double idea is continued: the precept being enforced, and the injunction amplified. It is by the truth remaining and operating in us that we have communion with God in Christ, and thereby the



promise is realized now, for “this is life eternal, that they might know thee [i.e. the triune Jehovah], the only true God, and Jesus Christ [the alone Mediator], whom thou hast sent” (Joh 17:3). As to the future, heaven is reached only by those who hold fast the hope of the Gospel and abide in Christ.

“The sum of what is said is, that we cannot live otherwise than by nourishing to the end the seed of life sown in the heart. John insists much on this point, that not only the beginning of a blessed life is to be found in the knowledge of Christ, but also its perfection” (John Calvin, 1509-1564).

It will be evident to the careful student that our perception of the precise connection between and the relation of verses 24 and 25 will largely turn upon what we understand to be signified by and included in “eternal life.” As we shall show below, that expression has a twofold force and application: a present and a future one; and in both senses the promise of it supplies a strong encouragement for believers to heed the injunction to let the truth abide and work within them. For it is by adhering to the Gospel that fellowship with Christ is maintained, and in that fellowship “eternal life” is experienced in the soul. Equally so, it is by faith’s keeping constantly in view the joy set before us in the promise, that we are encouraged and strengthened to persevere in the faith.

“As surely as you continue in the faith of the Gospel, you may be fully persuaded that this eternal life is actually bestowed on you, belongs to you, and shall be enjoyed by you, in uninterrupted communion with the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the house eternal in the heavens, forever and ever” (S.E. Pierce, 1746-1829).

We shall now consider: the Promiser—“He”; the blessing announced—“eternal life”; the form of the announcement—by “promise”; and the implications thereof.

### The Promiser: the Father

*“And this is the promise that he hath promised us.”* Without a doubt, the pronoun refers to the Father. *First*, because that is the nearest antecedent, the One mentioned at the close of verse 24. *Second*, because of the “order and economy of the sacred Trinity in their operations and actings in the economy of grace. The Father plans all. He proposes all. He provides all. He promises all. He gives all. The Son works from the Father. He performs all. He acts all. He obtains all. The Holy Spirit, in the order and dispensation of grace, witnesseth to all, and sets His seal to all the Father hath revealed and declared concerning His love in Christ Jesus to the elect; as also concerning the person and mediatorial work of our Lord Jesus Christ. So that it can be only that which belongs to the Father which is here asserted. It is a peculiar glory which is the very perfection of the sacred writers to keep up in all their discourses the trinity and proper distinction of the co-equal Persons in the Godhead; and also the order in which they act distinct one from the other; as also the distinct way and manner in which they operate in us, upon us, and within us” (S.E. Pierce). Let the reader note how this order is observed in Matthew 28:19; Ephesians 1:3-4; 1 Peter 1:2-3. *Third*, because of the clear testimony of 1 John 5:11, “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”

## The blessing announced: “eternal life”

The blessing announced is “eternal life,” which in the following Scriptures is spoken of as the present possession of all who savingly trust in Christ. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,” “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life,” “I give unto them eternal life” (Joh 3:36; 5:24; 10:28). “God hath given to us eternal life” (1Jo 5:11). On the other hand, eternal life is viewed as a future prospect in “he shall receive...in the world to come eternal life” (Mar 10:30), “Ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Rom 6:22), “he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal 6:8), “in the hope of eternal life” (Ti 1:2). Those two sets of passages need “rightly dividing” and adjusting thus. The Christian now has eternal life in divine promise, and therefore it is certain. He has a title and right to it, because the same has been purchased for him by Christ. He already has it in Christ (Col 3:3). He has it by faith, which is the substance of things hoped for. He has it in hope (Ti 3:7), which is a confident expectation of a future good, and therefore he rejoices therein. He has the earnest in the gift of the Holy Spirit (2Co 5:5). He has the seed (1Jo 3:9) or beginning of it in the spiritual nature that he received at the new birth. But he has it not yet in full possession and fruition.<sup>36</sup>

## The form of the announcement: by “promise”

We come now to consider the form in which the blessing is announced, namely by the Father’s *promise*. That is more than a purpose, a doctrinal declaration or prophetic prediction. His eternal purpose was something hid in Himself. A doctrinal declaration is a matter making known to us the divine purpose or will. A prophecy is the foretelling of things yet to be, and may concern that which is evil as much as that which is good. But a promise concerns only that which is good. Moreover, the accomplishment of a prophecy is dependent upon God’s power and veracity, but the making good of His promise is secured by His faithfulness and righteousness also. The divine promises are so many assurances unto us of God’s solemn engagements, by which He has graciously bound Himself to do some good unto or bestow some blessing upon His people. They are so many certifications of His good pleasure concerning them. They declare that He will lavish upon them the riches of His grace, out of His own mere bounty, according to His royal benignity. They are the revealed testifications of His heart who loved them from all eternity and foreappointed all things for them and respecting them. That they might have a true, clear, and spiritual knowledge of His good will and favour to them, God has been pleased to set the same before them in hundreds of promises scattered throughout His Word.

The divine promises, then, are so many declarations to remove some ill or to impart some good unto the objects upon whom God set His heart from all eternity. As such they are a most blessed manifestation of His love unto His saints. Speaking after the manner of men, there are three steps in connection with the operations of God’s love. The first, His inward purpose to exercise it; the last, the actual execution of His purpose; but in between there is the gracious making known of that purpose to the beneficiaries of it—so that they may be assured of and enjoy the same by faith’s anticipation before the realization thereof. While love is concealed we cannot be comforted therewith. Now God, who is “love,” not only loves His own, and will in due time fully display His love unto them, but in the interim He will have them informed of His benevolent

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<sup>36</sup> **fruition** – coming to fulfillment; realization.

designs, that even now they may rest in His love and stretch themselves comfortably upon His sure promises. Thereby each of them has reason to exclaim adoringly, “How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!” (Psa 139:17), for his promises make evident to us that assertion, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil” (Jer 29:11).

The triune God is not only the Author and Giver of the promises, but is the sum and substance of them too. All the Persons of the Godhead form the subject of these blessed assurances. God the Father is not only the Promiser, but the matter of the promises, for He declares unto His saints, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Thus He gives Himself unto them, so that they may have a propriety in Him and all His perfections. God the Son, in His person, His fullness, His suitability and sufficiency, is the promise of His redeemed, being expressly termed “the mercy promised to our fathers” (Luk 1:72)—given not only *for* but *to* them. God the Spirit, in His sevenfold gifts and graces, is equally the promise of the Church: one of His titles is “that holy Spirit of promise” (Eph 1:13). Thus the triune Jehovah makes Himself over unto His elect. No wonder that an apostle says, “whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises” (2Pe 1:4). Rightly did Spurgeon remark: “Greatness and preciousness seldom go together, but in this instance they are united in an exceeding degree: they come from a great God, they come to great sinners, they deal with great matters, and they work for us great results.” Everything in the way of blessing, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, comes to the believer by way of promise.

### What is “eternal life”?

“*And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.*” Observe the perfect harmony there is between this statement and “there [namely Zion] the LORD commanded the blessing, *even* life for evermore” (Psa 133:3)—how greatly they do err who assert that Israel’s portion was a temporal one only! This is the grand promise, the all-inclusive one, that embraces and comprehends all others. This is the sum of all felicity: of all blessings, *life* is the most desired (Job 2:4), and therefore it is made the emblem of spiritual and eternal bliss. Many things are promised the children of God, but this chiefly, outstandingly; yea, all other things are but steps and means thereto. As eternal death contains the essence of all evils, so eternal life contains the essence of all good. As the good Shepherd assured His sheep, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (Joh 10:10). “Life” there is to be regarded in its widest possible latitude, as including the whole of God’s so-great salvation. It is a being enstated in His favour for evermore. It consists of a satisfying knowledge of the triune God (Joh 17:3). It is the inward enjoyment of Him, and the conforming of the soul to the image of His Son.

“*And this is the promise that he hath promised us.*” Why that duplicating of language? For a double reason: first, because the promise was made originally unto Christ as the covenant head of His people, and then to the believer in the Gospel; second, because “eternal life” has both a present and a future aspect. The former is in view in 2 Timothy 1:9, “Who hath saved us [in His eternal decree], and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began”—given to us in Him by solemn compact as our Surety. So again in Titus 1:2: “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.” There was not only a purpose of grace in the heart of God from all eternity, but a real donation of eternal life unto us. “But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching” (Ti 1:3): that which was secretly and eternally agreed upon between God and Christ is now made known in the Gospel.

The Gospel message is, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have *everlasting life*” (Joh 3:14-15). There too “everlasting life” is an expression which is to be regarded as comprehending everything that Christ purchased for His people. Briefly summarized, eternal life is union with God Himself, in, through, and by Christ. “It is the most perfect fruition of God Himself, and that for evermore” (Hermann Witsius, 1636-1708). It begins with the divine operation of grace in our hearts, “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). It continues in our beholding by faith the glory of the Lord as it shines in the Word, by which we are experientially and progressively “changed into the same image from glory to glory” (2Co 3:18). It is consummated at Christ’s return, when He will “change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Phi 3:21); when in spirit and soul and body “we shall be like Him” (1Jo 3:2). It eventuates in dwelling with Him forever in heaven.

### The essential elements of eternal life

But let us consider more definitely its essential elements. First, it is a life-in-law. When Adam transgressed he incurred a double death—a legal and an experiential one; being cast out of God’s favour and losing the impress of His moral image in his soul. Correspondingly, God’s elect are given both a legal and a spiritual life. It was to the former that Christ referred when He defined eternal life as “and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (Joh 5:24). That is entirely a judicial thing. In His atoning work Christ did two things: He bore the sins of His people and suffered the penalty of the Law; He wrought out for them a perfect righteousness by obeying the precept of the Law. Having met all its requirements, Christ merited its reward, which is “life” (Rom 7:10; 10:5), namely, a standing accepted before God in His cloudless favour; and that life is eternal because it is the award of the “everlasting righteousness” that He brought in (Dan 9:24). When the first Adam sinned, he forfeited God’s favour and came under the curse of the Law; because the last Adam obeyed, He earned for His people the approbation of God and the blessing of the Law. Thus they are not only delivered from condemnation or legal death, but they have legal life, which is justification (Rom 6:10-11).

It is most important to see that the believer has life in Christ before he has life from Him. In Christ he has met every requirement of the Law, and not only is there now no condemnation to him, but he has received “the gift of righteousness,” and must “reign in life by one, Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:17). In consequence of this, *second*, “eternal life” is a life of grace in the soul, for at the new birth the life of God is imparted and we are made vitally one with Christ. It is then that we pass “from death unto life” (1Jo 3:14) experientially, being divinely quickened. The faculties of the soul are restored to their proper exercise: the eyes of the understanding are opened to see the glory of God, the ears unstopped to hear His voice, the affections raised unto things above, the tongue loosed in praise and petition. And they are infallibly assured that “He who has begun a good work in you will perform [or “finish”] it” (Phi 1:6). This too is an intrinsic part of the fruit of the Saviour’s travail (Ti 3:5-7).

*Third*, eternal life is consummated in everlasting celestial bliss, for God “hath begotten us again unto a lively [living] hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us” (1Pe 1:3-4). The spiritual life begun here is fully realized there. Now it is but the bud, then the lovely flower. “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now we know in part; but

then shall I know even as also I am known” (1Co 13:12). Even now we are made partakers of the divine nature (2Pe 1:4), but then shall we be perfectly conformed to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29), and eternally share with Him that “fullness of joy,” and those pleasures that are at God’s right hand. Thus “eternal life” includes a life-in-law, a life in the soul, and a life in heaven; or justification, regeneration, and glorification.

### The implications of the promises

A few words on the implications of the particular form in which eternal life is presented. *First*, since it be by divine “promise,” then it is a free gift. A promise supposes that the party making it is under no obligation to grant, and that the one to whom it is made can urge no claim. It is entirely gratuitous (see Galatians 3:18, 21). That eternal life is a “gift” is asserted in John 10:28, Romans 6:23. *Second*, it implies acceptance on our part, and that as a “gift.” Yet the very act of receiving it involves certain exercises of soul. There must be repentance, or a being sensible of our guilt and the desire for its removal; [and] the exercise of faith, or the extending of an empty hand to receive alms. Those exercises will necessarily be followed by obedience and a holy life. Where there be repentance, there is hatred of sin. Where there be faith, there is gratitude to the bounteous Giver and the longing to please Him. *Third*, everlasting bliss is also certain, for it is promised by Him who cannot lie. The unchanging faithfulness of God is the guarantee of endless felicity.

## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

### 87. Cities of Refuge, Part 1

“The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: that the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand: because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime. And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled” (Jos 20:1-6).

In that passage, we are furnished with a condensed account of the statutes with regard to murder which the Lord gave to Israel for the maintenance of righteousness in their midst. On the one hand, there must be a strict enforcing of justice—on the other, the exercising of mercy. The guilty were not to be cleared—the innocent must not be executed. Due and orderly investigation



must be made, and each case tried on its own merits before a court of law. Where guilt was established, malice aforethought being proved by witnesses, the death penalty was to be inflicted upon the murderer. But when a neighbour had been inadvertently killed, extreme measures were not to be taken against the one occasioning his death. Nor was the next-of-kin to the one slain permitted to take matters into his own hands and wreak vengeance upon him, who by misadventure had tragically terminated his life. Instead, there was a sanctuary provided for the innocent, to which he could fly, shelter afforded for one who had involuntarily committed homicide.

The original statute pertaining to the subject was, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: *for* in the image of God made He man” (Gen 9:6). There is nothing whatever “Jewish” about that injunction, for it was given centuries before the nation of Israel had any existence. It needs emphasizing today that capital punishment as the penalty for murder was ordained by God Himself long before the giving of the Mosaic law, and, since it has never been repealed by Him, that precept is binding until the end of time. It is important to observe that the reason for this law is not here based upon the well-being of human society, but is grounded upon the fact that man is made “in the image of God” (Gen 1:27). That expression has a twofold significance—a natural and a moral—the moral image of God (inherent holiness) was lost at the fall, but the natural still exists, as is clear from 1 Corinthians 11:7 and James 3:9. Thus, the primary reason why it is sinful to slay a man is because he is made in the image of God. “To deface the king’s image is a sort of treason among men, implying a hatred against him, and that, if he himself were within reach, he would be served in the same manner. How much more heinous, then, must it be to destroy, curse, oppress, or in any way abuse the image of the King of kings!” (Andrew Fuller, 1754-1815).

Whereas that original statute of God has never yet been repealed, it has been more fully explained, amplified, and safeguarded in later passages, and to them we now turn. The first one having a direct bearing upon our present subject is found in Exodus 21:12-14, “He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.” There is the general principle, but it is *qualified* thus, “And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand, then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee. But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.” A sharp distinction was thus drawn between deliberate murder and involuntary manslaughter. In the former instance, when one smote his fellow intentionally, whether from premeditated malice or in the heat of sudden passion, so that he expired from the injury, then the deed must be regarded as murder, and the death penalty be enforced. But where one unwittingly and unwillingly inflicted an injury upon another, even though it proved to be a fatal one, he was not to be executed for the act. Instead, there was a place appointed by God to which he might flee, and where he could be sheltered from any who sought vengeance upon him.

We have been much impressed by the fact that the above passage is found in the very next chapter after the one which records the Ten Commandments. Let those who have such a penchant for drawing invidious and odious comparisons between that which obtained under the old covenant and that which pertains to the new, take careful note that this gracious provision was made by God under that very economy which dispensationalists are so fond of terming “a forbidding and unrelieved regime of stern law.” It was nothing of the kind, as any impartial student of the Word is aware. In all ages, God has tempered His justice with mercy and caused His grace to reign through righteousness. Let it not be overlooked that such declarations as the following are found in the *Old Testament* Scriptures, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the

LORD pitieth them that fear him” (Psa 103:13). “Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD” (Psa 119:156). The putting forth of His wrath is spoken of as His “strange work” (Isa 28:21). “Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness” (Neh 9:17). “He restraineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy” (Mic 7:18), and most evidently did the cities of refuge testify to that fact.

Ere passing on from Exodus 21:13-14, let us also duly attend to the wording of verse 13. It is *not*, “And if a man lie not in wait, but *accidentally* slay another,” but instead, “And if a man lie not in wait [having no intention to injure his neighbour], but *God deliver him* into his hand.” In full accord with the uniform teaching of Holy Writ concerning the divine superintendence of all events, such a calamity, as is here supposed, is not ascribed to “chance” or “ill fortune” (for there is nothing fortuitous in a world governed by God), but instead is attributed to an act of God—i.e. the Lord being pleased to take away in that manner the life which He had given. “Unto God the LORD belong the issues from death” (Psa 68:20). The gates of the grave open unto none except at the command of the Most High, and when He gives the word none can withstand it. “My times [to be born and to die, Ecc 3:2] are in *thy hand*” (Psa 31:15), and not in my own. “Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass” (Job 14:5). Not only is the hour of death divinely decreed, but *the form* in which it comes. “Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him” (Joh 10:31), but in vain, for God had ordained that He should be crucified. No matter in what manner death comes, it is the Lord who kills and “bringeth down to the grave” (1Sa 2:6).

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan into the land of Canaan: then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares” (Num 35:9-11). That which is mentioned in Exodus 21 had reference to God’s merciful provision for Israel during the time they remained in the wilderness. There was, even then, “a place” appointed by the Lord to which the manslayer might turn for sanctuary. We are not told where that place was. Some of the ancient Jewish writers suppose that it was located “outside the camp,” but, since all the cities of refuge were cities which pertained to *the Levites*, we consider it more in keeping with the Analogy of Faith to conclude that the “place” was within that part of the camp assigned to the priests. That temporal provision was to give way to a more permanent arrangement after the children of Israel became settled in their inheritance.

“And of these cities which ye shall give six cities shall ye have for refuge. Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge” (Num 35:13-14). Two and a half of the tribes, namely the children of Gad, the children of Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh, had been assigned their place and portion on the eastern side of the Jordan (Num 32:33), in the fertile valley which had been occupied by Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan, who, refusing Israel’s request to pass through that country, had been slain in battle and their territory seized by the conquerors (Num 21:21-31). The remaining three were to be situated in convenient sections in Palestine, where they would be accessible at short notice unto those who might have need of the same. Nor was their use restricted to those who were of the natural seed of Abraham, “These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them: that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither” (Num 35:15). Thus, even under the Mosaic economy, divine mercy was extended unto those who threw in their lot with the people of God!

In the verses that follow, various cases are described in detail, so that there might be no miscarriage of justice when the magistrates were adjudicating thereon. “And if he smite him with

an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. Or if he smite him with an hand weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him he shall slay him. But [or “and”] if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by laying of wait, that he die; or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die: he that smote him shall surely be put to death: for he is a murderer: the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him” (Num 35:17-21). Thus, those cities of refuge were not meant to afford shelter for murderers as such. Therein they differed noticeably from the sacred precincts of the heathen gods, which provided a safe asylum for any violent or wicked man. The divine statute insisted on the sanctity of life and the inflexible maintenance of righteousness.

Equally express were the instructions on the other side. “But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or have cast upon him any thing without laying of wait; or with any stone, wherewith a man may die, seeing him not, and cast it upon him, that he die, and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm: then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments. And the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil” (Num 35:22-25). Shelter and security were provided only for one who had brought about the death of another without deliberate design, yea, with no intention of inflicting any injury upon him. Murder, strictly speaking, involves more than the overt act. It includes the spirit behind the act, the motive prompting it. If the act be performed “without enmity” and with no desire to harm another, then it is a case of involuntary manslaughter and not of murder.

To prevent any guilty one taking advantage of this provision for the innocent, the accused must “stand before the congregation in judgment” (Num 35:12). That is, he was to be brought before a court of justice, where the magistrates were to give him a fair trial. Full and formal investigation was to be made, so that the accused had every opportunity to prove his innocence. “Then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments” (Num 35:24). Once the manslayer had been received into the city of refuge, the avenger of blood could act only as prosecutor (previously he had the right to be the executioner—verse 19), and his case had to be determined by the rules God had specified. If it were proved that death had ensued where no malicious attempt upon life had been made, but, instead, the injury had been inflicted casually, “unawares,” then the death penalty was not to be visited upon him.

It is highly important in the administration of law that no innocent person should be made to suffer, and equally so that the guilty should not be exempted from the due reward of his iniquities. In the case of murder, the divine law required proof of previous malice, a laying in wait to slay the victim, deliberate measures taken to encompass his death, an assault with some weapon of violence to accomplish the fell deed. “Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die. Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death” (Num 35:30-31). Thereby did the Lord manifest His abhorrence of this crime—no atoning sacrifice was available for it, nor could any ransom be accepted for its perpetrator. Justice must be administered impartially, the law strictly enforced without fear or favour. Very solemn and impressive is it to note what follows.



“So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for *blood defileth the land*: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel” (Num 35:33-34). Such shedding of blood not only defiles the conscience of the murderer, who is thereby proved not to have eternal life abiding in him (1Jo 3:15), but also pollutes the land in which the crime was committed, being abominable to God and to all good men. Nor can that land be cleansed from the blood of murder but by executing condign judgment upon the murderer himself. Thus, we are informed that there was far more involved in the enforcing of these statutes than the maintenance of righteousness between man and man. As another has pointed out, “The glory of God, the purity of His land, and the integrity of His government, had to be duly maintained. If those were touched, there could be no security for anyone.”

The same things are taught, substantially, in the New Testament, particularly in Romans 13:1-4. There the civil ruler or magistrate is twice denominated “the minister of God”—first, in protecting the law-abiding; second, in penalizing the law-defiant. He is divinely appointed to maintain civic righteousness, for if the restraints of government be removed, a state of anarchy and bedlam at once ensues. The “sword” is the symbol of the ultimate power of life and death (Gen 3:24; Zec 13:7), and the “he beareth not the sword in vain” signifies that God has invested him with the authority to inflict capital punishment—the common method of which in olden times was by decapitating with the sword. It is an essential part of the governor’s office to be “a revenger, to execute [God’s] wrath upon him that doeth evil.” Nothing is said about its being his duty to reform criminals, rather is it his business to redress wrongs and to instill fear into those who contemplate doing wrong. Romans 13:1-4 is silent upon any efforts being required to reclaim the refractory, the emphasis being placed upon his alarming them and imposing the full penalty of the law. Compare 1 Peter 2:14. It is a sure sign of a nation’s moral degeneracy, and a dishonouring and incurring of God’s displeasure, when capital punishment is abolished, or magistrates become lax and yield to sentimentality.

Reverting to the case of the one who is not guilty of deliberate murder, there are four other details which require to be noticed. First, when one unintentionally killed a neighbour, there must usually have been, in such cases, a culpable degree of carelessness, and therefore, though his life was spared, his freedom was curtailed. Second, accordingly, he was required to leave his home and family, and take up residence in the city of refuge. Third, if he forsook that city, he forfeited legal protection, and then, should the revenger of blood find him without its borders, he was entitled to kill him (Num 35:27). Fourth, it was required that he remain within the city of refuge until the death of the high priest, and then, he was free to return to his home and reside there unmolested (Num 35:28). By limiting the time of his banishment by the high priest’s death, honour was put upon the priesthood—as it had been in selecting those cities, for they all belonged to the Levites. “The high priest was to be looked upon as so great a blessing to his country, that when he died their sorrow upon that occasion should swallow up all other resentments” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

Further reference is made to our subject in Deuteronomy 4:41-43, wherein we see illustrated the law of progressive development. First, bare mention of an unspecified “place” is referred to (Exo 21:13). Next, instructions are given for the appointing of six cities of refuge, without stating more than that three of them are to be on the wilderness side of the Jordan, and three within Canaan (Num 35:14-15). Then, the first three are actually named (Deu 4:43), while in Joshua 20:7-8, the locations of all six are given. In Deuteronomy 19, more definite instructions were

communicated as to the precise situations of those cities. The land was to be divided into three parts, so that one of them would be the more readily accessible for those in any particular section (verses 2-3). A “way” which led to each city was to be prepared (verse 3) so as to guide the fugitive who was fleeing unto it. Joshua 20:4 supplies the additional information that when the manslayer arrived at the gate of the city of refuge he received a preliminary hearing from the elders ere he was admitted, which was followed by a fuller and more formal investigation of his case in a court of justice (verse 6). The typical and spiritual meaning of the whole of the foregoing will be considered in our next article.

# THE DOCTRINE OF MORTIFICATION

## 2. An Outline, Part 1

We have given this article the above title because Romans 8:13 supplies the most comprehensive description of our subject to be found in any single verse of the Bible, setting forth as it does the greatest number of its principal features, “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” This is a most solemn and searching verse, and one which has little place in modern ministry, be it oral or written. If Arminians have sadly wrested it, many Calvinists have refused to face its plain affirmations and implications. Five things in it claim our best attention. First, the persons addressed. Second, the awful warning here set before them. Third, the duty enjoined upon them. Fourth, the effectual Helper provided. Fifth, the promise made to them. The better to focus our minds, and to enable us to grapple with the difficulties which not a few have found in the verse, ere seeking to fill in our outline, we will ask a number of pertinent questions.

What is the relation between our text and the context? Why are both of its members in the hypothetical form—“if”? Does the “ye” in each half of the verse have reference to the same persons, or are there two entirely different classes in view? If the latter be the case, then by what valid principle of exegesis can we account for such? Why not change one of them to “any” or “they”? What is meant by “live after the flesh”? Is it possible for a real Christian to do so? If not, and it is unregenerate persons who are mentioned, then why say they “shall die,” seeing that they are dead already spiritually? Are the terms “die” and “live” here used figuratively and relatively, or literally and absolutely? What is imported by “mortify” and why “the deeds of the body” rather than “the lusts of the flesh”? If the “ye” perform that task, then how “through the Spirit”? If He be the prime Worker, then why is the mortifying predicated of them? If there be conjoint action, then how are the two factors to be adjusted? In what manner will the promise “ye shall live” be made good, seeing they already be alive spiritually? We know of no commentator who has made any real attempt to grapple with these problems.

The whole context makes it quite evident *what* particular classes of people are here addressed. First, it is those who are in Christ Jesus, upon whom there is now no condemnation (Rom 8:1). Second, it is those who have been made free from the law of sin and death, and had the

righteousness of Christ imputed to them (Rom 8:2-4). Third, it is those who give proof that they are the beneficiaries of Christ, by walking not after the flesh, but after the spirit (Rom 8:4). In what immediately follows, a description is given of two radically different classes—they who are after the flesh, carnally minded, and they whose legal standing is not in the flesh, but in the spirit, who are spiritually minded because indwelt by the Spirit of God (Rom 8:5-11). Fourth, concerning the latter—“we” as opposed to the “they” of verse 8—the apostle draws a plain and practical conclusion. “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh” (Rom 8:12)—the endearing appellation there used by Paul leaves us in no doubt as to the particular type of characters he was addressing. Thomas Manton (1620-1677) had a most able sermon on this verse, and we will mostly, in our own language, epitomize his exposition.

Man would fain be at his own disposal. The language of his heart is “our lips are our own: who is lord over us?” (Psa 12:4). He affects supremacy and claims the right of dominion over his own actions. But his claim is invalid. He was made by Another and for Another, and therefore, he is a “debtor.” Negatively, not to the flesh, which is mentioned because that corrupt principle is ever demanding subjection to it. Positively, he is debtor to the One who gave him being. Christians are debtors both as creatures and as new creatures, being entirely dependent upon God alike for their being and their well-being, for their existence and preservation. As our Maker, God is our Owner, and being our Owner, He is, therefore, our Governor, and, by consequence, our Judge. He has an absolute propriety in us, an unchallengeable power over us, to command and dispose of us as He pleases. We have nothing but what we receive from Him. We are accountable to Him for our time and our talents. Every benefit we receive increases our obligation to Him. We have no right to please ourselves in anything. This debt is indissoluble. As long as we are dependent upon God for being and support, so long are we bound to Him. Sin has in no wise cancelled our obligation, for though fallen man has lost his power to obey, the Lord has not lost His power to command.

By virtue of his spiritual being, the saint is still more a debtor to God. First, because of his redemption by Christ, for he is not his own, but bought with a price (1Co 6:19). The state *from which* he was redeemed was one of woeful bondage, for he was a slave of Satan. Now when a captive was ransomed, he became the absolute property of the purchaser (Lev 25:45-46). The *end* which Christ had in view proves the same thing. He has “redeemed us to God” (Rev 5:9). Second, because of his regeneration. The new nature then received inclines to God. We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph 2:10). Having brought us from death unto life, renewed us in His image, bestowed upon us the status and privileges of sonship, we owe ourselves, our strength and our service unto God as His beneficiaries. The new creature is diverted from its proper use if we live after the flesh. Third, because of our own dedication (Rom 12:1). A genuine conversion involves the renunciation of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and the giving up of ourselves unto the Lord (2Co 8:5). Since our obedience to God is a *debt*, there can be no merit in it (Luk 17:10). But if we pay it not, we incur the debt of punishment (Mat 6:12, 15). Since the flesh has no right to command, the gratification of it is the yielding to a tyrannous usurper (Rom 6:12, 14). When solicited by the flesh, the believer should reply, “I am the Lord’s.”

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom 8:13). Here are two sharply contrasted propositions, each one being expressed conditionally. Two eventualities are plainly set forth. Two suppositions are mentioned, and the inevitable outcome of each clearly stated. Both parts of the verse affirm that if a certain course of conduct be steadily followed (for it is far from being isolated actions which are referred to) a certain result would inevitably follow. This hypothetical form of presenting the truth is quite

a common one in the Scriptures. Servants of Christ are informed that, “*If any man’s* [literally, “any one’s,” i.e. of the “ministers” of verse 5, the “labourers” of verse 9] work abide which he hath built thereon, he shall receive a reward. *If any man’s* [“one’s,” “minister’s”] work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss” (1Co 3:14-15). Other well-known examples are, “For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ,” and “For if I build again the things which I destroyed [renounced], I make myself a transgressor” (Gal 1:10; 2:18). “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” (Heb 2:3 and cf. 10:26). Our text, then, is parallel with, “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal 6:8).

There are two things which the people of God are ever in need of—faithful warnings, kindly encouragements—the one to curb their sinful propensities, the other to animate their spiritual graces to the performing of duty, especially when they be cast down by the difficulties of the way or are mourning over their failures. Here, too, a balance needs to be carefully preserved. Inexperienced believers have little realization of the difficulties and perils before them, and the hearts of older ones are so deceitful that each alike needs to be plainly and frequently corrected, and exhorted to pay attention to the danger-signals which God has set up along our way. It is both striking and solemn to note how often the Saviour sounded the note of warning, not only unto the wicked, but more especially unto His disciples. He bade them, “Take heed what ye hear” (Mar 4:24); “Beware of false prophets” (Mat 7:15); “Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness” (Luk 11:35); “Remember Lot’s wife” (Luk 17:32); “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life” (Luk 21:34). To one He had healed, “Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee” (Joh 5:14).

The word “flesh” is used in Scripture in a number of senses, but throughout Romans 8, it signifies that corrupt and depraved nature which is in us when we enter this world. That evil nature or principle is variously designated. It is termed “sin” (Rom 7:8), “warring against the law of my mind” (verse 23). In James 4:5, “the *spirit* that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy,” to indicate that it is not a tangible or material entity. But more commonly it is called “the flesh” (Joh 3:6; Rom 7:25; Gal 5:17). It is so termed because it is transmitted from parent to child as the body is, because it is propagated by natural generation, because it is strengthened and drawn forth by carnal objects, because of its base character and degeneracy. It was not in man when he left the hand of his Creator and was pronounced by Him “very good.” Rather was it something that he acquired by the fall. The principle of sin as a foreign element, as a thing *ab extra*, as an invading agent, entered into him, vitiating the whole of his natural being—as frost enters into and ruins vegetables, and as blight seizes and mars fruit.

The “flesh” is the open, implacable, inveterate, irreconcilable enemy of holiness, yea, it is “enmity against God” (Rom 8:7)—an “enemy” may be reconciled, not so “enmity” itself. Then, what an evil and abominable thing is the flesh—at variance with the Holy One, a rebel against His Law! It is, therefore, our enemy. Yea, it is far and away the worst one the believer has. The devil and the world without do all their mischief to the souls of men by the flesh within them. “The flesh is the womb where all sin is conceived and formed, the anvil upon which all is wrought, the false Judas that betrays us, the secret enemy within that is ready on all occasions to open the gates to the besiegers” (Thomas Jacomb, 1622-1687). We must distinguish sharply between *being* in the flesh and *living after* the flesh. Thus, “For when we were in the flesh” (Rom 7:5) has reference to Christians in their unregenerate condition, as “They that are in the flesh cannot please God” speaks of the unsaved. Whereas, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit” (8:8-9) is

predicated of believers. “In the flesh” imports a person’s standing and state before God. Living after the flesh describes his course and conversation. The one inevitably follows and corresponds to the other. A person’s character and conduct agree with his condition and case.

The flesh is radically and wholly evil, as Romans 7:18 declares, there is “no good thing” in it. It is beyond reclamation, being incapable of any improvement. It may indeed put on a religious garb, as did the Pharisees, but beneath is nothing but rottenness. Fire may as soon be struck out of ice as holy dispositions and motions be produced by indwelling sin. As the “flesh” continually opposes that which is good, so it ever disposes the soul unto what is evil. To “walk after” or to “live after the flesh” (both terms have the same force) is for a person to conduct himself as do all the unregenerate, who are dominated, motivated and actuated by nothing but their fallen nature. To “live after the flesh” refers not to a single act, nor even to a habit or a series of acts in one direction, but rather to the whole man being governed and guided by this vile principle. That is the case with all who are out of Christ. Their desires, thoughts, speech, and deeds all proceed from this corrupt fount. It is by the flesh that the whole of their souls are set in motion and their entire course steered. All is directed by some fleshly consideration. They act *from* self, or base principle. They act *for* self, or base end. The glory of God is nothing to them. The flesh is all in all.

The flesh is a dynamical, active, ambitious principle, and, therefore, is it spoken of as a *lusting* thing. Thus, we read of “the lusts of the flesh,” yea, of “the wills of the flesh” (Eph 2:3—margin) for its desires are vehement and imperious. “But [indwelling] sin, taking occasion [being aggravated] by the commandment [“Thou shalt not covet”], wrought in me all manner of concupiscence” [or “lust”] (Rom 7:8). Education and culture may result in a refined exterior; family training and other influences may lead to an espousal of religion, as is the case with the great majority of the heathen. Selfish considerations may even issue in voluntarily undergoing great austerities and deprivations, as the Buddhist to attain unto Nirvana, the Mohammedan to gain paradise, the romanist to merit heaven—but the love of God prompts none of them, nor is His glory their aim. Though the Christian be “not in the flesh” as to his status and state, yet the flesh as an evil principle (unchanged) is still in him, and it “lusteth against the spirit” (Gal 5:17) or new nature, and therefore are we exhorted, “Let not sin [i.e. the flesh] therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Rom 6:12).

It requires to be pointed out that there is a *twofold* walking or living after the flesh—the one more gross and manifest, the other more indiscernible. The first breaks forth into open and bodily lusts and acts, such as gluttony, drunkenness, moral uncleanness. This is “the filthiness of the flesh.” The second is when the flesh exerts itself in internal heart lusts, which are more or less concealed from our fellows, which lie smouldering and festering within the soul, such as pride, unbelief, self-love, envy, covetousness. This is the filthiness “of the spirit” (2Co 7:1). In Galatians 5:18-19, the apostle gives a catalogue of the lustings of the flesh in *both* of these respects. He does so to expose a common fallacy. It is generally assumed that walking or living “according to the flesh” is limited to the first form mentioned, and the second one is little considered or regarded. So long as men abstain from gross intemperance, open profanity, brutish sensuality, they think that all is well with them, whereas they may be quite free from all gross practices and still be guilty of living after the flesh. Yea, such *is* the case with all in whose hearts there are inordinate affections after the world, a spirit of self-exaltation, covetousness, malice, hatred, uncharitableness, and many other reprehensible lusts.

Our text makes crystal clear to us the fundamental and vital importance of the duty here enjoined, for our performance or non-performance thereof is literally a matter of life and death.

Mortification is not optional, but imperative. The solemn alternatives are plainly stated—neglect ensures everlasting misery, compliance therewith is assured eternal felicity. The whole verse is manifestly addressed unto saints, and they are faithfully warned, “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die,” that is, die eternally, for as in verse Rom 6:12, 21; 6:23; 8:6, “death” includes all the penal consequences of sin both here and hereafter. So, in our text, “die” manifestly signifies “shall suffer the second death,” which is “the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Rev 21:8). The express reason is here advanced why Christians should not live after the flesh. They are not debtors to it to do so (verse 12). If they surrender to its dominion, the wages of sin will most certainly be paid them. “The flesh belongs to the world, and the man who is yielding to its promptings is in the world, living like the world, and must perish with the world” (J. Stifler, c. 1840-c. 1910).

It was by yielding to the lusts of the flesh that Adam brought death upon himself and all his posterity. And if I live after the flesh, that is, am governed and guided by my old nature, acting habitually according to its inclinations—for it is a persistent and continuous course of conduct which is here mentioned—then, no matter what be my profession, I shall perish in my sin. It is the gratifying and serving of the flesh, instead of the will of God, which eternally ruins souls. “It may be asked whether one who has received the grace of God in truth can live after the flesh. To live in a continued course of sin is contrary to the grace of God, but flesh may prevail and greatly influence the life and conversation for a while. How long this may be the case of a true believer under backsliding, through the power of corruptions and temptations, cannot be known, but certain it is that it shall not be always thus with him” (John Gill, 1697-1771).

The whole of our verse pertains to professing Christians, and at the present moment. The apostle did not simply say, “If ye have lived after the flesh,” for that is the case with every unregenerate soul, but if ye now live after the flesh, “ye shall die”—in the full meaning of that word. It is a general statement of a universal truth. We fully agree with the explanation furnished by Benjamin W. Newton (1807-1899), who was a decided Calvinist. “An expression of this kind is addressed to us for two reasons. First, because in the professing church the apostle knew there were and would be false professors. So, whenever collective bodies are addressed, he always uses words implying uncertainty and doubt, for tares will be among the wheat. And second, true believers themselves (though grace can preserve them) have now, nevertheless, always a tendency in them to the same paths. Therefore, descriptions like this, which are true to the full of those who merely profess, may yet be rightly applied to all who are wandering into those paths.” Examples of the one are found in such passages as Galatians 4:20 and 6:8; Ephesians 5:5-7; Colossians 3:5-6. Of the second, it must be borne in mind that a backsliding Christian had turned aside from the narrow way of denying self, and that, if he follows the course of self-pleasing to the bitter end, destruction awaits him.”

See here the *faithfulness* of God in so plainly warning of the terrible doom awaiting all who live after the flesh. Instead of thinking hardly of God for His threatenings, we should be grateful for them. See the *justice* of God. To be pleasing self is to continue in the apostasy of mankind, and therefore, the original sentence (Gen 2:17) is in force against them. It is contempt of God, and the heinousness of the sin is measured by the greatness of Him who is affronted (1Sa 2:25). Moreover, they refuse the remedy, and therefore are doubly guilty. See here the *wisdom* of God in appointing the greater punishment to curb the greatness of the temptation. The pleasures of sin are but for a season, but the pains of sin are for evermore. If the latter were soundly believed and seriously considered, the former would not so easily prevail with us. Behold the *holiness* of God.

An unmortified soul is unfit for His presence. Vessels of glory must first be seasoned with grace. Conformity to Christ fits for heaven, and where that be lacking there can be no entrance.

# JOHN THE BAPTIST

## Part 1

It might well be supposed that our Lord's forerunner was no ordinary man. Before assenting to that idea, it is necessary to determine what is meant in that connection by "no ordinary man." If it implies that John must have been one of social prestige and prominence, a highly educated and learned man, possessed of more than average talents, then, a serious doubt at once enters our mind, for it accords not with what is revealed elsewhere of the thoughts and ways of Him which are so different from ours. "The LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1Sa 16:7). He is pleased to choose "the foolish things to confound the wise" and "the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty: and base things of the world, and things which are despised...that no flesh should glory in his presence" (1Co 1:27-29)—the primary reference being to His ministers, and the wider application to His saints in general. Thus, the ambassadors of Christ were for the most part unlettered fishermen, and when the Messiah appeared, he had no form nor comeliness in the sight of men.

Nevertheless, from the spiritual and divine side of things, the above expectation *was* fully realized. The one appointed to introduce the Saviour unto Israel was the subject of Old Testament prediction. He came from exceptionally pious parents. His very name was given to him by an angel before his conception (Luk 1:13). He was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Luk 1:15). His mission was a unique one. Yea, we are fully warranted in saying that God conferred upon him higher honours than on any other of the sons of men either before or since. He was "the prophet of the Highest" and sent "before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways" (Luk 1:76). He was the first administrator of the holy ordinance of baptism (and accordingly is named "the Baptist"), and had the great privilege of baptizing the Lord Jesus. It was announced that "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord" (Luk 1:15), and blessedly was that fulfilled, for he was most eminently characterized by "a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1Pe 3:4). In that respect, as in many others, he was closely conformed unto Him who was "meek and lowly in heart."

There are a number of striking paradoxes in the career of John which are deserving of mention. Though both of his parents were of the tribe of Levi, and his father an officiating priest (Luk 1:5), yet, he himself filled no ecclesiastical position and was never seen in the temple. Though his task was such a momentous one, there is no hint that he was trained in any of the schools of earth or that he consorted with men of letters. Instead, we are informed that he "was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel" (Luk 1:80). Though he was appointed to make the Messiah "manifest to Israel" (Joh 1:31), instead of using Jerusalem for his headquarters, his

sphere of operations was the wilderness! Though invested with such high dignity, nevertheless, his garb was of the meanest and his food the plainest. Though a prophet and filled with the Holy Spirit, yet, he performed no miracles. Though his mission and ministry were of such deep importance, yet, they began and ended within the space of a few weeks! Though he was highly esteemed by the multitudes, yet, he ended his days in prison, and God suffered the one who had so faithfully discharged his duty to be beheaded.

Luke 1:5 records a situation which must have deeply exercised the hearts of the godly remnant then to be found in Israel. Their beloved land was in the hands of enemies. The throne was occupied by a heathen—the wicked Herod then being king of Judaea. Long centuries had passed since any of the seed of David had wielded the scepter. It looked as though JEHOVAH had ceased to be gracious. But the saints walk by faith, and not by sight. God's sure Word, and not that which appears to outward sight, is the ground of their confidence, the basis of their hopes, and the comfort of their hearts. Faith may indeed be sorely tested, patience tried to its limits; the vision may tarry long, but in God's good time, it is certain of realization. It has been so all through the past, it was then—it will be so to the end of human history. Those words, "And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (Mat 25:6) enunciate a principle which has received frequent fulfilment, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psa 30:5).

Against that dark background of Herod's being king of Judaea, we are told, "A certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luk 1:5-6). Those were the parents of John the Baptist, and profoundly significant were their names. Zacharias means "JEHOVAH remembers." How blessed! Our own memories are treacherous, and those about us are often forgetful, but not so the omniscient One. And *what is it* that He particularly "remembers"? The name of Zacharias's wife tells us, for Elisabeth means "The oath of God." Ah, *that* is what JEHOVAH never forgets, never falsifies, never fails to execute. Of old, He declared, "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations" (Psa 89:3-4). "And God remembered his covenant" (Exo 2:24), when the children of Israel were groaning under their Egyptian bondage. In the days of the Judges, they provoked Him, and He brought them low for their iniquity, yet, "He remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies" (Psa 106:42-45). That He kept His covenant was Daniel's comfort in Babylon (Dan 9:4), so too Nehemiah's (Neh 1:5).

It was the covenant "ordered in all things and sure" (2Sa 23:5), which the Lord now remembered—the next step unto the fulfilment of which He was about to perform. This is abundantly clear from what follows in Luke 1. First, the words of the Saviour's mother to Elisabeth after she had been informed of her own supernatural conception and upon visiting her cousin, "He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy," which is explained by what immediately follows. "As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever" (Luk 1:54-55). And second, the language of Zacharias himself, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people...to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham" (Luk 1:68, 72-73). It is not without reason that the Spirit has informed us that Zacharias was a priest "after the course of Abia" for a reference to 1 Chronicles 24:10 ("Abijah" is the Hebrew form of Abia, and means "Jah is father"), shows that his was the *eighth* of the twenty-four, and in the



language of scriptural numerics, it is the number which speaks of a new beginning—a new dispensation was now dawning not only for Israel, but for the whole world.

The testimony borne to the parents of the Baptist shows that they were of exceptional piety, “They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Luk 1:6). That does not mean they were morally perfect, for “There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecc 7:20). “Righteous before God” signifies that they were saved souls. More specifically, they were righteous both legally and experientially—justified by faith in Christ, had received a holy nature at regeneration. But more—they supplied proof thereof—not merely by words, but by their works. Note the *uniformity* of their conduct. They not only complied with the divinely appointed “ordinances” of worship, but also performed the moral “commandments.” They not only approved themselves unto God, but they led exemplary lives before men, so that none could charge them with open sin. They were heedful of their ways, and, therefore, were kept from proving an occasion to others of stumbling. Their *walk* was highly honouring to God, for their lot was cast in a day of sadly low spirituality, and not of revival. Nevertheless, divine grace was sufficient for them. Ponder Philippians 2:15!

“And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years” (Luk 1:7). The barrenness of Elisabeth was emblematic of the condition of her nation at that time—though very punctilious in ceremonial formalism, there was no fruit for God—nor could there be, until His might sovereignly and graciously interposed. A situation existed which was altogether beyond the capacity of man to remedy. Elisabeth was not only barren, but “in her old age” (Luk 1:36), so that, like Sarah of yore, her womb was now dead. Thus, there must be a supernatural operation from on high if she was to bear a son. The spiritual truth which is here illustrated is not only of deep importance, but plainly set forth. A power above and beyond that of mere nature has to come in before there can be any deliverance from the surrounding darkness and dearth, and any real revival of godliness be set in motion. Genuine servants of God are not the product of human might, natural wisdom, or earthly training. Instead, they are heaven’s gift. Divinely raised up and supernaturally called and qualified, fitted and empowered by the Holy Spirit. That is why God’s people are bidden, “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest” (Mat 9:38). Yet how little is that heeded today!

Next, we are told that while Zacharias was officiating in the temple, an angel of the Lord stood on the right side of the altar of incense, saying to him, “Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth” (verses 13-14). Valuable instruction is there here for us. Zacharias did not allow the appalling state of Judaism, nor the disappointing barrenness of his wife, to fill him with despondency and despair. Instead, he continued to serve the Lord, and to wait upon the throne of grace. So in this present day of declension and darkness, even though to carnal reason the situation appears to be hopeless, it is our responsibility to adhere steadfastly to the discharge of duty and to make known our requests unto God. Here, too, is real encouragement for us; the harbinger of Christ was given in answer to supplication! The incident now before us records one of the many examples contained in the Scriptures for our comfort. It illustrates the need of importunity in believing prayer. No doubt Zacharias had often besought God to give him a son, yet, apparently his petitions were in vain. But it is written, “Men ought always to pray, and *not to faint*” (Luk 18:1). Now he received

assurance that his petition was granted, “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col 4:2).

“For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luk 1:15-17). First, Christ’s forerunner should be “great in the sight of the Lord,” employed by Him in most eminent service, signally honoured by the unique position accorded him. Second, he was to be a total abstainer from liquor all the days of his life, which means that he was to be a “Nazarite” (Num 6:1-3) or one “separated,” wholly devoted unto God, which was a signal honour for his parents (Amo 2:11). Third, his being filled with the Holy Spirit from being conceived was the divine appointing and anointing of him to the prophetic office (compare Jer 1:5). Fourth, he would be abundantly successful in his mission, for he would be instrumental in the conversion of many, and thereby prepare them to receive Christ for themselves when He appeared. He was to be named John, which means “The favour of God,” and many would rejoice at his birth (Luk 1:58), so that in this respect, too, he was another Isaac, producing the “laughter” of joy. “He was a distinguished favourite of heaven, and a distinguished blessing to the earth” (Matthew Henry).

And what was the response made by the recipient of this blessed and wondrous revelation from the celestial messenger? Was Zacharias overwhelmed with wonderment and praise unto God for such favours? Alas, far from it. He was full of doubts and fears. “And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years” (Luk 1:18). That is very sad and solemn. Though definitely assured, “Elisabeth *shall* bear thee a son” (Luk 1:13), he questioned it, being occupied entirely with the difficulties of the case, and was skeptical about the good news communicated to him. This also is recorded for our instruction—as a warning for us to take to heart. It is a tragic reminder that unbelief still lurks within the hearts of the saints, and needs to be sternly resisted. It gives point to that exhortation, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12). The chastening hand of God now fell upon the priest. Let us see in God’s striking Zacharias dumb for his unbelief (verse 20) what a grave offence it is to supplicate the throne of grace and not expect an answer. Still graver to receive a promise from Him and, then, turn from it in unbelief. Those lips which ought to be employed in thanksgiving were now silent—the Lord will not use the mouths of those who distrust Him.

But despite the skepticism of Zacharias, in due time (Luk 1:57), the divine promise *was* fulfilled—“If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself” (2Ti 2:13)—and the child was born unto him. His birth was extraordinary, due to the direct intervention of God, and therein it, too, “prepared the way of the Lord.” As Matthew Henry pointed out, it was “*next* to miraculous, so that the people might be prepared to receive and believe a virgin’s bringing forth of a son, which was *perfectly* miraculous.” Another link in the wondrous operations of divine providence had been supplied, and the unborn babe leaped in his mother’s womb as he heard the salutation of Mary (Luk 1:41). What proof was this that he was then “filled with the Holy Spirit”? The relations and neighbours gathered together at the happy event. *They* wanted to name the child after his father, but his mother insisted that he should be called John—“God’s gift.” Signs were made to Zacharias and he confirmed his wife. Whereupon the chastening hand of God was at once removed, speech was restored to him again, and he praised the Lord (Luk 1:59-66). When natural inclinations were subordinated to spiritual considerations, communion was recovered!

The immediate sequel is very blessed. “Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied” (Luk 1:67). Most important is the practical lesson therein inculcated. Now that Zacharias had righted the wrong and was back again in full fellowship with the One whose word he had doubted, the Holy Spirit was morally free to use him as His messenger. That is the key to that oft-quoted, but little-understood, petition of the contrite Psalmist, “O LORD, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise” (Psa 51:15). David had been smitten with spiritual dumbness by his sad fall, and until God sealed his pardon, there could be no peace in his heart or praise from his lips. It was a request that God would unstop his shame-silenced mouth. It was a further evidence of David’s deep penitence that he desired to present again an offering of thanksgiving. As he was forgiven, restored, and became a happy worshipper, so Zacharias was now lifted entirely above himself, giving expression to God-honouring language which has been preserved unto this day. His inspired song became an imperishable part of Holy Writ, and the father of the Baptist was numbered among the “holy men” who, of old, “spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2Pe 1:21).

Filled with the Spirit, Zacharias was given discernment to perceive that which was hidden from those who were wise and prudent in their own esteem. He had spiritual understanding of the times. He knew that the long-promised Redeemer was at hand, that a mighty Saviour was being raised up (Luk 1:68-69). He realized that God was on the point of fulfilling the everlasting covenant (Luk 1:72). He recognized that God’s redeemed would serve Him “in holiness and righteousness” (Luk 1:75). He understood that the son which had been given to him was the predicted forerunner of the Messiah (Luk 1:76). He apprehended that salvation is entirely of the Lord, that He alone can give light to those in darkness, and “*guide* our feet into the way of peace” (Luk 1:79).



# December

## OUR DELIGHTS

New Year's Message — to be read on January 1, 1953

What are really the objects of your greatest delights? What are the things which afford you the most solid and lasting pleasure? Wherein does your heart find satisfaction? The truthful answer to those questions reveals the state of your soul, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. If your affections be set upon things below, if it affords you more joy than anything else to see your bank balance growing, or to receive the honours, or revel in the pleasures of this world. If you see in Christ no beauty as to make you desire Him, then, you are a lost soul. That which we most delight in is our “God.” To rejoice more in our own wisdom, strength, or possessions, than in the Lord, is to idolize them. To take more delight in parents, wife, children, is to worship them. Yet, that is the common sin of the unregenerate the world over—as it was the Christian reader’s when he was dead in sin—to prefer the creature to the Creator.

Now, if the Lord takes such pleasure in His people (as was shown in the companion article), how much more so ought they to take pleasure in Him! Such is His injunction to the saint, “Delight thyself also in the LORD” (Psa 37:4). All things that are excellent and lovely upon earth or in heaven—all the graces of time and all the blessings of eternity—center in Him as their source and flow from Him as their fountain. Then, make Him the joy and rejoicing of your soul. Fix your thoughts upon Him and let your affections flow out to Him. Drink deeply from this Fountain of living water. Revel in your substantial portion. “My soul followeth hard after thee” (Psa 63:8). Let that be your determined resolve and supreme business. The whole spiritual life is but a pursuit of the soul toward God, and the more constantly and earnestly we seek Him, to enjoy more of His saving graces and benefits, the more we have of the love of God in us. Therefore did David express this longing as exceeding all others, “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD” (Psa 27:4)—to commune and converse with Him, to taste the ravishing sweetness of His presence.

“Delight thyself also in the LORD” (Psa 37:4). In His peerless *person*. He has everything in Him which the renewed soul can desire, for He is “altogether lovely.” All excellencies are found in Immanuel, without defect or excess, everything in perfect harmony and in exact proportion. Delight in His holiness, for it is “glorious” (Exo 15:11); in His wisdom, for it is “manifold” (Eph 3:10); in His faithfulness, for it is “great” (Lam 3:23); in His goodness, which “endureth continually” (Psa 52:1); in His power, for it is “exceeding great” (Eph 1:19); in His mercy, which

is “abundant” (1Pe 1:3); for He is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever (Heb 13:8). Delight thyself also in His *offices*, which are all exercised in thy behalf—a Prophet to instruct and direct thee (Mat 21:11), a Priest who ever liveth to make intercession for thee (Heb 7:17, 25), and present to God thy petitions and praises, and a King to rule over thee (1Ti 6:15), to subdue thine enemies (1Ch 17:10), to regulate thine affairs, and to make all things work together for thy good (Rom 8:28).

Delight thyself also in His *titles* and relationships. Is He not thy Father (Isa 9:6), thy Redeemer (1Co 1:30), thy Comforter (2Th 2:16-17)? If thou be a born-again soul, then the Lord is thy strong Rock (1Co 10:4), and thou art built upon Him (1Co 3:11), and the gates of hell shall never prevail against thee (Mat 16:18). He is thy shepherd (Heb 13:20), who maketh thee to lie down in green pastures and leadeth thee beside the still waters (Psa 23:2). He is thy Light (Joh 8:12), to illumine the understanding, and make His way plain before thy face. He is thy Shield and exceeding great Reward (Gen 15:1). Though there be much in this world to distress and depress, yet a believing contemplation of the glory of the Lord will lift our hearts and minds above it. This is the grand remedy for all our ills, the only effectual balsam for our diseases. By delighting ourselves in the Lord, comfort and support are administered to us. This is the way and means of conveying a deeper sense of God’s love unto our souls, causing us to “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8).

This delighting of ourselves in the Lord is very much more than having vague and casual wishes, namely, the outgoings of our innermost and deepest longings. According as we thus delight ourselves in Him will all other objects pale. They disappoint, but He satisfies the soul. They soon vanish, but He remains. According as we make the Lord our Portion (Lam 3:24), life is imparted and vigour is infused, so that we find the joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh 8:10). This will make duties not only easy, but pleasant, giving a relish to them. This will make sorrows easier to endure, for His peace will flow into the soul and sustain it in the darkest hour. If we be daily and truly delighting ourselves in the Lord, then death will be welcome, and we shall be carried into and through it comfortably and cheerfully. Who can fear to commit his parting spirit into the hands of his Beloved!

Delight thyself in those things that delight Him, and the more wilt thou abound in those fruits which please Him. In proportion as you do will Psalm 119:47 express the language of your heart, “I delight myself in *thy commandments*, which I have loved.” By nature, we deemed His commandments burdensome, because they were contrary to the desires of the flesh, but when we were renewed by grace, another bias was given to our affections, God writing His commandments upon our hearts (Heb 8:10), inclining us thereto, so that obedience becomes cheerful and holiness our happiness. Note well the order in Psalm 119:47. God’s commandments are loved before they be delighted in, for it is love that sweetens duties, making it our meat and drink to do God’s will. Thus, this is an infallible mark of a gracious soul, and therefore did David make it the character of the blessed man (the one who is happy in his soul, and on whom the divine benediction rests), “His delight is in the law of the LORD, and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psa 1:2). Paul also avers this as a sure evidence of his sincerity amid all his infirmities, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom 7:22).

The graceless professor may relish God’s promises and build an unsanctifying and delusive hope upon them, but he delights not in His precepts, for he has no love for their Author. But the saint regards it as both his privilege and safety to “long after” God’s precepts (Psa 119:40) in dependence on His promises, expecting a fulfillment of the promises in the way of obedience to His precepts. “Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his

commandments” (Psa 112:1), for obedience procures a good conscience and obtains the approbation of God, and thus, we find that “in keeping of them there is great reward” (Psa 19:11)—in this life as well as in the next. In times of adversity and tribulation, we should turn to God’s precepts for counsel and comfort, “Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights” (Psa 119:143). “A good understanding have all they that *do* his commandments” (Psa 111:10).

If we would please the Lord, then we must also remember *the Sabbath day* and keep it holy. “If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob” (Isa 58:13-14). In that way is the Sabbath to be sanctified— withdrawing the mind from temporal things, abstaining from all secular work and fleshly gratification, allowing not ourselves that liberty of speech as on other days, but setting our affections on things above, performing holy duties, and rejoicing in what that day celebrates (Psa 118:22-24). Then shall we be lifted above this world, anticipate heaven, and be favoured with blessed foretastes thereof. The saint should be most in his element when he is wholly at leisure to joy in the Lord.

“I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste” (Song 2:3). If that language marked the strength of the Church’s faith in and love to Christ centuries before He became incarnate, then how much greater reason have Christians today to make it theirs! Let it never be said that they, who beheld their Beloved only through “the shadow of good things to come” (Heb 10:1) and the prophecies and promises of Scripture, were more filled with ecstasy in Him than we are, now that the promises are fulfilled and the substance is ours. Christ is the Tree of life, who not only affords shade and shelter for the weather-beaten saint, but whose branches are laden with delectable fruit, to regale and satisfy His people. Then come and sit down before Him, to enjoy His presence, obtain sweet discoveries and manifestations of His grace and love, admire and feast upon His perfections, and rest in the Lord. The better He be known, the more goes out the heart unto Him.

In proportion as the Christian reader delights himself in the Lord, in His Word, in His Sabbath, and communes and converses with Him, the more will 1953 prove to be a happy, yea, *delightful*, year.

# EXPOSITION OF JOHN'S FIRST EPISTLE

## 36. Seducers (2:26)

*"These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you."*

### Why this is important

It is likely that quite a number of our readers will consider that there is little or no occasion for us to devote a chapter to our present subject, or, at any rate, that they feel in no need of anything thereon. If so, they are lamentably ignorant of their own hearts. Anyone who imagines himself to be so well taught and established in the truth as to be immune from being imposed upon by error is in a dangerous state of mind, for he is possessed by a spirit of pride and self-sufficiency, and therefore very liable to fall a victim to the wiles of the devil. It is written, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Pro 16:18). There is nothing that God hates more than pride; and where it be allowed, He humbles. Pride is "the condemnation of the devil" (1Ti 3:6), being that which brought about his ruin. It was the insensate pride of our first parents—the desire to be as God—that plunged the whole race to destruction. Pride or self-confidence was the cause of Peter's sad fall. Those who think highly of themselves affront God, and will be brought low. "Be not high minded, but fear" (Rom 11:20), dear reader. "When Majesty humbled Himself, shall the worm swell with pride?" (Bernard).

The Christian is exhorted to "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1Th 5:21)—to examine carefully and critically everything which he hears or reads, testing it by the Word of God. There is pressing need for him to do so, for there is much error, cleverly disguised, abroad today. As another has pointed out, "We may know a straight line, and be assured that there is in it no curve, or twist, or angle; and yet much that appears straight will be found to be irregular, bent, and twisted, when tested by a measuring rod. In like manner we may know the truth, and yet much that appears to be true will be found false when tested by the truth Himself. The only perfect line of rectitude is Christ. All who are opposed to Him, in thought, word, or deed, are liars; even as all watches are false that contradict the sun." The Christ of many a pulpit is radically different from the Christ of God, yet because the preacher invests the figment of his own imagination with the name of "Christ," many unlearned and unstable souls are deceived into supposing that it is the Christ of Scripture that is being set before them. It was so in John's day, and that is why he devoted this section of his epistle to an exposure of the same, and warning the saints against them.

The apostle was very jealous of the spiritual welfare of Christ's sheep, and anxious to secure them from the fierce wolves. In his other epistles he revealed the loving spirit that animated him when he declared, "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth" (2Jo 1:4), and "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3Jo 1:4). How greatly distressed, then, must he have been to discover that some had forsaken the same and espoused error (1Jo 2:19)! He therefore wrote to instruct and warn those who might be wavering. He knew

that in the most enlightened there is much ignorance. In the most determined there is yet irresolution. In the most spiritual there is still corruption. Especially in the case of the newly converted was there a need for precept upon precept, line upon line. His long experience had shown him how many defects and dangers encompassed the most favoured and advanced believers, and how requisite it was ever to address unto them the word of exhortation. In the case before us it appears that he was very hopeful of success in thus addressing them. In verse 21, he intimates that he set the truth before them encouraged by the belief that there would be found in them a readiness of mind to receive it; while in verse 27 he expresses the confidence that the anointing they had received would ensure their abiding in Christ.

## Definition

A “seducer” is one who, by means of his blandishments or sophistries, seeks to allure another from the path of rectitude. The ungodly are allured by their own lusts. “The righteous *is* more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them” (Pro 12:26). Even in this life the righteous are “more excellent” than others, in their character, their spiritual possessions, and their privileges. But the worker of iniquity is deceived by the way of the world, which tempts and cheats him by its promises of temporal gains, honours, and pleasures, and blinds his mind to his eternal undoing. “He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside [from the paths of wisdom and holiness], that he cannot deliver his soul” (Isa 44:20). On the other hand, professing Christians are seduced by false teachers, who seek to corrupt their minds and turn them away from the truth. They tacitly repudiate the total depravity of man, concealing the fact that he is dead in trespasses and sins, completely incapacitated to perform a single spiritual act; and flatter him by assuring him of his “free will,” and that he has power to decide his own eternal destiny. They pervert God’s way of salvation, omitting that which is abasing to pride, and substituting that which is pleasing to the flesh. They preach “another gospel” than that of Christ. By “cunning craftiness...they lie in wait to deceive,” and “allure through the lusts of the flesh” (Eph 4:14; 2Pe 2:18).

Of old God declared, “Mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies...Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar” (Eze 13:9-10).

“The peculiar guilt of these prophets consisted in seducing the worshippers of God into idolatry and iniquity, and encouraging them to harden themselves in impenitence; by assuring them of peace and prosperity at the very time when divine judgments were about to be poured on them...Thus they acted as if a man were to build a wall with loose stones or bricks of earth without cement; and others should seek to give an appearance of stability by daubing it over with mortar made of bad materials and not properly mixed; and should then expect that such a wall would protect them” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

And those men were not heathen soothsayers, but Israelites who claimed to be the mouthpieces of Jehovah. So it is in Christendom: many have entered the sacred ministry as a means to worldly advancement and applause. They pretend to speak in the name of Christ, but they are strangers to Him. They love money rather than souls, and prefer the praise of men to the approbation of God.

“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2Ti 3:12-13). The seducers and the persecutors of God’s people are two very different types. The former seek to turn them away from



the truth, whereas the latter oppose them because of their fidelity unto the truth. The former conceal their real character, but the latter come out in their true colours. The one feign themselves to be friends and helpers, the other make no attempt to disguise the fact that they are enemies and antagonists. The former are harder to detect, and we are very apt to be less on our guard against them. Constant vigilance is required lest we be deceived by their “good words and fair speeches” (Rom 16:18). Let us not overlook, but rather be awed by, the striking accuracy of this prophecy. It is not that persecutors would become fiercer and fiercer as the Christian era proceeded, but that evil men and seducers should wax worse and worse. And so it has been historically. Nothing comparable, either in scale or ferocity, has equaled the persecutions of the saints by Nero and others of the Roman emperors who followed him. On the other hand, efforts to corrupt the truth and beguile Christians by those claiming to be the servants of Christ have increased in number, daring, and subtlety.

The arch-seducer is Satan, who beguiled Eve through his wiles. He pretended to have her best interests at heart and to sympathize because of the restriction placed upon her liberty. He made her imagine that she was mistaken in supposing that she would be injured by eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, that such a thing was quite incompatible with God’s goodness and His interest in her well-being. He assured her that, on the contrary, she would be the gainer by partaking of its fruit. The gilded bait was swallowed, and fatal was the result. That was the beginning of his trade in seducing souls, and he has plied it energetically ever since. The devil is the instigator of innumerable devices to cheat the unwary and ruin their souls. He often appears as an angel of light, and his ministers are disguised as those of righteousness (2Co 11:14-15). Such abounded at the commencement of this Christian era. The Lord revealed their method and aim in the parable where He spoke of the evil leaven being surreptitiously introduced into the meal (Mat 13:33). The epistles contain many warnings against them. Paul declared, “For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ” (2Co 11:13). It is so today.

### The ways of seduction

The wicked one has many of his seducing emissaries in Christendom, who pose as men of superior enlightenment, with great spiritual zeal and love for souls, yet are engaged in stealthily propagating error and undermining the fundamentals of the faith. And, as we have seen, it was divinely foretold that these evil men and seducers should wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. The word “evil men” signifies wicked, being the same one as used in “the wicked one” (1Jo 2:14). They have vile designs, though they appear under “a form of godliness” (2Ti 3:5). They are dissemblers, assuming a character which does not belong to them. They are tricksters, beguiling many by their arts to receive as good and true that which is pernicious and false. They are themselves deluded by the father of lies. They jettison the Law of God under the pretence of magnifying His grace. They set aside the duty of the sinner to repent and believe, by over-stressing his moral impotence. The most searching and humbling sections of Scripture are shelved by an erroneous system of what is termed “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2Ti 2:15). Eternal punishment is represented as being incompatible with the goodness and mercy of God.

In other instances, these seducers of souls and corrupters of the truth introduce, gradually, practices not sanctioned by Scripture, until there is a fully developed system of superstitious observances. Such wax worse and worse both in principle and practice. They grow increasingly ambitious and audacious. An awful example of this is seen in the ever-advancing blatancy and

blasphemy of Romanism. In 1854 the dogma of “The Immaculate Conception” was invented and announced; Pope Pius proclaiming that the Virgin Mary was absolutely pure and sinless from the womb, and declaring the same to be “the established doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church”—thereby ascribing to her body what pertained alone to the Lord Jesus Christ. In 1870 the Vatican Council declared that the Pope was infallible in the execution of all that pertained to his pontifical functions, thus investing him with a divine attribute. In 1951, amid unprecedented pomp and pageantry, the Pope published the dogma of Mary’s Assumption, wherein it was averred that she had been taken “body and soul into the glory of heaven,” placing her on a par with the Saviour. The same increasing wickedness is seen in thousands of non-papish churches, whose pulpits are now occupied by men voicing the skepticism (the denial of miracles) of infidels and agnostics.

### Background: Review of verses 18-25

*“These things I have written unto you concerning them that seduce you,”* or, as the American Revised Version (often more literal and accurate in translating the Greek verb) has it, “These things have I written unto you concerning them that would lead thee astray.” The “these things” refers to what is contained in verses 18-25, and probably many would be helped if we briefly reviewed their contents. First, it is to be noted that John was here addressing the youngest in the family, the “little children,” or “babes” as the word properly signifies. It is the newly converted who, in their ignorance and simplicity, most need to be warned against false teachers. They are informed that this Christian dispensation is “the last time” or concluding era of the world’s history, so that no further revelation from God is to be expected, and therefore any who claim to be favoured with such are impostors. The character and will of God have been fully and finally made known in and by His incarnate Son (Heb 1:1-2). The presence of “many antichrists” furnished evidence that “the last time” had even then begun, for their activities demonstrated that the true Christ had come, and since He had ushered in the final age, and they were opposing Him, naught remained but the judgment of God.

Then the apostle intimated that there was no occasion for those young Christians to be stumbled because some of their fellows had given ear to the antichrists and had apostatized from the faith, for he assured them that those renegades were never anything more than nominal disciples. Though they had made a profession, had much head knowledge of the truth, and appeared to be full of zeal for the Gospel, nevertheless they were graceless souls, strangers to the saving operations of the Holy Spirit. They “were not of us”; though members of the churches, they never had vital union with Christ and His people. Their going out made it “manifest that they were not all of us” (verse 19). While it cannot but be a distressing and disturbing experience unto God’s people to behold some of those deserting the assemblies and proving to be traitors with whom they had enjoyed outward fellowship, yet it should not shatter their own faith, for God often suffers the chaff to be thus sifted and separated from the wheat. The Scripture gives plain warning that there are thorny-ground hearers as well as fruitful ones, that the Gospel net encloses bad fishes besides good ones, that many shall follow the pernicious ways of false prophets.

Next, in verse 20, he assured the babes, “But ye have an unction from the Holy One,” which distinguished them radically from the apostates. That “unction” is God’s gracious provision for His own people, to preserve them from embracing fatal error. That unction or “anointing” is the coming of the Spirit from Christ upon those for whom He shed His blood; it is both the communication of a spiritual gift and a divine operation that separates the recipient from the world and all that is opposed to God, consecrating him to Him. The first benefit that believers

have by this anointing is an illumination of the mind: “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” The knowledge imparted to the Christian by the gift of the Spirit and His effectual application of the truth unto the heart is radically different from the wisdom of the natural man, or any mental apprehension of spiritual things that he may obtain. It is a supernatural, spiritual, and saving acquaintance with divine things. It is an experiential and certifying knowledge, by which the soul is infallibly assured of the verity of God’s Word. It is a humbling and conforming knowledge, casting the heart into the mold of divine doctrine (Rom 6:17). It is therefore a *preservative* knowledge, which prevents its possessor being fatally deceived by error. It is an *operative* knowledge which stirs the soul unto holy action.

It was because these babes in Christ were savingly acquainted with the truth that John thus addressed them, and because they knew “that no lie is of the truth” (verse 21). When the eyes of the understanding be opened by God, there is the capacity to distinguish between light and darkness. Because the sheep recognize the voice of the shepherd, they refuse to follow the call of a stranger. Nevertheless, it was needful for the apostle to put them on their guard against false prophets, that they might be still further established in the faith and fortified against specious<sup>37</sup> error. Error often has a very plausible appearance, and many are deceived thereby; since they have no inward and saving experience of the truth, they are unable to discern that which is opposed to it. But those who know and are established in the Gospel are assured that no lie can be found in or deduced from it; as well expect foul water from a clean fountain as heresy in the pure Word of God. Whatever be contrary to the Gospel of Christ cannot be sound and wholesome.

From that general principle John proceeded to point out that anyone who denied that Jesus is the Christ was a liar and an antichrist, and no matter what be his pretensions “the same hath not the Father” (verses 22-23)—a repudiator of the truth, an antagonist of God’s Son, a seducer of souls, and therefore a deadly enemy of the saints. By such fearful names of opprobrium<sup>38</sup> does God stigmatize the corrupters of His Gospel and warn His people against them. In view of such a menace John made a practical application of the foregoing, exhorting the saints to persevere in the faith and heed not those who sought to entice away from it (verse 24). It is only by means of the truth abiding in our hearts and operating in our lives that we are rendered immune to the devil’s lies and kept from apostasy. A cherishing of that which was blessed to our conversion, and the conforming of our characters and conduct thereto, maintains the soul in communion with the Lord, and that will make us turn a deaf ear unto those siren voices that seek to draw us from Him and bring about our eternal ruin.

Finally, to encourage these young converts to hold fast the truth and shun lying novelties, the apostle reminded them, “And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (verse 25). “Eternal life” is both a present possession and a future prospect. It is received by faith’s laying hold of the Gospel offer, and it is realized in the soul just so far as fellowship with Christ is practically maintained by subjection to His will. But the full possession and fruition of “eternal life” (the sum of the believer’s blessedness and the climax of his bliss) awaits the world to come, and it is by hope’s anticipation thereof—through faith’s keeping steadfastly in view the joy set before him—that the believer is strengthened to run the race set before him and kept from straying. Now there is nothing more pleasing to God than our making a good use of His promises. First, by collecting them, storing them in our minds, meditating much upon them, and making them our spiritual food. Second, by faith’s laying hold of the same and pleading them before the

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<sup>37</sup> **specious** – having the ring of truth, but actually false; deceptive.

<sup>38</sup> **opprobrium** - reproach mingled with contempt or disdain.

throne of grace: “do as thou hast said” (2Sa 7:25; and cf. Psa 119:49; Act 27:25). Third, by cleansing ourselves from everything contrary to holiness (2Co 7:1).

## Conclusion

“These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.” From which we may see, *first*, that all teachers of error are beguilers of souls—what terrible appellations: liars, antichrists, seducers! How they should be feared and shunned! *Second*, how needful it is that we be well informed and instructed from the Scriptures that we may be enabled to detect and reject everything that is contrary thereto. The welfare of our souls and the glory of God demand that we thoroughly familiarize ourselves with the Word of truth. *Third*, “it is the duty of a good and diligent pastor not only to gather a flock, but also to drive away wolves; for what will it avail to proclaim the pure Gospel, if he connive at the impostures of Satan?” (John Calvin, 1509-1564). Error must be exposed and refuted if the minister is to “take the stumblingblock out of the way of my people” (Isa 57:14). Finally, we see how that, humanly speaking, we are beholden to the seducers of the first century for not a little in the Epistles, their attacks giving occasion to warn against them. Thus God can bring light out of darkness, and by error make way for a more complete discovery of the truth.

# THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

## 88. Cities of Refuge, Part 2

In his comments upon Numbers 35, Thomas Scott well remarked, “This remarkable law, expressive of the deepest detestation of murder, yet providing most effectually against the innocent being punished with the guilty, is likewise an instructive typical representation of the salvation of the Gospel. ‘The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men’ (Rom 1:18). If it is appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment, with the eternal consequences, in the meanwhile a Refuge is provided and revealed in Christ Jesus. His ministers warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come, and instruct and exhort them to ‘flee for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them’ (Heb 6:18). All things are prepared for the reception of those who obey this call. By faith they discern both their danger and refuge. Then fear warns and hope animates. Should death, like the avenger of blood, find them *without*, destruction is inevitable.” The fact that the cities of refuge are described at more or less length in no fewer than *four* of the Old Testament books—Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua—denotes the importance of them, as well as adumbrating the delineation which we have of the antitypical Refuge in the *four* Gospels.

When we bear in mind how much the Holy Spirit delighted in shadowing forth the Lord Jesus under the Old Testament, in type and figure, and when we observe how closely and strikingly the various things said of the cities of refuge point to the Saviour, we must conclude that they were

divinely designed to foreshadow Him. In seeking to understand and interpret the types, two dangers need to be guarded against—first, the giving way to an unbridled imagination, and second, ultra-caution and conservatism. On the one hand, we must not indulge in the fanciful allegorizing of Origen. On the other, we must eschew the rationalizing of the Higher Critics. In the past, too many have been chargeable with the first. But today, when the divine element is either denied or pushed into the background, the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme—to assume that we are unwarranted in regarding anything in the Old Testament as possessing a spiritual significance unless the New Testament expressly says so is as unjustifiable as to insist that there are no prophecies there except those specifically termed such in the New Testament—for instance, Genesis 3:15.

Concerning the subject now before us, there are, in the judgment of this writer, at least two passages in the Epistles which confirm the view that the cities of refuge are to be regarded as having a spiritual meaning and reference. The first is in Philippians 3:9, where the apostle, after announcing and then renouncing all his natural advantages as a Hebrew, counting them but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, expresses the desire that he might be “*found in him*, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” There the proud Pharisee forsook his own righteousness, which was condemned by the law—as the manslayer fled from the avenger of blood—and he betook himself to the righteousness of Christ as the homicide did within the city of refuge from the sword of justice. The second passage is a still more manifest allusion to this Old Testament figure, for there the heirs of promise are assured that God has provided strong consolation unto those who have “*fled for refuge* to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb 6:18), i.e. in the Gospel—reminding us of the prayer of David, “Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I *flee unto thee* to hide me” (Psa 143:9).

The manslayer is an apt representation of the sinner, who is a soul-slayer, “Thou hast destroyed thyself” (Hos 13:9). But more particularly, he sets before us *the awakened sinner*. Previously, the man had lived in quietness and comfort, but when he slew another, though unintentionally, his peace was shattered. Everything was suddenly changed. There was danger without, and fear within. He now discovered himself to be in a very evil case. There lies the body of another, dead by his own carelessness. Who can conceive the distress and dismay which overwhelm his mind? He knows that the next of kin has the right to take vengeance and slay him. He is no longer safe in his own home. He is unable to find security in any building of his own hands. He must perforce flee for his life. Thus it is with the unconverted. In his natural condition, a false serenity is his, and he finds contentment in the things of this world and the pleasures of sin. Then, unawares, the Holy Spirit arouses him from the sleep of spiritual death, convicts him of sin, makes him realize that the wrath of God is upon him, and his soul exposed to eternal death. Oh, what unspeakable anguish is his as he now realizes himself to be a rebel against the Most High, lost and undone.

Intolerable dread now fills him as the fire of hell is felt in his spirit and the undying worm gnaws at his conscience. What must I do? How shall I escape?—are his urgent inquiries. Proud reason can furnish no answer. His outlook appears to be hopeless, his case beyond the reach of mercy. Now it is that the message of the Gospel receives welcome attention. He has heard it, perhaps, many times before, but without any personal interest or deep concern. So with the manslayer. Hitherto he gave little or no thought at all to what he had read or heard about the cities of refuge—having no need of them, they possessed no special interest for him. But matters are very different with him now. Having become a homicide, those places become of the utmost

importance in his esteem, and he is greatly relieved by the knowledge that a merciful provision has been made with God to meet his desperate case, that shelter is available from the avenger. Thus it is with the sinner. He may be informed about God's way of salvation, but he never sets his heart upon it, labours to understand it clearly, and appropriate it unto his own deep need, until he is made sensible of his ruined condition.

"Men do not flee for refuge when they are in no distress. The vessel puts not into the harbor of refuge when winds and waves all favour her. A man does not escape out of a city, like Lot from Sodom, unless he be persuaded that the city is to be destroyed, and that he is likely to perish in it. Ah! Indeed, we who are saved confess with gratitude to Him that has delivered us that we were once in danger. In *danger*, my brethren, is the word strong enough? In danger of eternal burnings! It was worse than that, for we are brands plucked out of the fire; we already burned with that fire of sin, which is the fire of hell" (C. H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892). It is one thing to be in deadly danger—as are all who lie under the condemnation and curse of God's broken law—but it is quite another to have a feeling sense of the same in our souls. A man is satisfied with his condition until he sees his vileness in the light of God's holiness. He has a good opinion of his own character and righteousness until his eyes be divinely opened to perceive that he is a moral leper. He is self-complacent and self-confident until he is given a terrifying sense of the wrath of God pursuing him for his sins, and that there is but a step between him and eternal death.

But mark it well, my reader, it is not sufficient for the manslayer to recognize his peril, nor to have the knowledge that God has provided relief for him. He must flee to the city of refuge and personally avail himself of its shelter. Not until he actually passed within the portals of that sanctuary was he safe from the avenger of blood. His case was so desperate that it admitted of no delay. If he valued his life, he must flee in haste. A dilatory and trifling spirit would evince that he had no real sense of his peril. So it is with the sinner. No matter how deep or long-protracted be his convictions, until he really betakes himself to Christ and closes with His gracious offer he is a lost soul. He is either under the wrath of God or under the atoning blood of Christ. There is no middle place between the two. He is this very day "condemned already" (Joh 3:18), waiting for execution, or he is absolved, so that vengeance cannot strike him. As it was something more than a momentary alarm, which could easily be shaken off, that seized the manslayer—deepening in its intensity the more he pondered it—so something more than a temporary fright that soon passes away is required to make the sinner come to Christ.

"The manslayer left his house, his wife, his children, everything, to flee away to the city of refuge. That is just what a man does when he resolves to be saved by grace. He leaves everything he calls his own, renounces all the rights and privileges which he thought he possessed by nature. Yea, he confesses to having lost his own natural right to live, and he flees for life to the grace of God in Christ Jesus. The manslayer had no right to live except that he was in the city of refuge, no right to anything, except that he was God's guest within those enclosing walls. And so we relinquish, heartily and thoroughly, once and for ever, all ideas arising out of our supposed merits. We hasten away from self that Christ may be all in all to us. Fleeing for refuge implies that a man flees from his sin. He sees it and repents of it" (Spurgeon). There has to be a complete break from the old self-pleasing life. Sin must be made bitter before Christ will be sweet. Fleeing for refuge implies earnestness, for the manslayer dared not dawdle or saunter. He ran for his life. It implied unwearied diligence, so that he loitered not till shelter and safety were reached.

It is just at this point that the convicted sinner needs to be most careful. When Satan cannot prevail with a person to reject wholly the imperative duty of his fleeing to Christ, his next attempt for the ruination of his soul is to prevail with him at least to put off the performing of it. Many

who have been shaken from their unconcern are easily persuaded to defer a wholehearted seeking of Christ until they have taken their fill of the things of this world, until they are warned by serious illness or the infirmities of old age that soon they must leave it, hoping that a season of repentance will be given them before they die. But such postponing shows they are unwilling to repent and believe until they be forced by necessity, and that they prefer the world to Christ. Thus, they unfit themselves more and more for this urgent duty by continuing in sin and wasting the time which is now theirs. Others persuade themselves they are not yet sufficiently convicted of sin, and must wait till God assures them more fully that the Gospel is suited to their case, and thus, those who are wrongly termed “seekers,” misspend their day of grace.

It is quite evident from what has been before us that in this type there is an enforcing of *the sinner's responsibility*. A merciful provision had been made to meet the dire need of the homicide, yet *he* was required to exert himself in order to benefit thereby. The city of refuge was graciously available for him, but he must flee thither and enter it if he would be safe. If under any pretext he failed to do so, and was slain by the next of kin, his blood was upon his own head. As another has said, “It is not at all likely that anyone would be so blind or so infatuated as to fold his arms in cold indifference and say, “If I am fated to escape, I shall escape. *My efforts* are not needed. For if I am not fated to escape, I cannot escape, my efforts are of no use.” We cannot fancy a manslayer using such silly language, or being guilty of such blind fatuity as this. He knows too well that if the avenger could but lay his hand upon him all such notions would be of small account. There was but one thing to be done, and that was to escape for his life—to flee from impending judgment, to find his safe abode within the gates of the city of refuge.”

The cities of refuge were a manifest type of Christ as He is presented and offered to sinners in the Gospel.

1. They were *appointed by God Himself*. They were not of man's devising, as the Gospel is no human invention. They were an expression of the divine mercy. And how rich the grace thus evidenced, for it provided not merely one, but no less than six of these cities! They anticipated the urgent situation. The Lord did not wait until an Israelite had unwittingly slain one of his fellows, and then arrange for his deliverance from the sword of justice. No, He is ever beforehand in supplying what we lack. Those cities were available ere they were made use of. In like manner, God's appointing of Christ to be the Saviour of sinners was no afterthought to meet an unlooked-for emergency. In the divine purpose and plan, Christ was the Lamb “slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8).

2. Those cities were given *to provide shelter from the avenger*. That was the outstanding feature in this lovely evangelical picture. Sought by one who was determined to execute judgment upon him, the manslayer turned unto this haven of peace. To attempt to brazen things out was futile. Equally so is it for the sinner to imagine he can successfully defy Him whose justice is even now pursuing him. Thus, there was no other alternative but death. In like manner, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Act 4:12). To delay was madness. “He shall flee unto one of those cities, and live” (Deu 19:5) was the peremptory requirement. It was dangerous for Lot to linger in Sodom, lest fire and brimstone destroy him (Gen 19:17) So God bids us, “Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Heb 3:7-8).

3. Those cities were *placed on an eminence*, being built upon hills or mountains, as several of their names and the locations of others plainly intimate. This made them the more readily seen and kept in sight by those who were fleeing to the same. As such, they blessedly prefigured Him whom “God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to



Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Act 5:31). So too, when the Gospel is faithfully preached, the antitypical Refuge is held forth, so that it may be said of the hearers, “before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently [plainly] set forth” (Gal 3:1). For the same reason, the ministers of Christ who lift Him before their congregations are likened to “a city that is set on an hill” (Mat 5:14).

4. The road to the city was *plainly marked out*. “Thou shalt prepare thee a way...that every slayer may flee thither (Deu 19:3). Jewish writers say it was a law in Israel that one day in every year there were persons sent to repair the roads leading to them, to remove all stumbling-stones which might by time have fallen in the way, and to see also that the signposts which were set up at every corner leading to the city were carefully preserved, and the name *Miklac* (that is, Refuge) was legible upon them. Whether or not that was the case, certain it is that in the Gospel, God has fully and plainly made known the way of salvation, so the “wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein” (Isa 35:8). See also Romans 10:6-8.

5. They were *easy of access*. Those cities were so situated that when a person had need of such, one was near at hand. Express instructions were given that they were to be “in the midst of the land” (Deu 19:2-3), and not in remote corners which had been difficult to approach. The land had to be divided “into three parts,” one city of refuge in each, so that it could be reached within a single day’s journey, no matter where the manslayer resided—what a touching proof of God’s tender mercy! Everything was done to facilitate the homicide’s escape. The application is obvious. “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart” (Psa 34:18). Unto such He says, “My righteousness is near” (Isa 51:5). The way to Christ is short. It is but a simple renunciation of self and a laying hold of Him to be our all in all.

6. The city of refuge provided *protection only for the homicide* from the revenger of blood. The deliberate murderer was excluded, to teach us that there is no salvation in Christ for *presumptuous* sinners who still go on deliberately in their trespasses. Those who persist in willful sin, and continue to defy God and trample upon His law, bar themselves from His mercy. There is no shelter in a holy Christ for those who are in love with sin, but unto those that flee to Him *from* their sins, there is “plenteous redemption” (Psa 130:7). In Christ, the penitent and believing sinner is secure from the curse of the broken law and the wrath of God, for the Lord Jesus endured them in his stead. In Christ, he is safe also from the fury of a raging devil and is delivered from the accusations of a guilty conscience.

7. Nevertheless, the one who took refuge in that city *had to remain there*. If he was foolish enough at any time to forsake its bounds, the revenger of blood had the right to slay him (Num 35:26-27). As it was his duty to flee into it, so he was obliged to continue therein. That imports the responsibility of the believer to make use of Christ not only at the time of his conversion, but all through his life. There is as much emphasis placed upon our abiding in Christ as there is upon our coming to Him (Joh 8:31; Col 1:23; Heb 3:6, 14; 1Jo 2:28).

8. They were *available for Gentiles* as well as Jews (Num 35:15). How thankful we should be that “There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him” (Rom 10:12).

9. It was *the death of the high priest* which secured full and final deliverance (Jos 20:6). It is indeed striking to observe how the procuring cause of the believer’s redemption was prefigured in this many-sided type, though some expositors experience a self-created difficulty in connection therewith. All the days that Israel’s high priest lived and the manslayer abode within the city, no condemnation could come upon him—and since the Christian’s High Priest is “alive for evermore,” they are eternally secure. Still, it was upon the death of Aaron or his successor that the



homicide was made free, as we owe our emancipation to the death of Christ—thus the double figure of the city (safety) and the high priest's death (propitiation) was necessary to set forth both aspects, as were the two goats of Leviticus 16:7-8. There may also be a designed dispensational hint here. Saints were saved of old, but not until the death of Christ was the full liberty of sonship enjoyed (Gal 4:1-7).

10. *The names* of these cities (Jos 20:7-8) spoke of what the believer has in Christ. Kadesh signifies “Holy,” and Jesus Christ, the Holy One of God, is made unto the believer sanctification as well as righteousness (1Co 1:30)—how deeply suggestive that this is the first mentioned, that in the Redeemer we have a sanctuary of holiness. Shechem means “Shoulder,” which is the place of strength (Isa 9:6) and of safety (Luk 15:5)—under the government of Christ the believer finds security. Hebron means “Fellowship,” and through Christ His people are brought into communion with the Father and with the holy angels. Bezer means “A fortified place” and “The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble” (Nah 1:7). Therefore, “I will say of the LORD, he is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust” (Psa 91:2). Ramoth means “Height” or “Exaltation.” In Christ, we are elevated above the world, made to sit in heavenly places (Eph 2:6). Golan means “Exultation” or “Joy,” and “We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom 5:11).

# THE DOCTRINE OF MORTIFICATION

## 2. An Outline, Part 2

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom 8:13). The whole of this verse pertains and belongs to believers, who are “debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh” (verse 12), but, instead, debtors to Christ who redeemed them, and therefore, to live unto His glory. Debtors to the Holy Spirit who regenerated and indwells them, and therefore, to live in subjection to His absolute control. In our last, we sought to supply answers to the several questions raised by us in the second paragraph on the former part of our text. We turn now to consider those relating to its latter half.

On this occasion, we will state very briefly what is signified by “mortify,” leaving for a later article (D.V.) a fuller explanation of the precise nature of this duty. First, from its being here placed in apposition with “live after the flesh,” its negative sense is more or less obvious. To “live after the flesh” is to be completely controlled by indwelling sin, to be thoroughly under the dominion of our inbred corruptions. Hence, mortification consists in a course of conduct which is just the reverse. It imports, “Comply not with the demands of your old nature, but rather subdue them. Serve not, cherish not your lusts, but starve them, ‘Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof’” (Rom 13:14). The natural desires and appetites of the physical body require to be disciplined, so that they are our servants, and not our masters. It is our responsibility to moderate, regulate, and subordinate them unto the higher parts of our being. But the cravings

of the body of sin are to be promptly refused and sternly denied. The spiritual life is retarded just in proportion as we yield subservience to our evil passions.

The imperative necessity for this work of mortification arises from the continued presence of the evil nature in the Christian. Upon his believing in Christ unto salvation, he was at once delivered from the condemnation of the divine law, and freed from the reigning power of sin. But “the flesh” was not eradicated from his being, nor were its vile propensities purged or even modified. That fount of filthiness still remains unchanged unto the end of his earthly career. Not only so, but it is ever active in its hostility to God and holiness, “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit [or new nature], and the Spirit against the flesh” (Gal 5:17). Thus, there is a ceaseless conflict in the saint between indwelling sin and inherent grace. Consequently, there is a perpetual need for him to mortify or put to death not only the actings of indwelling corruption but also the principle itself. He is called upon to engage in ceaseless warfare and not suffer temptation to bring him into captivity to his lusts. The divine prohibition is “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness [enter into no truce, form no alliance with], but rather reprove them” (Eph 5:11). Say with Ephraim of old, “What have I to do any more with idols?” (Hos 14:8).

No real communion with God is possible while sinful lusts remain unmortified. Allowed evil draws the heart away from God, and tangles the affections, discomposes the soul, and provokes the Holy One to close His ears against our prayers: “Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?” (Eze 14:3). God cannot, in any wise, delight in an unmortified soul. For Him to do so would be denying Himself or acting contrary to His own nature. He has no pleasure in wickedness, and cannot look with the slightest approval on evil. Sin is a mire, and the more miry we are, the less fit for His eyes (Psa 40:2). Sin is leprosy (Isa 1:6), and the more it spreads, the less converse will the Lord have with us. Deliberately to keep sin alive is to defend it against the will of God, and to challenge combat with the Most High. Unmortified sin is against the whole design of the Gospel—as though Christ’s sacrifice was intended to indulge us in sin, rather than redeem us from it. The very end of Christ’s dying was the death of sin. Rather than sin should not die, He laid down His life.

Though risen with Christ, their life hid with Him in God, and they certain to appear with Christ in glory, the saints are, nevertheless, exhorted to mortify their members which are upon the earth (Col 3:1-5). It may appear strange when we note what particular members the apostle specified. It was not vain thoughts, coldness of heart, unwary walking, but the visible and most repulsive members of the old man, “fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence.” And in verse 8, he bids them again, “Put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication” and lying. Startling and solemn it is to find that believers require calling upon to mortify such gross and foul sins as those. Yet it is no more than is necessary. The best Christians on earth have so much corruption within them, which habitually disposes them unto these iniquities (great and heinous as they are), and the devil will so suit his temptations as will certainly draw their corruptions into open acts, unless they keep a tight hand and close watch over themselves in the constant exercise of mortification. None but the Holy One of God could truthfully aver, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (Joh 14:30) which could be enkindled by his fiery darts.

As the servants of God urge upon the wicked that they slight not any sin because in their judgment it is but a trivial matter, saying, “Is it not a little one? and my soul shall live” (Gen 19:20), so the faithful minister will press it upon all of God’s people that they must not disregard any sin because it is great and grievous, and say within themselves, “Is it not a great one? And my

soul shall never commit it.” As we presume upon the pardoning mercy of God in the committing of the least sins, so we are apt to presume upon our own strength to preserve us from the committing of great and crying sins. It is because of their self-confidence and carelessness that sometimes the most gracious and experienced suddenly find themselves surprised by the most awful lapses. When the preacher bids his hearers beware that they murder not, blaspheme not, turn not apostates from their profession of the faith, none but the self-righteous will say with Hazael, “But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” (2Ki 8:13). There is no crime, however enormous, no abomination, however vile, but what any of us are capable of committing, if we do not bring the cross of Christ into our hearts by a daily mortification.

But why “mortify the deeds of *the body*”? In view of the studied balancing of the several clauses in this antithetical sentence, we had expected it to read “mortify the flesh.” In the seventh chapter and the opening verses of the eighth, the apostle had treated of indwelling sin as the fount of all evil actions, and here he insists on the mortifying of both the root and the branches of corruption, referring to the duty under the name of the fruits it bears. The “deeds of the body” must not be restricted to mere outward works, but be understood as including also the springs from which they issue. As John Owen (1616-1683) rightly said, “The axe must be laid to the root of the tree.” In our judgment, “the body” here has a twofold reference. First, to the evil nature or indwelling sin, which in Romans 6:6 and 7:24 is likened unto a body, namely, “the body of the sins of the flesh” (Col 2:11). It is a body of corruption which compasses the soul. Hence, we read of “your members which are upon the earth” (Col 3:5). The “deeds of the body” are the works which corrupt nature produces, namely, our sins. Thus, the “body” is here used objectively of “the flesh.”

Second, the “body” here includes the house in which the soul now dwells. *It* is specified to denote the degrading malignity which there is in sin, reducing its slaves to live as though they had no souls. It is mentioned to import the tendency of indwelling sin, namely, to please and pamper the baser part of our being, the soul being made the drudge of the outward man. The body is here referred to for the purpose of informing us that, though the soul be the original abode of “the flesh,” the physical frame is the main instrument of its actions. Our corruptions are principally manifested in our external members. It is *there* that indwelling sin is chiefly found and felt. Sins are denominated “the deeds of the body,” not only because they are what the lusts of the flesh tend to produce, but also because they are executed by the body (Rom 6:12). Our task then is not to transform and transmute “the flesh,” but to slay it—to refuse its impulses, to deny its aspirations, to put to death its appetites.

But who is sufficient for such a task—a task which is not a work of nature but wholly a spiritual one? It is far beyond the unaided powers of the believer. Means and ordinances cannot of themselves effect it. It is beyond the province and ability of the preacher. Omnipotence must have the main share in the work. “If ye through the Spirit do mortify,” that is “The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ” of Romans 8:9—the Holy Spirit. For He is not only the Spirit of holiness in His nature, but in His operations, too. He is the principal efficient cause of mortification. Let us marvel at and adore the divine grace which has provided such a Helper for us! Let us recognize and realize that we are as truly indebted to and dependent upon the Spirit’s operations as we are upon the Father’s electing and the Son’s redeeming us. Though grace be wrought in the hearts of the regenerate, yet it lies not in their power to act it. He who imparted the grace must renew, excite, and direct it.

Believers may employ the aids of inward discipline and rigour, and practice outward moderation and abstinence, and while they may for a time check and suppress their evil habits,

unless the Spirit puts forth His power in them, there will be no true mortification. And *how* does He operate in this particular work? In many different ways. First, at the new birth He gives us a new nature. Then, by nourishing and preserving that nature. In strengthening us with His might in the inner man. In granting fresh supplies of grace from day to day. By working in us a loathing of sin, a mourning over it, a turning from it. By pressing upon us the claims of Christ, making us willing to take up our cross and follow Him. By bringing some precept or warning to our mind. By sealing a promise upon the heart. By moving us to pray.

Yet, let it be carefully noted that our text does not say, “If the Spirit do mortify,” or even “If the Spirit through you do mortify,” but, instead, “If ye through the Spirit.” The believer is not passive in this work, but active. It must not be supposed that the Spirit will help us without our concurrence, as well while we are asleep as waking, whether or not we maintain a close watch over our thoughts and works, and exercise nothing but a slight wish or sluggish prayer for the mortification of our sins. Believers are required to set themselves seriously to the task. If, on the one hand, we cannot discharge this duty without the Spirit’s enablement, on the other hand, He will not assist if we be too indolent to put forth earnest endeavours. Then, let not the lazy Christian imagine he will ever get the victory over his lusts.

The Spirit’s grace and power afford no licence to idleness, but rather call upon us to the diligent use of means and looking to Him for His blessing upon the same. We are expressly exhorted, “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1), and that makes it plain that the believer is not a cipher in this work. The gracious operations of the Spirit were never designed to be a substitute for the Christian’s discharge of duty. Though His help be indispensable, yet it releases us not from our obligations. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1Jo 5:21) emphasizes our accountability and evinces that God requires much more than our waiting upon Him to stir us unto action. Our hearts are terribly deceitful, and we need to be much upon our guard against cloaking a spirit of apathy under an apparent jealous regard for the glory of the Spirit. Is no self-effort required to escape the snares of Satan by refusing to walk in those paths which God has prohibited? Is no self-effort called for in separating ourselves from the companionship of the wicked?

Mortification is a task to which every Christian must apply himself with prayerful diligence and resolute earnestness. The regenerate have a spiritual nature within that fits them for holy action, otherwise there would be no difference between them and the unregenerate. They are required to improve the death of Christ, to embitter sin to them by His sufferings. They are to use the grace received in bringing forth the fruits of righteousness. Nevertheless, it is a task which far transcends our feeble powers. It is only “through the Spirit” that any of us can acceptably or effectually (in any degree) “mortify the deeds of the body.” He it is who presses upon us the claims of Christ—reminding us that inasmuch as He died *for* sin, we must spare no efforts in dying *to* sin—striving against it (Heb 12:4), confessing it (1Jo 1:9), forsaking it (Pro 28:13). He it is who preserves us from giving way to despair, and encourages us to renew the conflict. He it is who deepens our longings after holiness, and moves us to cry, “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Psa 51:10).

“If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body” (Rom 8:9). Mark, my reader, the lovely balance of truth which is here so carefully preserved. While the Christian’s responsibility is strictly enforced, the honour of the Spirit is as definitely maintained, and divine grace is magnified. Believers are the agents in this work, yet, they perform it by the strength of Another. The duty is theirs, but the success and the glory are His. The Spirit’s operations are carried on in accordance with the constitution which God has given us, working within and upon us as moral

agents. The same work is, in one point of view, God's; and in another, ours. He illumines the understanding, and makes us more sensible of indwelling sin. He makes the conscience more sensitive. He deepens our yearnings after purity. He works in us both to will and to do of God's good pleasure. Our business is to heed His convictions, to respond to His holy impulses, to implore His aid, to count upon His grace.

"If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, *ye shall live*." Here is the encouraging promise set before the sorely tried contestant. God will be no man's debtor. Yea, He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6). If then, by grace, we concur with the Spirit, denying the flesh, striving after holiness, richly shall we be recompensed. The promise unto this duty is opposed unto the death threatened in the clause foregoing—as "die" there includes all the penal consequences of sin, so "shall live" comprehends all the spiritual blessings of grace. If by the Spirit's enablement and our diligent use of the divinely appointed means, we sincerely and constantly oppose and refuse the solicitations of indwelling sin, then—but only then—we shall live a life of grace and comfort here, and a life of eternal glory and bliss hereafter. As we have shown in the November article on 1 John 2:25, "eternal life" is the believer's present possession (Joh 3:36; 10:28) and also his future goal (Mark 10:30; Gal 6:8; Ti 1:2). He now has a title and right to it. He has it by faith and in hope. He has the seed of it in his new nature. But he has it not yet in full possession and fruition.

"The promises of the Gospel are not made to the work, but to the worker—and to the worker, not for his work, but according to his work, for the sake of Christ's work. The promise of life, then, is not made to the work of mortification, but to him that mortifies his flesh, and that not for his mortification, but because he is in Christ, of which this mortification is the evidence. That they who mortify the flesh shall live is quite consistent with the truth that eternal life is the free gift of God—and in the giving of it, there is no respect to the merit of the receiver. This describes the character of all who receive eternal life, and it is of great importance. It takes away all ground of hope from those who profess to know God and in works deny Him" (Robert Haldane, 1764-1842). The conditionality of the promise, then, is neither that of causation nor uncertainty, but of coherence and connection. A life of glory proceeds not from mortification as the effect from the cause, but follows merely upon it as the end does the use of means. The highway of holiness is the only path which leads to heaven.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST

### Part 2

The grand mission of this eminent character was clearly announced by the word of prophecy centuries before he appeared upon the stage of human history. Its nature and design were defined by Isaiah and Malachi, and later by an angel, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Isa 40:3). That those words pertain to John is evidenced by the Holy Spirit's application of them to him in

each of the first three Gospels, and by his own express appropriation of the same in John 1:23. There was a peculiar propriety in designating him “the voice,” for that is to be heard and not seen. His mission was addressed solely to the ear and in no wise to the eye, for he wrought no miracles. Therein it differed from that of his Master—note the “see” in Matthew 11:4. But more particularly, as the voice is the medium by which the message is enunciated, so the Baptist was but the instrument to proclaim Him who is *the Word* itself. He was “the voice of him that *crieth*,” not whispereth or muttereth—publicly, fervently, powerfully, importunately, as he preached repentance and proclaimed the advent of the Saviour.

“Crieth in the wilderness.” What a position for the Messiah’s forerunner to occupy! Surely the place that befitted him was *Jerusalem*. Such indeed ought to have been the case, for not only was the temple—the grand centre of divine worship—situated there, but it was also the site of the royal residence, “the city of the great King” (Mat 5:35). But spiritual conditions precluded any such thing. John was sent to a nation that had grievously departed from JEHOVAH. Judaism was but a hollow shell. Its ritual was maintained, but there was no life and reality. Pharisaism and Sadduceeism were in the saddle. The masses were blind to their awful condition before God, boasting that they were the children of Abraham, yet neither exhibiting his faith nor bringing forth his works. It was, therefore, in perfect keeping with their moral state that the sphere of John’s ministry was in the desert rather than in the temple courts, for God would not condone their pride and self-righteousness, nor own their formality and hypocrisy. His messenger was, therefore, assigned a place *outside* the apostate camp (Heb 13:13), later ministering in the vicinity of the Jordan. The “wilderness” symbolized the spiritual barrenness of all around him.

“Prepare ye the way of the Lord.” In olden times, when a king or some eminent person was about to visit a place, a herald preceded him, announcing his coming and making the necessary arrangements for his entertainment. Such was the honourable task assigned John. He proclaimed to Israel the approach of Christ as the Lord their God. A spiritual preparation was necessary ere the kingdom of Christ could be set up. “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain” (Isa 40:4). That described in figurative language the process of preparation. Those who were bowed down by a sense of their guilt, and made little in their own eyes, should be raised up; but the haughty and self-sufficient should be humbled; that which was obscure in the typical rites would be understood, mysteries would be cleared. John prepared his Master’s way by disposing men’s minds for His person and message, particularly by his calling upon them to repent. When the ministry of John had inclined the hearts of many for the reception of the Messiah and had engaged the attention of the people at large, Christ appeared and John soon disappeared. “This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease” (Joh 3:29-30), he declared—as the morning star vanishes when the sun has risen.

“And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it” (Isa 40:5). God’s design in the sending of John and the mission of the Messiah—as in all His other works in creation, providence and grace—was the manifestation of the divine glory. But in order to make way for the display of that glory in Christ and His salvation, there must be the blighting and blasting of all that glory wherein man boasts. The flesh was made to appear in its true nature, as corrupt and having sentence of death upon it, so that the grace of God should alone be exalted. “The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass” (Isa

40:6-7). That expresses, in figurative language, what was to be the burden of the Baptist's message and the work the Spirit should accomplish through him.

John's ministry was but a preliminary one. His task was not that of sowing and planting, but of ploughing and harrowing, a preparing of the ground for the Gospel seed. He was not a builder, but a hewer down. What a shattering word was his to the religious leaders, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?...And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Mat 3:7, 10). He was called to oppose a carnal Judaism, and expose its vain pretensions. He was sent to arouse and alarm a deluded nation, to humble their pride, to blow upon their worldly expectations, to show the need of a *spiritual* redemption. John's commission was not to foster, but to dispel their hopes of a restoration of Judaism, the freeing of Palestine from the invader, and the re-establishment of the throne of David. Christ would procure for His people something infinitely better than Palestine, even an eternal inheritance. The transitory economy of Moses would be displaced by the enduring Christian dispensation. The former, in which the Jews gloried, had served its purpose, and "that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Heb 8:13).

The character of John's mission and ministry was further described as "He shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias" (Luk 1:17). So closely did he resemble the Tishbite, that in the language of prophecy, he was actually denominated Elijah (Mal 4:5-6 and see Mat 11:13-17; 17:10-13). Elijah appeared at a time when Israel was being dominated by an alien, when the nation's spirituality was at an appallingly low ebb, and only an insignificant remnant remained true to God. Similar was it in the days of John. Elijah came not with a message of grace on his lips, but rather of judgment, enforcing the righteous claims of God. Stern as the prophet of Gilead, the work of Christ's forerunner was to level mountains and lay low every lofty imagination. Each of them was a man of retirement from the world, a denouncer of those in high places, an uncompromising rebuker of sin. The one was clad in similar garb to the other (2Ki 1:8; Mat 3:4) and subsisted on equally plain fare.

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple" (Mal 3:1). That was the divine answer to the contemptuous question of Mal 2:17. The promised Messiah was about to appear in judgment, though not to condemn and destroy, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind" (Joh 9:39). But before He was publicly manifested, John opened the door for Him (Joh 10:2-3). By office, John was a "messenger," his mission was to prepare Christ's way. Observe that the herald was our Lord's (for the "my" refers to Christ), sent by Him, thereby showing His authority in the sending forth of His ministers. His superiority to John, His existing before him—all so many proofs of His deity. Hence, the prefatory, "Behold," to fix attention upon and intimate the importance of what follows, to arouse the nation. Christ would appear "suddenly" after His forerunner had accomplished his task.

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD [in A.D. 70, when the temple was razed, Jerusalem trodden down of the Gentiles, and the Jews scattered to the four winds]. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal 4:5-6). That was still another Old Testament prediction regarding Christ's harbinger. John was not Elijah in person (any more than Ezekiel 34:23 has reference to the literal David, or Revelation 2:14, 20 to the literal Balaam and Jezebel), but he came in the spirit and power of that prophet, to perform

an Elijah-like work. There was a great likeness in their mission and circumstances, their austerity of living, courage, and integrity in rebuking vice, holiness of life, zeal in the cause of God, and in both being feared and persecuted by the reigning king. That the above prophecy referred to John is unmistakable from Luke 1:17, “He was to go before the Lord for the purpose of effecting a reconciliation between the degenerate seed of Israel and their pious forefathers—making them again of one heart and soul, so that the fathers might not be ashamed of their children, nor the children of their fathers: in a word, that he might effect a real reformation by turning ‘the disobedient [offspring] to the wisdom of the just [ancestors]’” (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874).

After describing the extraordinary circumstances which attended his birth, excepting in Luke 1:80, nothing is told us about John until his work began. He drank neither wine nor strong drink, being mortified to all of earth’s pleasures. It was at the age of thirty that he appeared, for that was the time of entrance upon office (Num 4:3; Luke 3:23). “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mat 3:2). The “kingdom of heaven” signifies that sphere where the rule of God is professedly owned, being in contrast with the kingdom of Satan (Mat 12:29). It is the Gospel dispensation, which is entered by a confession of repentance and faith. The demand for repentance shows it was a *spiritual* kingdom. To call upon the Jews to repent was the denouncing of their self-righteousness and confidence in ceremonialism. Repentance is the soul passing sentence of unsparing judgment upon itself, a bowing to God’s verdict of its lost and ruined condition, owning itself to be dead in sin. By taking their true place before God, they would be prepared to receive Christ.

Matthew 3:4 describes his dress and food. As Christ had no form nor comeliness in the sight of men (Isa 53:2), so His forerunner was mean in the eyes of the world. He was homely in his attire, frugal in his diet, being wholly intent on matters of more importance. Thereby, he exemplified his teaching. He could but mourn over a condition of things without God. His very food and dress called for fasting and mourning. His baptism confirmed his preaching, for it was one “of repentance” and in the Jordan—the river of death. Those who responded to his call came “confessing their sins” (Mar 1:5), of which death was their due. “Ye must die and be buried, even as He who is to come will save by death and burial. This was the meaning of the emblem which he set before the crowd” (C. H. Spurgeon).

Ere passing on, it requires to be pointed out that the mission of John exemplified one of the “ways” usually employed by God with souls in preparing them to receive the Gospel. That was intimated in Isaiah 40:7, “The Spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it.” There is a withering work of the Spirit before a comforting one. The pride of man has to be abased ere the grace of God is exalted. It is the Spirit’s office to convict of sin, and when He does so the comeliness of the flesh is blighted, its beauty fades as the flower, all our righteousnesses are seen as filthy rags, and boasting is silenced. The Spirit wounds before He heals, breaks to pieces before He mends, calls to repentance before He says, “Behold, the Lamb of God” (Joh 1:29). Christ will never be precious to those who are pleased with themselves. Only the sick welcome the physician. We have to discover our filthiness ere we cry, “Wash me” (Psa 51:2). We have to see ourselves as utterly undone and driven to self-despair ere we value the Gospel.

Attracted by the novelty, great multitudes flocked to John’s preaching and were baptized by him. But instead of rejoicing, the religious leaders of that day were displeased, regarding him as an interloper. A deputation of priests and Levites was sent from Jerusalem to ask, “Who art thou?” (Joh 1:19). He had not been trained in their schools, and was outside all denominations. Whence then had he received his authority? Who had commissioned him to preach and baptize?



One can readily surmise the contemptuous tone of their “Who art *thou*?”—confirmed by his reply, “He confessed, and denied not” (Joh 1:20). He refused to be intimidated by them, boldly standing his ground. Not satisfied, they continued to interrogate him until they asked, “What sayest thou of thyself?” (Joh 1:22). A searching question! The answer to which revealed his state of heart. He might have replied, “The most remarkable character God ever raised up to Israel,” or, more modestly, “The son of Zacharias the priest.” Instead, he merely said, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness” (Joh 1:23). Thus, he answered in the language of Scripture, and indicated that his office was vested with divine authority.

A real trial had been made of John’s sterling character by those officials, but a still more exacting test of his piety soon followed. “Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him” (Mat 3:13). This was the One of whom he had testified, “He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear” (Joh 1:27). That was said by John before the multitude at the height of his fame. But so far from being puffed up by the dignified position he occupied and the high esteem in which he was held, he was not ashamed to own that he felt himself utterly unfit to perform the meanest service for such an august Person. Suitable representative of One who was “meek and lowly in heart” (Mat 11:29) was this modest and diffident forerunner. “But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” (Mat 3:14). He was completely overwhelmed by the unique honour that Christ would confer upon him. “And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now...Then *he suffered him*” (Mat 3:15). For praiseworthiness, that act of obedience deserves to be ranked with Abraham’s offering up of his son Isaac.

John’s final testing came soon afterwards at the hand of Herod. That king heard him preach and was deeply impressed (Mar 6:20). Instead of feeling flattered and fawning upon him, John faithfully rebuked him for cohabiting with his brother’s wife (Mar 6:18). That gave great offence to the tetrarch, who cast him into prison—it is no new thing for God’s ministers to suffer ill for doing well. The world ever hates those who testify that its works are evil. While languishing in prison, the faith of John wavered (Mat 11:2-3), for there has been only One who was “without blemish and without spot” (1Pe 1:19). As Matthew Henry remarked, “Where there is true faith, yet there may be a mixture of unbelief.”

The outstanding grace in John was his *lowliness*, for the most eminent saints have ever been the most humble. Lovely climax to his modesty was his “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Joh 3:30)—willing to be eclipsed that Christ might be all. Blessed is it to behold the Lord honouring the one who so honoured him, “Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least [we strongly prefer “less” as all the older versions rendered it] is greater than he” (Mat 11:11), for the Son of God took a still more lowly place—“I am a worm, and no man” (Psa 22:6). And again He testified of John, “He was a burning and a shining light” (Joh 5:35) in doctrine and deportment, full of zeal for God, and love for souls. Burning inwardly, shining outwardly. He hid not his light under a bushel, thus leaving the Jews without excuse.

# ANNUAL LETTER

It was Mr. Pink's wish that we list his library (greatly reduced from what it once was) in *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES* so that the books would be available to the readers. Each one desiring a book or books, please make choice and communicate with me and we will discuss price by letter.

I have been much exercised in my mind about continuing publishing *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES* after I have used the articles Mr. Pink left with me to print before closing down. There is much in old volumes which I could reprint and at least complete 1953. After much prayer and waiting on the Lord for guidance that I make no mistake, I have decided, God willing, to venture to attempt it, especially in view of what Mr. Pink said last time we were speaking on the matter, "Probably you had better close down when this is printed." My heart aches for those who have looked to the magazine for spiritual food so long and know not where to turn now.

The Lord has favoured us with such a kind printer. He is making it as easy for me as possible, and as I put my hand to the plough years ago to be an instrument in His hand of doing the mechanical part of putting out what His servant supplied, I cannot, with peace of mind, withdraw my hand when I still have in my possession material which I feel would be helpful to those who have never had access to it.

I am hoping for the co-operation of the readers who have gone along with us all the past years. The bound volume for 1952 will (D.V.) be ready early in the New Year. Will those desiring one please send in their order as usual? The price will likely be the same as 1951—7/6 and \$1.75 U.S.A., etc.

The late Editor's death has delayed things somewhat, but we trust soon to get the posting-out date more normal again.

"All is well." "He hath done exceeding abundantly above all that we could ask or think." "Brethren, pray for us." My needs are provided for. Ever yours by His wondrous mercy,

Vera E. Pink



# APPENDICES

## About Studies in the Scriptures

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952) wrote and published his monthly 28 page expository digest, *Studies in the Scriptures*, from 1922 to 1953. He mailed it worldwide by paid subscription to whomever desired the deeper truths of God. Each issue contained continuing serialized articles on six to eight subjects. When one subject was “completed” to the author’s satisfaction, another subject series began in its place in the next issue. In total, the 380 issues comprise a treasure of immense proportions.

By God’s grace, Chapel Library republishes the *Studies* beginning with the year 1934, available for download worldwide, and mailing three issues each quarter by free subscription in North America. We also print many books and booklets gleaned from articles in the *Studies*. These may be ordered in print in North America, or downloaded from our website worldwide without charge:

Studies: [www.chapellibrary.org/studies](http://www.chapellibrary.org/studies)

Other literature: [www.chapellibrary.org/literature/title-catalog](http://www.chapellibrary.org/literature/title-catalog)

Today the various subjects are being gathered together by topic, and republished in paperbacks by several sources. *Chapel Library* offers the following at the time of this printing:

- |                                   |           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| - The Sovereignty of God          | 176 pages |
| - Comfort for Christians          | 79 pages  |
| - Profiting from the Word         | 96 pages  |
| - Seven Sayings of the Savior     | 94 pages  |
| - Spiritual Union and Communion   | 175 pages |
| - The Attributes of God           | 84 pages  |
| - The Doctrine of Human Depravity | 238 pages |
| - The Doctrine of Revelation      | 214 pages |
| - 1 John – An Exposition, Part 1  | 190 pages |
| - 1 John – An Exposition, Part 2  | 173 pages |
| - The Holy Spirit                 | 196 pages |

# Biography of A.W. Pink

by Erroll Hulse

Concerning Calvinism<sup>39</sup> and Arminianism<sup>40</sup> during the first half of the Twentieth Century, a most interesting case study is the experience of Arthur W. Pink. He was a preacher and writer of outstanding talent who ministered in Britain, America, and Australia. When he died in 1952 in isolation on the Island of Lewis in north eastern Scotland, he was hardly known outside a small list of subscribers to his magazine, *Studies in the Scriptures*. Yet, by the 1970s, his books were in wide demand and his name was widely known among publishers and ministers. In fact, for that period it would be difficult to find a reformed author whose books were more widely read.

The preaching ministry of A. W. Pink had been remarkably blessed in the USA, but it was in Australia that he seemed to reach the apex of his public ministry, and there in particular that his preaching ministry reached great heights. He was then faced with accreditation by the Baptist Union and was rejected on account of his Calvinistic views. He then ministered in a Baptist church of Strict Baptist pedigree. There he came unstuck since they esteemed him an Arminian! A considerable group, however, appreciated Pink, recognised his worth, and seceded from that Strict Baptist Church to form a new church of 27 members. Then suddenly, in 1934, Pink resigned and returned to Britain. It is widely held that one rejection is enough to cripple a minister for life, but two in quick succession can destroy a pastor completely. So it proved for Arthur Pink. He never again found meaningful entrance into the ministry, though he tried his utmost. He sought openings in both the UK and the USA without success. He became increasingly isolated. He ended his days as an evangelical recluse in the Island of Stornoway off the coast of Scotland. It was rumoured that not more than ten souls attended his funeral.

There is much that we can learn from the life of A. W. Pink. Firstly, we will trace out his early life in broad outline. Secondly, we will describe his experience in Australia, and trace out the adverse effects of this on his life. Thirdly, we will the impact of his writing ministry.

## 1. Early Life

Arthur Pink was born in Nottingham, England, in 1886. His parents were godly. They lived by the Bible and kept the Lord's Day holy. Arthur was the first of three children brought up in the

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<sup>39</sup> **Calvinism** – the doctrinal system developed from the teachings of the French-born Swiss Reformer John Calvin (1509-1664), holding that the Bible teaches the supreme authority of the Scriptures, the sovereignty of God, predestination, and the “doctrines of grace”; these doctrines were the response of the Synod of Dort (1618-19) to the Arminians’ remonstrance (protest) and are commonly known by the acronym TULIP.

<sup>40</sup> **Arminianism** – (from Jacobus Arminius, 1560-1609, Dutch theologian) the doctrinal system that rejects the Reformers’ understanding of predestination, teaching instead that God’s predestination of individuals was based on His foreknowledge of their accepting or rejecting Christ by their own free will.

fear and admonition of the Lord. To the grief of their parents, all three children drifted into lives of unbelief. Worse was to come: Arthur embraced *Theosophy*, an esoteric cult that claimed powers of the occult! “Lucifer” was the name of the leading theosophy magazine. A natural feature of Arthur’s character was wholeheartedness, and he entered theosophy with zeal. A leadership role was offered him, which meant that he would visit India. At the same time a friend who was an opera singer, noted that Arthur possessed a fine baritone voice; he urged him to study for a career in opera. Then suddenly on a night during 1908, Arthur was converted. His first action was to preach the Gospel to the theosophist group.

Simultaneous with Pink’s conversion was a call to the Christian ministry. But the colleges were in the hands of liberals bent on the destruction of the Scriptures. Arthur, however, heard of the Moody Bible Institute, which had been founded by D. L. Moody<sup>41</sup> in 1889. In 1910, aged 24, Pink left for Chicago to begin a two-year course. His time at Moody lasted only six weeks, however. He decided that he was wasting his time, and that he should enter directly into a pastorate—and his professors agreed! He was not disgruntled, but rather frustrated, that the teaching was pitched at such a primary level that it did nothing for him.

During 1910, he began in his first pastorate in Silverton, Colorado, a mining camp in the San Juan Mountains. We possess little detail of this period, but we know that from Silverton, Pink moved to Los Angeles. He was always a hard worker, and this is illustrated by the fact that at one point in Oakland he was engaged in tent evangelism six nights a week for eighteen weeks!

From Los Angeles, he moved to Kentucky. It was here that he met and married Vera E. Russell. There could not have been a better gift from heaven. Vera was entirely committed to the Lord. She was hard working, gifted, intelligent, and persevering. She died just ten years after Arthur’s decease on the island of Stornoway.

The next move was to Spartanburg, South Carolina, from 1917 to 1920. This church building consisted of a small and frail wooden structure, while he and Vera lived in a small wooden house standing on wooden columns. Heating was inadequate, and in the freezing winter it was like an ice box.

It was during this time Pink began writing books. There were two of significance: one with the title *Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, and the second *The Sovereignty of God*, the foreword of which is dated June 1918. It was this book that was later taken up by The Banner of Truth publishers. The first edition, according to I. C. Herendeen, his first publisher at that time, was only 500 copies, and it was a struggle to sell that number. When the book came to Banner, it was edited by Iain Murray and vastly improved. It became one of the most popular of The Banner of Truth paperbacks. By 1980, 92,000 copies had sold.

After about a year at Spartanburg, Pink almost came to grief. He felt a strong conviction to give up the ministry and devote himself to writing only, and at one point was disconsolate. Vera wrote to a friend saying that her husband was even thinking of leaving the ministry and going into business, to make money for the Kingdom as a better way of serving God. In 1920, Arthur resigned the pastorate at Spartanburg. He and Vera moved and settled at Swengel, Pennsylvania, in order to be near the publisher I. C. Herendeen.

In the middle of July, 1920, he left to take a series of meetings in California. Large crowds gathered and numbers were saved. At one point 1,200 gathered to hear the Gospel. Other crusades and conferences followed; it was evident that Pink was eminently suited to this kind of ministry.

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<sup>41</sup> **D. L. Moody** (1837-1899) – American evangelist and publisher who founded the Moody Church, Northfield School and Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts (now the Northfield Mount Hermon School), the Moody Bible Institute, and Moody Publishers.

Looking back over his life, it is apparent that he experienced more blessing in the itinerant ministry than he did in a total of twelve years in pastoring churches. This had to do with his temperament; he preferred being in his study to visiting.

In 1921, Arthur and Vera were back in Pennsylvania. The monthly digest, the *Studies in the Scriptures*, first appeared in 1922. It ran continuously without interruption for 32 years, until Arthur's death in 1952. Initially, this was a 24 page magazine, with four to six articles as instalments in a series. To write expository material at a high standard at this rate every month is a tremendous testimony to his insight into the Scriptures, and to the Lord's blessing and enabling. All his articles had to be written by hand and finished for the printer at least two months before the date of publication. *Studies in the Scriptures* had about 1,000 circulation at the beginning, but for most of its existence the subscription level hovered at about 500. The financial side was always precarious, with only just enough to cover printing costs from one month to the next. Pink corresponded with some of his subscribers; eventually this formed his pastoral work. Throughout he was assisted by his very hard working wife, who acted as secretary. They never had a family, always lived very humbly, and managed always to make ends meet. This was made possible through a modest inheritance left to him by his parents and through gifts that he received from his readers.

During 1923, Arthur fell into a deep depression, which turned out to be a nervous breakdown. At this juncture a young couple that had been greatly blessed by Pink's ministry came to the rescue, and Arthur was nursed through a period of several months enforced rest, which brought him back to normal health.

In 1924, a major new direction came by way of letters of invitation from a publisher in Sydney, Australia. Before departing for Australia, no less than four months preparation had to be made for the *Studies*. On his way to Australia, Pink engaged in more Bible conference preaching in Colorado, then in Oakland, California, and also San Francisco—from where he and Vera took ship across the Pacific to Sydney.

## 2. Pink's Experience in Australia

The Pinks spent a total of three and half years in Australia. These times were for them the best, but also turned out to be the worst. Upon arrival Arthur had more invitations than he possibly fill. Initially his ministry in Australia was a great success. Crowds gathered; churches were filled; believers were revived; and souls were brought to the Saviour.

Attendance swelled in every place he preached. In the first year in Australia Arthur preached 250 times. He would often work until 2:00 in the morning to keep *Studies in the Scriptures* going. The Pinks truly must have felt that at last they had found the place of permanent fulfilment. There was an evident power in his ministry. One mature believer declared that he drew people "like a magnet," and that he preached the "whole counsel of God's Word," and was capable of preaching a sermon "from every word of the text."

This period proved to be one of great joy. Pink was now 40 years old. He was preaching almost daily for well over an hour. He would get home at 10:00 PM and then work until 2:00 AM. He wrote, "never before during our 16 years in the ministry, have we experienced such blessing and joy in our souls, such liberty of utterance, and such an encouraging response as we have done in this highly favoured portion of Christ's vineyard."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *The Life of Arthur W. Pink*, by Iain H. Murray, The Banner of Truth Trust, p 49.

We can be sure that a thrilling and powerful soul-saving ministry will arouse the fury of Satan. And so it proved to be in this case when that old serpent, the devil, mounted a cunning counterattack. The Baptist Union leaders were fundamentally opposed to Calvinism. These leaders invited Arthur Pink to read a paper on “Human Responsibility.” Sadly, Pink did not realise that this was a plot to demote him in the eyes of the public—and in his sincere earnestness he fell into the trap. Instead of declining this invitation, he presented the paper and then answered questions for over an hour. The result of this was that the BU of New South Wales published a statement that they agreed unanimously *not* to endorse his ministry. What they really meant (for they did not themselves clarify any doctrine) is that they did not agree with Pink’s Reformed doctrine. They were fundamentally Arminian. The effect of all this was that invitations dried up, and Pink’s wider effective ministry in Australia was drastically reduced.

It was at this juncture that one of three Strict and Particular Baptist Churches invited Pink to become its pastor. This church was known as the Belvoir Street Church. Here Pink was as busy as he had ever been in his life. He had preached 300 times in the year ending 1926. In addition to preaching three times a week at Belvoir Street, he preached in three different places in Sydney each week to an average of 200 at each meeting. He still managed to maintain *Studies in the Scriptures* by burning midnight oil.

Trouble however was in store. The early part of the Twentieth Century was a time of lack of clarity in doctrine. One of the evidences of this was confusion over Calvinism, Arminianism, and hyper-Calvinism.<sup>43</sup> Many churches polarized. The Baptist Union was Arminian, and the Strict and Particular Baptists tended to be hyper-Calvinist. This proved to be the case at Belvoir Street. Until about May 1927, the Pinks believed that they had found a permanent church home.

### 3. Impact of Pink’s Writing Ministry

If history had progressed normally, Arthur Pink would have been forgotten. There are several leaders in each generation who are well known, but it is unlikely that their names will be remembered for very long. When Arthur Pink died, he was known to a small circle of readers—about 500—who read his monthly periodical *Studies in the Scriptures*, which he had faithfully produced with the help of his wife Vera for 31 years. Yet, after his decease, as his writings were collected and published as books, his name became very well known in the English-speaking evangelical world. During the 1960s and ’70s, there was a dearth of reliable expository writing; Pink’s writings filled an important need. His expositions are God-centred, theologically compelling, and reliable—as well as practical and experimental. That was precisely what was needed during a period of spiritual drought. Publishers discovered the value of his writings. The outcome was dramatic.

For instance, Baker Book House published twenty-two different titles by Pink, with a combined total sales by 1980 of 350,000. By the same date just three books (*Sovereignty of God*, *Life of Elijah*, and *Profiting from the Word*) totaled 211,000. Yet as contemporary reformed authors have multiplied, so the demand for Pink’s books has lessened.

We must remember that with the dawning of the twentieth century, the mainline denominations had already suffered extensive losses to higher criticism and modernism. Such was

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<sup>43</sup> **hyper-Calvinism** – the doctrinal error that holds men need not evangelize, since God will save His elect children with or without the means of preaching the Word. This represents only one side of biblical truth; the other is that God is pleased to use human instruments as means to His work, and the preaching of the Word is uniquely marked out for this purpose (2Ti 4:2; 2Ti 3:16; Mat 28:19).



the advance of modernism in the late nineteenth century and through the first half of the twentieth century, most Bible colleges and seminaries were lost to an agenda of unbelief and anti-Christianity. Instead of producing preacher/pastors for the churches, men were sent out who emptied the churches. The most striking example is Methodism. The aggregate membership in Methodism grew to be the highest of the non-conformist churches. Yet this denomination has been virtually annihilated by modernism.

The writings of Pink provided not only food for the spiritually hungry, but as Iain Murray asserts, “Pink has been immensely important in reviving and stimulating doctrinal reading at the popular level. The same can be said of few other authors of the twentieth century.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*

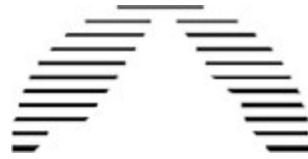


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