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STUDIES
IN THE
SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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Studies in the Scriptures appeared without interruption from 1922 to 1953, each issue including six to eight articles addressing a different topic in a series. While virtually unknown to the Christian world when he died, his writings continue to grow in their influence upon God’s people around the world, through their clarity, careful exposition, and Christ-centeredness.

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STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink

THE FAITH OF CHRIST

“Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in flesh” (1Ti 3:16). Yes, so “great” is this “mystery” that when faith attempts to view it, our eyes are dazzled. Only as we contemplate it through the very words of Holy Writ shall we be preserved from the blindness which carnal speculation inevitably imparts. “The word became flesh” (Joh 1:14). The second person in the Holy Trinity took upon Him the form of a servant. The eternal Son took holy humanity into union with Himself. Though that humanity was not, in itself, a person, though it never had a separate existence, yet was it endowed with all the elements and qualities of a human personality. Christ was not only God, but man, having a human spirit and soul and body. As such, Christ lived the life of a perfect man. Speaking by the Spirit of prophecy, He declared, “I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved” (Psa 16:8).

In becoming flesh, our blessed Lord took upon Him a *dependent* nature, and therefore did He for thirty-three years live a life of faith upon His heavenly Father. The actings of that faith, in all its diversified phases, may be clearly seen portrayed to our wondering view in those Psalms, which, beyond all gainsaying, contain the experiences of Christ in the days of His flesh. “There is not a grace or fruit of the Spirit possessed by His people in measure which the Lord did not possess without measure. And these, it must be borne in mind, were active graces, drawn out and called into continual exercise by the same Holy Spirit who had communicated them.

“Faith in all its actings, hope in all its anchorings, love in all its flowings, patience in all its endurings, humility in all its submittings, prayer in all its supplications, praise in all its adorings, obedience in all its yieldings, holiness in all its flame, and worship in all its fervour—all, all these graces and fruits of the Holy Spirit, may be seen shining forth as with beams of heavenly light in the personal experience of our blessed Lord in those

Psalms in which He speaks. They were, as it were, framed for Him by the Holy Spirit before He came into a time state, that they might be, not only prophetic of His sufferings for the benefit of His church, but be the spiritual utterance of His own holy soul in the days of His flesh" (J. C. Philpot, 1862).

As the Sponsor and Surety of God's elect, the Lord Jesus entered the place of their responsibility. To be the Kinsman-Redeemer of His people, really and truly "of one" (Heb 2:11) with the many sons He was to bring to glory, "In all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren" (Heb 2:17), and thus to be brought into that condition wherein He should trust in God and act in that dependency upon Him which the nature of man, whilst exposed to troubles, does indispensably require. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor. He who had brought into existence the universe by the fiat of His will, now became subject to the commandments of the Father. He who upholdeth all things by the word of His power, entered the place of complete dependency, and cried to the Strong for strength.

Not only in the Psalms, but in the prophets too has the Holy Spirit given us to hear some of the holy breathings of Him who became man, completely dependent upon God. Most blessedly is this brought before us in Isaiah 50. There we find the Mediator saying, "The LORD God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The LORD God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back....The LORD God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded" (Isa 50:4-5, 7). What light this casts upon the lowly place which the Creator of angels had taken! How blessedly it makes known to us His amazing condescension! How perfectly He conducted Himself as the Father's Servant (Isa 42:1). Well could He say, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Mat 11:29).

1. From the very commencement of His earthly life, the Lord Jesus lived by faith. Marvelously is this revealed to us in the 22nd Psalm. There we behold the Saviour in the midst of His dying agonies, doubtless tempted by Satan to give way to unbelief and despair—for it was there he was permitted to fully vent his enmity against the woman's seed (Gen 3:15; Luk 22:53), yet vain were the enemy's attacks. There we hear our blessed Redeemer declaring, "But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly" (Psa 22: 9-10). How this brings out His uniqueness! In His faith, as in everything else, He has the "pre-eminence" (Col 1:18). It was not only in manhood or childhood, but from very earliest infancy that the Man Christ Jesus drew His support from the Triune God.

2. Throughout His life the Lord Jesus lived by faith. Many are the proofs of this, but we can here barely mention a few of them. His prayer-life exemplifies the fact. He was engaged in prayer while being baptized (Luk 3:21). He "continued all night in prayer to God" (Luk 6:12) before selecting the twelve apostles. It was "as he prayed" that "the fashion of his countenance was altered" (Luk 9:29) and He was transfigured on the holy mount. His prayers expressed His dependence upon and felt need of the Father. His victory over Satan illustrated the same fact. "By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer," He declared and then added, "Hold up my goings in thy paths" (Psa

17:4-5). “He ever acted in filial dependence upon the Father and in filial reception out of the Father’s fullness” (Adolph Saphir, 1831-1891).

Christ was never actuated by what is called “common sense,” influenced by public opinion, or governed by worldly policy and prudence. Instead, He was always beholding Him who is invisible, walking with God, and doing His will. “I am not alone....he that sent me is with me” (Joh 8:16, 29). The Captain of our salvation was exposed to great difficulties, anxiety of mind, dangers, and troubles—typed out by the great sufferings of David before he came to the kingdom. But in all His perplexities, the Lord Jesus ever betook Himself unto the protection of God, “Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust” (Psa 16:1)—such was His plea. “As the living Father hath sent me, and I *live by* the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me” (Joh 6:57). “When he suffered, he threatened not; but [by faith] committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1Pe 2:23).

3. On the cross, the suffering Saviour’s faith was active. Wondrously is this brought out in Isaiah 50:8-9, “He is near that justifieth me....Behold, the LORD God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me?” The ineffably Holy One had been made the Sinbearer. Jehovah had laid on Christ the iniquity of all His people (Isa 53:6). Though personally sinless, all the sins of God’s elect were imputed to Christ, “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24). Yet even while enduring the curse, and the wrath of God was hard upon Him, our Surety had implicit faith that He would be exonerated, “He is near that *justifieth* me.”

4. In death itself, the Saviour fully trusted God. His last act was one of faith, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luk 23:46). “My flesh also shall rest in hope [literally, “dwells in confident sureness”]. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou *wilt* show me the path of life [resurrection life]: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psa 16:9-11).

Perhaps the fear of lowering the character of our blessed Lord has restrained many from writing on this precious theme, but none should be afraid to go as far as Scripture goes. As we have seen, Holy Writ depicts the life of Christ as giving us the only perfect and all-sided embodiment of faith. Nor was His faith a secret or hidden thing. He made open profession of it—His enemies acknowledged, “He *trusted in God*” (Mat 27:43). O for more conformity to His image. Christ is not only the Christian’s righteousness and peace, but as well the model and strength of his life.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

58. The Faith of Enoch (11:5-6)

The apostle makes it his principal design in this chapter to convince the Hebrews of the nature, importance, and efficacy of saving faith. In the execution of his design, he first

described the essential actings of faith (Heb 11:1), and then in all that follows he treats of the effects, fruits, and achievements of faith. It is blessed to behold how that once more his appeal was to the Holy Scriptures. Not by abstract arguments, still less by bare assertions, would he persuade them, but instead, by setting forth some of the many examples and proofs which the sacred records furnished. Having reminded them of what the faith-obedience of Abel procured, namely, the obtaining of a witness from God that he was righteous, the apostle cites the case of Enoch who exemplifies another aspect and consequent of faith.

The *order* observed by the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 11 is not the historical one. A careful reading of its contents will make this clear. For example, reference is made in Hebrews 11:9 to Isaac and Jacob before attention is directed to Sarah in Hebrews 11:11. The falling down of Jericho's walls (Heb 11:30) is mentioned before the faith of Rahab (Heb 11:31). In Hebrews 11:32, Gideon is mentioned before Barak, Samson before Jephthah, and David before Samuel. Thus it is evident that we are to "search" for something deeper. Since the chronological order is departed from again and again, must there not be a spiritual significance to the way in which the Old Testament saints are here referred to? Without a doubt, such must be the case. The reason for this is not far to seek. It is the *experimental* order which is followed in this chapter. If the Lord permits, this will become plainer and plainer as we proceed from verse to verse.

That which the three examples supplied in Hebrews 11:4 to 7 set before us is an outline of the life of faith. Abel is mentioned first not because he was born before Enoch and Noah, but because what is recorded of him in Genesis 4 illustrated and demonstrated where the life of faith begins. In like manner, Enoch is referred to next, not because he is mentioned before Noah in the book of Genesis, but because what was found in him (or rather, what divine grace had wrought in him) must precede that which was typified by the builder of the ark. Each of these three men adumbrated a distinct feature or aspect of the life of faith and the order concerning them is inviolable. Another, before us, has characterized them thus—in Abel, we see faith's worship, in Enoch, faith's walk, in Noah, faith's witness. This, we believe, is an accurate and helpful way of stating it and the more it be pondered, the more its beauty and blessedness should be perceived.

But man ever reverses God's order and never was this fact more plainly evident to the anointed eye than in these degenerate times in which our lot is cast. Witnessing and working ("service") is what are so much emphasized today. Yet dear reader, Hebrews 11 does not begin with the example of Noah. No, indeed. Noah was preceded by Enoch and for this reason—there can be no divinely-acceptable witness or work unless and until there is a walking with God! Enoch's walk with God must come before any service which is pleasing *to Him*. Alas that this is so much lost sight of now. Alas that, so generally, as soon as a young person makes profession of being a Christian, he or she is pushed into some form of "Christian activity"—open-air speaking, personal work, teaching a Sunday school class—when God's Word so plainly says, "*Not a novice* [margin, "one newly come to the faith"], lest being lifted up with pride [which almost always proves to be the case] he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1Ti 3:6).

O how much we miss and lose through failing to give close heed to the *order* of God's words. Frequently have we emphasized this fact in these pages, yet not too frequently. God

is the God of order and the moment we depart from His arrangements, confusion, with all its attendant evils, at once ensues. We cannot pay too strict attention to the order in which things are presented to us in Holy Writ, for only as we do so are we in the position to learn some of its most salutary lessons and admire its heavenly wisdom. Such is the case here. Enoch's walk of faith must precede Noah's witnessing by faith, and this, in turn, must be preceded by Abel's worship of faith. There must be that setting aside of our own preferences and ways, that bowing to God's will, that submitting to His appointments, that obedience to His requirements, before there can be any real walking with Him. Obedience to Him, then walking *with* Him, then witnessing *for* Him, is heaven's unchanging order.

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Heb 11:5). The case of Abel shows us *where* the life of faith begins. The example of Enoch teaches us *of what* the life of faith consists. Now just as we had to refer to Genesis 4 to understand Hebrews 11:4, so we have to turn back to Genesis 5 for its light to be thrown upon our present verse.

"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Gen 5:24). Here we have set forth, in the form of a brief summary, the new life of the believer—to "walk with God." Previously, Enoch had "walked according to the course of this world" (Eph 2:2), had gone his "own way" (Isa 53:6) of self-pleasing, and unconcerned about the future, had thought only of the present. But now he had been "reconciled to God" (2Co 5:20), for "Can two walk together, except they be *agreed*?" (Amo 3:3). The term "walk" signifies a voluntary act, a steady advance, a progress in spiritual things. To "walk with God" imports a life surrendered to God, a life controlled by God, a life lived for God. It is to that our present verse has reference.

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Heb 11:5). It should be obvious to any Spirit-taught heart that we need to look beneath the surface here if we are to discover the *spiritual principle* of the verse and seek grace to apply it to ourselves. As a mere historical statement, it is doubtless a very interesting one, yet as such it imparts no strength to my needy soul. The bare fact that a man who walked this earth thousands of years ago escaped death may astonish, but it supplies no practical help. What we wish to press upon the reader is the need for asking each portion of Scripture he reads the question, What is there here, what practical lesson, to *help me* while I am left on earth? Nor is this always discovered in a moment—prayer, patience, meditation are required.

As we endeavor to *study* our verse with the object of ascertaining its practical and meaning message for us today, the first thing the thoughtful ponderer will notice is the repetition of the word "translated." This occurring no less than three times in one verse is evidently the key-word. According to its etymology, "translated" signifies to carry across, to bear up, to remove, to change from one place to another. This at once brings to mind (if the Word of Christ be dwelling in us richly) that verse, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and *hath translated us* into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col 1:13). This refers to the grand fact of the Christian's present standing and state before God—he has "passed from death unto life" (Joh 5:24). Now it is the Christian's privilege and duty to

live in the power of this fact and have it made good in his actual case and experience. And this *will be so* just in proportion as he is enabled to live and walk *by faith*.

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death" (Heb 11:5). The word "see" here has the force of taste or experience. Enoch was not to be overcome by death, but let us not limit our thoughts unto physical death. Just as Enoch's "translation" from earth to heaven has a deeper meaning than the natural, so "that he should not see death" signifies more than an escape from the grave. "Death" is the wages of sin, the curse of the broken law. We are living in a world which is under God's righteous curse and death is plainly stamped across everything in it. But when faith is in exercise, the soul is lifted above the scene, and its favoured possessor is enabled to "walk in newness of life." As we saw when pondering the opening verse, it is the nature of faith to bring near things future and to obtain proof and enjoyment of what is invisible to natural sight. Just so far as we walk by faith is the heart "translated," raised above this poor world, and then it is we experience the "power of his [Christ's] resurrection" (Phi 3:10).

Let us now link verses 4 and 5 together, observing their *doctrinal* force. When a sinner, by surrender to God and faith in the sacrifice of Christ, is pronounced righteous by the Judge of all, he is made an heir of eternal life and sin and death can no more have dominion over him, that is, no longer have any legal claim upon him. It is *this* which is illustrated here. The very next saint who is mentioned after Abel was taken to heaven *without* dying, thereby demonstrating that the power of "death" over the Christian has been annulled. First a sinner saved through the blood of the Lamb (Abel), then a saved sinner removed from earth to heaven, and nothing between. How inexpressibly blessed! Words fail us and we can but bow in silent wonderment and worship. How "great" is God's salvation!

Now that which is a fact of Christian doctrine needs to become a fact of Christian experience. We need to enjoy the good, the power, the blessedness of it in our souls day by day. And this can only be as a supernatural faith is in exercise. A bare knowledge of doctrine is practically worthless unless the heart earnestly seeks from God a practical outworking of it. It is one thing to believe that I have judicially passed from death unto life, it is quite another to live practically in the realm of LIFE. But that is exactly what a *life of faith* is. It is a being lifted above the things which are seen and a being occupied with those things which are unseen. It is for the affections to be no longer set on things on the earth, but to have them fixed on things in heaven.

Perhaps the reader is inclined to say, The ideal you set before us is indeed beautiful, but it is impossible for flesh and blood to attain unto it. Quite true, dear friend, we fully grant it. Of himself the Christian can no more live practically upon resurrection-ground than Enoch could transport himself to heaven. But observe carefully the very next words in our wonderful text, "because *God* had translated him." Again we beg you not to carnalize these words and see in them *only* a reference to his bodily removal to heaven or to see in them nothing more than a type and pledge of the rapture—the fulfillment of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17—that is the prophetic significance. But there is a spiritual meaning and practical application also and this is what we so much desire to make clear unto each spiritual reader.

Enoch's translation to heaven was a miracle and that which is spiritually symbolized is a supernatural experience. The whole Christian life, from start to finish, is a *supernatural* thing. The new birth is a miracle of grace, for one who is dead in trespasses and sins can no more regenerate himself than he can create a world. A spiritual repentance and spiritual faith are imparted by "the operation of God" (Col 2:12), for a fallen creature can no more originate them than he could give himself being. To have the heart divorced from the world, to be brought to hate the things we once loved, and to now love the things we once hated is the alone fruitage of the almighty work of the Holy Spirit. And for the heart to function in the realm of resurrection-life, while its possessor is left in a scene of death, can only be made possible and become actual as the supernatural grace of God sustains and calls into exercise a supernatural faith. Only God can daily wean our hearts from the things of this world of death and bring us into real communion with the Prince of life.

A word of caution here. Let us be on our guard against fatalistically folding our arms and saying, God has not ordained that I should live the *translated* life. True, God is sovereign and distributes His favours as He pleases. True, He grants more grace to some of His own people than to others of them. Yet it is also written that, "Ye have not, because ye ask not" (Jam 4:2). Moreover, observe well the next words in our text, "before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Heb 11:5). Ah, does not *that* explain why *our* faith is so feeble and why the things of earth forge such heavy chains about our hearts? God is not likely to strengthen and increase our faith while we are so largely indifferent to *His* pleasure. There must first be the daily, diligent, prayerful striving to please Him in all things. This is absolutely essential if we are to enter into the experience of the *translated* life.

Let us seek to anticipate a possible objection. Some may be saying, "The *translated life is difficult* these days." Then let us remind you of the times in which Enoch lived. It was just before the flood and probably conditions then were far worse than they are now. "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the LORD cometh with ten thousands of His saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" (Jude 1:14-15). It must be remembered that those words had a historical force as well as a prophetic. Thus, a life of pleasing God, of walking with Him, of the heart being lifted above the world, was no easier then than now. Yet divine grace made this actual in Enoch and that grace is as potent today as it was then.

Oftentimes it is helpful to reverse the clauses of a verse so as to perceive more clearly their relation. In order to illustrate this and because we are so anxious for the reader to lay hold of the vitally important teaching of Hebrews 11:5, we will treat it accordingly. "Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Heb 11:5). Do I? Do you? That is a most timely inquiry. If we are *not* "pleasing God," then the more knowledge we have of His truth, the worse for us. "And that servant, which *knew* his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither *did* according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes" (Luk 12:47). God will not be mocked. Fair words and reverent postures cannot deceive Him. It is not how much light do I have, but how far am I in complete subjection to the Lord?

“God had translated him.” Of course He did. God always honours those who honour Him, but let us remember that same verse adds, “And they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed” (1Sa 2:30). God is too holy to encourage self-pleasing and put a premium upon self-indulgence. While we gratify the flesh, the blessing of the Spirit will be withheld. While our hearts are so much occupied with the concerns of earth, He will not make the things of heaven real and efficacious to us. O my reader, if God be not working mightily in your life and mine, showing Himself strong on our behalf (2Ch 16:9), then something is seriously wrong with us.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death” (Heb 11:5). Remember what was before us in the preceding article, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). Faith always presupposes a divine revelation. Faith must have a foundation to rest upon and that foundation must be the Word of Him that cannot lie. God had spoken and Enoch believed. But what a testing of faith! God declared that Enoch should be removed from earth to heaven without passing through the portals of the grave. One, two, three hundred years passed, but Enoch *believed God* and before the fourth century was completed His promise was fulfilled. “That he should not see death” was the reward of his pleasing God. And He does not change. Where there is a genuine “pleasing” of Him, a real walking with Him, He elevates the heart above this scene into the realm of life, light, and liberty.

Ere passing on to the next verse, let us enumerate other points of interest and value contained in this one, though we can do no more than barely mention them. 1. God is not tied to the order of nature. Genesis 3:19 was set aside in the cases of Enoch and Elijah. 2. God puts great outward (providential) differences between those equally accepted by Him. He did so between Abel and Enoch. 3. To exhibit the world’s enmity, God suffered Abel to be martyred. To comfort His people, God preserved Enoch. 4. What God did for Enoch He can and will yet do for a whole generation of His saints (1Co 15:51). 5. There is a future life for believers. The removal of Enoch to heaven plainly intimated this. 6. The body is partaker with the soul in life eternal. The corporeal translation of Enoch showed this. 7. The godliest do not always live the longest. All mentioned in Genesis 5 stayed on earth a much greater time than did Enoch. 8. They who live with God hereafter must learn to please God ere they depart hence. 9. They who walk with God please Him. 10. They who please God shall not lack testimony thereof.

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb 11:6). The apostle had just spoken of Enoch’s translation as a consequent of his pleasing God, and now from the fact of his pleasing God, proves his faith. The adversative particle “But” is used to introduce a syllogism. The argument is framed thus—God Himself had translated Enoch, who before his translation had pleased Him (as his translation evidenced), but without faith it is impossible to please God—therefore Enoch was by faith translated. Thus, this declaration in Hebrews 11:6 has special reference to the last clause in the verse preceding. The argument is drawn from the impossibility of the contrary—as it is impossible to please God without faith and as Enoch received testimony that he *did* please God, then he must have had faith—a justifying and sanctifying faith.

While there is an intimate relation between our present verse and the one immediately preceding, and while as we shall yet see (the Lord willing) that it is closely connected with the case of Noah in Hebrews 11:7, yet it also makes its own particular contribution unto the theme which the apostle is here developing, supplying both a solemn warning and a blessed encouragement. The Holy spirit still had before Him the special need of the wavering Hebrews and would press upon them the fact that the great thing God required was not attendance on outward ordinances, but the diligent seeking unto Him by a wholehearted trust. Where faith was missing, nothing could meet with His approval, but where faith really existed and was exercised, it would be richly rewarded. This principle is unchanging, so that the central message of our verse speaks loudly to us today and should search the heart of each one of us.

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb 11:6). Most solemnly do these words attest the total depravity of man. So corrupt is the fallen creature, both in soul and body, in every power and part thereof, and so polluted is everything that issues from him, that he cannot of and by himself do anything that is acceptable to the Holy One. “So then they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God” (Rom 8:8). “They that are in the flesh” means they that are still in their natural or unregenerate state. A bitter fountain cannot send forth sweet waters. But faith looks out of self to Christ, applies unto His righteousness, pleads *His* worth and worthiness, and does all things Godward in the name and through the mediation of the Lord Jesus. Thus, by faith we *may* please God.

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb 11:6). Yet in all ages there have been many who attempted to please God without faith. Cain began it, but failed woefully. All in their divine worship profess a desire to please God and hope that they do so, why otherwise should they make the attempt? But as the apostle declares in another place, many seek unto God but “not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law” (Rom 9:32). But where faith be lacking, let men desire, design, and do what they will, they can never attain unto divine acceptance. “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his *faith* is counted for [“unto”] righteousness” (Rom 4:5). Whatever be the necessity of other graces, faith is that which alone obtains acceptance with God.

In order to please God, four things must concur, all of which are accomplished by faith. First, the person of him that pleaseth God must be accepted of Him (Gen 4:4). Second, the thing done that pleaseth God must be in accord with His will (Heb 13:21). Third, the manner of doing it must be pleasing to God. It must be performed in humility (1Co 15:10), in sincerity (Isa 38:3), in cheerfulness (Rom 8:12; 2Co 9:7). Fourth, the end in view must be God’s glory (1Co 10:31). Now faith is the only means whereby these four requirements are met. By faith in Christ the person is accepted of God. Faith makes us submit ourselves to God’s will. Faith causes us to examine the manner of what we do Godwards. Faith aims at God’s glory—of Abraham it is recorded that he “was strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Rom 4:20).

How essential it is then that each of us examine himself diligently and make sure that he has *faith*. It is by faith the convicted and repentant sinner is saved (Act 16:31). It is by faith that Christ dwells in the heart (Eph 3:17). It is by faith that we live (Gal 2:20). It is by faith that we stand (Rom 11:20; 2Co 1:24). It is by faith we walk (2Co 5:7). It is by faith the devil is successfully resisted (1Pe 5:8-9). It is by faith we are experimentally sanctified

(Act 26:18). It is by faith we have access to God (Eph 3:12; Heb 10:22). It is by faith that we fight the good fight (1Ti 6:12). It is by faith that the world is overcome (1Jo 5:4). Reader, are you certain that *you* have the “faith of God’s elect” (Ti 1:1)? If not, it is high time you made sure, for “without faith it is *impossible* to please God.” (Heb 11:6).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

10. In the Cave of Adullam

At the close of last month’s article, we saw the backslider restored to communion with God. As David then wrote, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous:”—most of them brought upon ourselves through sinful folly—“but the Lord delivereth him out of them all” (Psa 34:19). Yet, in His own good time. The hour had not yet arrived for our patriarch to ascend the throne. It would have been a simple matter for God to have put forth His power, destroyed Saul, and given His servant rest from all his foes. And this, no doubt, is what the energetic nature of David had much preferred. But there were other counsels of God to be unfolded before He was ready for the son of Jesse to wield the scepter. Though *we* are impulsive and impetuous, God is never in a hurry. The sooner we learn this lesson, the better for our own peace of mind, and the sooner shall we “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him” (Psa 37:7).

“God had designs other than the mere exaltation of David. He intended to allow the evil of Saul and of Israel to exhibit itself. He intended to give to David some apprehension of the character of his own heart and to cause him to learn subjection to a greater wisdom than his own. He intended also to prove the hearts of His own people Israel and to try how many among them would discern that the cave of Adullam was the only true place of excellency and honour in Israel” (B. W. Newton, 1897-1899). Further discipline was needed by David, if he was to learn deeper lessons of dependency upon God. Learn from this, dear reader, that though God’s *delays* are trying to flesh and blood, nevertheless, they are ordered by perfect wisdom and infinite love. “For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come” (Hab 2:3).

“David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam” (1Sa 22:1). Still a fugitive, David left the land of the Philistines and now took refuge in a large underground cavern, situated, most probably, not far from Bethlehem. To conceal himself from Saul and his blood-thirsty underlings, our hero betook himself to a cave—it is probable that the Holy Spirit made reference to this in Hebrews 11:38. The high favourites of heaven are sometimes to be located in queer and unexpected places. Joseph in prison, the descendants of Abraham labouring in the brick-kilns of Egypt, Daniel in the lion’s den, Jonah in the whale’s belly, Paul clinging to a spar in the sea, forcibly illustrate this principle. Then let us not murmur because we do not now live in as fine a house as do some of the ungodly. *Our* “mansions” are in heaven!

“David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam” (1Sa 22:1). It is blessed to learn how David employed himself at this time, yet close searching has to be done before this can be ascertained. The Bible is no lazy man’s book. Much of its treasure, like the valuable minerals stored in the bowels of the earth, only yield up themselves to the diligent seeker. Compare Proverbs 2:1-5. By noting the superscription to the Psalms (which, with many others, we are satisfied are divinely inspired), we discover that two of them were composed by “The sweet singer of Israel” at this time. Just as the 34th Psalm casts its welcome light upon the close of 1 Samuel 21, so Psalm 57 and 142 illuminate the opening verses of 1 Samuel 22.

The underground asylum of David made an admirable closet for prayer, its very solitude being helpful for the exercise of devotion. Well did C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) say, “Had David prayed as much in his palace as he did in his cave, he might never have fallen into the act which brought such misery upon his latter days.” We trust the spiritual reader will, at this point, turn to and ponder the 57th and 142nd Psalms. In them he will perceive something of the exercises of David’s heart. From them he may derive valuable instructions as to how to pray acceptably unto God in seasons of peculiar trial. A careful reading of the 57th Psalm will enable us to follow one who began it amid the gloomy shadows of the cavern, but from which he gradually emerged into the open daylight. So it often is in the experiences of the believer’s soul.

Perhaps the 142nd Psalm was composed by David before the 57th, certainly it brings before us one who was in deeper anguish of soul. Blessed indeed is it to mark the striking contrast from what is here presented to us and what was before us as we passed through 1 Samuel 20 and 21. There we saw the worried fugitive turning to Jonathan, lying to Abimelech, playing the madman at Gath. But vain was the hope of man. Yet how often we have to pass through these painful experiences and bitter disappointments before we thoroughly learn this lesson! Here we behold the son of Jesse turning to the only One who could do him any real good. “I cried unto the LORD with my voice...I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble” (Psa 142:1-2). This is what we should do—thoroughly unburden our hearts unto Him with whom we have to do. Note how, at the close of this Psalm, after he had so freely poured out his woes, David exclaimed, “Thou shalt deal bountifully with me!”

“And Jonathan loved him as his own soul . . . all Israel and Judah loved David” (1Sa 18:1, 16). Now their love was tested, now an opportunity was furnished them to manifest their affections for him. This was the hour of David’s unpopularity. He was outlawed from the court, a fugitive from Saul, he was dwelling in a cave. Now was the time for devotion to David to be clearly exhibited. But only those who truly loved him could be expected to throw in their lot with an hated outcast. Strikingly is this illustrated in the very next words.

“And when his brethren and all his father’s house heard it, they went down thither to him” (1Sa 22:1). Ah, true love is unaffected by the outward circumstances of its object. Where the heart is genuinely knit to another, a change in his fortunes will not produce a change in its affections. David might be in the eyes of the world in disgrace, but that made no difference to those who *loved* him. He might be languishing in a cavern, but that was all the more reason why they should show their kindness and demonstrate their unswerving

loyalty. Among other things, this painful trial enabled David to discover who were, and who were not, his real friends.

If we look beneath the surface here, the anointed eye should have no difficulty in discerning another striking and blessed type of David's Son and Lord. First, a type of Him when He tabernacled among men in "the days of his flesh." How fared it then with the anointed of God? By title, the throne of Israel was His, for He was born "the King of the Jews" (Mat 2:2). That God was with Him was unmistakably evident. He too "behaved himself wisely in all his ways." He too performed exploits—healing the sick, freeing the demon-possessed, feeding the hungry multitude, raising the dead. But just as Saul hated and persecuted David, so the heads of the Jews—the chief priests and Pharisees—were envious of and hounded Christ. Just as Saul thirsted for the blood of Jesse's son, the leaders of Israel (at a later date) thirsted for the blood of God's Son.

The analogy mentioned above might be drawn out at considerable length, but at only one other point will we here glance, namely, the fact of the solemn foreshadowment furnished by David as first the friend and benefactor of his nation, now the poor outcast. Accurately did he prefigure that blessed One, who when here was "the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa 53:3). Trace His path as the Holy Spirit has described it in the New Testament. Behold Him as the unwanted one in this world of wickedness.

Hear His plaintive declaration, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Mat 8:20). Read too, "And every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the mount of Olives" (Joh 7:53; 8:1) and it is evident that David's Lord was the homeless outcast in this scene.

But were there none who appreciated Him, none who loved Him, none who were willing to be identified with and cast in their lot with Him who was "despised and rejected of men" (Isa 53:3)? Yes, there were some and these, we believe, are typically brought before us in the next verse of the Scripture we are now pondering, "And everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him" (1Sa 22:2). What a strange company to seek unto God's anointed! No mention is made of the captains of the army, the men of state, the princes of the realm, coming unto David. No, they, with all like them, preferred the court and the palace to the cave of Adullam.

Is not the picture an accurate one, dear reader? Is it not plain again that these Old Testament records furnish something more than historical accounts, that there is a typical and spiritual significance to them as well? If David be a type of Christ, then those who sought him out during the season of his humiliation, must represent those who sought unto David's Son when he sojourned on this earth. And clearly they did so. Read the four Gospels and it will be found that, for the most part, those who sought unto the Lord Jesus were the poor and needy. It was the lepers, the blind, the maimed, and the halt who came unto Him for help and healing. The rich and influential, the learned and the mighty, the leaders of the nation had no heart for Him.

But what is before us in the opening of 1 Samuel 22 not only typed out that which occurred during the earthly ministry of Christ, but it also shadowed forth that which has come to pass all through this Christian era, and that which is taking place today. As the Holy Spirit declared through Paul, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many

wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things which are: That no flesh should glory in his presence" (1Co 1:26-29).

The second verse of 1 Samuel 22 sets before us a striking Gospel picture. Note, first, that those who came to David were *few in number*, "about four hundred." What a paltry retinue! What a handful compared with the hosts of Israel! But did Christ fare any better in the days of His flesh? How many friends stood around the cross, wept at His sepulchre, or greeted Him as He burst the bars of death? How many followed Him to Bethany, gazed at His ascending form, or gathered in the upper room to await the promised Spirit? And how is it today? Of the countless millions of earth's inhabitants, what percentage of them have even heard the Gospel? Out of those who bear His name, how many evidence that they are denying self, taking up their cross daily, and following the example which He has left, and thus proving themselves by the only badge of discipleship which He will recognize? A discouraging situation, you say. Not at all, rather is it just what faith expects. The Lord Jesus declared that His flock is a "little one" (Luk 12:32), that only "few" tread that narrow way which leadeth unto life (Mat 7:14).

Second, observe again the particular *type of people* who sought out David. They were "in distress, in debt, and discontented." What terms could more suitably describe the condition they are in when the redeemed first seek help from Christ! "In debt"—in all things we had come short of the glory of God. In thought, word, and deed, we had failed to please Him, and there was marked up against us a multitude of transgressions. "In distress"—who can tell out that anguish of soul which is experienced by the truly convicted of the Holy Spirit? Only the one who has actually experienced the same, knows of that unspeakable horror and sorrow when the heart first perceived the frightful enormity of having defied the infinite Majesty of heaven, trifled with His longsuffering, slighted His mercy again and again.

"Discontented"—Yes, this line in the picture is just as accurate as the others. The one who has been brought to realize he is a spiritual pauper, and who is now full of grief for his sins, is discontented with the very things which till recently pleased him. Those pleasures which fascinated, now pall. That gay society which once attracted, now repels. O the emptiness of the world to a soul which God hath smitten with a sense of sin! The stricken one turns away with disgust from that which he had formerly sought after so eagerly. There is now an aching void within, which nothing without can fill. So wretched is the convicted sinner, he wishes he were dead, yet is terrified at the very thought of death. Reader, do you know anything of such an experience or is all this the language of an unknown tongue to you?

Third, these people who were in debt, in distress, and discontented, *sought out* David. They were the only ones who did so. It was a *deep sense of need* which drove them to him and a hope that he could relieve them. So it is spiritually. None but those who truly feel that they are paupers before God, with no good thing to their credit, absolutely destitute of any merits of their own, will appreciate the glad tidings that Christ Jesus came into this world to pay the debt of such. Only those who are smitten in their conscience, broken in

heart, and sick of sin will really respond to that blessed word of His, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat 11:28). Only those who have lost all heart for this poor world will truly turn unto the Lord of glory.

Fourth, the spiritual picture we are now contemplating is not only a type of the first coming to Christ of His people, but also of their subsequent *going forth* "unto him without the camp" (Heb 13:13). Those who sought David in the cave of Adullam turned their backs upon both the court of Saul and the religion of Judaism. There was none to pity them there. Who cared for penniless paupers? Who had a heart for those in distress? So it is in most of the churches today. Those who are "poor in spirit" (Mat 5:3) have nothing in common with the self-satisfied Laodiceans. And how "distressed" in soul are they over the worldliness that has come in like a flood, over the crowds of unregenerate members, over the utter absence of any scriptural discipline. And what is to be the attitude and actions of God's grieved children toward those having nothing more than a form of godliness? This—"from such turn away" (2Ti 3:5). Identify yourself with Christ on the outside. Walk alone with Him.

Fifth, "And he became a *captain over them*" (1Sa 22:2). Important and striking line in the picture is this. Christ is to be received as "Lord" (Col 2:6) if He is to be known as Saviour. Love to Christ is to be evidenced by "keeping his commandments" (See Joh 14:15). It mattered not what that strange company had been who sought unto David, they were now his servants and soldiers. They had turned away from the evil influence of Saul, to be subject unto the authority of David. This is what Christ requires from all who identify themselves with Him. "Take my *yoke* upon you" is His demand (Mat 11:29). Nor need we shrink from it, for He declares "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mat 11:30).

FEEBLE FAITH

*"And the apostles said unto the Lord, increase our faith"
(Luke 18:5)*

Did the apostles need to pray? Then well may I. Oh! Thou great Author and Finisher of our faith! I would look up unto Thee with thankfulness that Thou hast granted even the smallest portion of faith to so unworthy a creature as I am. Surely, my soul, it is as great a miracle of grace that my God and Saviour should have kindled belief in thy stony heart, amidst all the surrounding obstructions of sin and Satan which lay there, as when miraculous fire from heaven, in answer to the prophet's prayer, came down and consumed the wetted sacrifice. I praise Thee, my God and King, this day, in the recollection of this unspeakable, unmerited mercy. And though this faith in my heart still be but as a grain of mustard seed, though it be but as a spark in the ocean, though it be but as a drop of dew in comparison of the river, yet blessed, precious Jesus, still this is faith and it is Thy gift! And is it not a token of Thy favour? Is it not an earnest of the Holy Spirit and a pledge of the promised inheritance? Babes in faith as well as strong in the Lord are equally Thine, for it

is said that, “as many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Act 13:48), “and to as many as believed, thou gavest power to become the sons of God.” So it is by Thyself, blessed Redeemer, and not by the strength or weakness of the faith of Thy people, their justification before God the Father is secured. Precious is the Scripture which tells us that by Thee all that believe, whether great faith or little faith—”all that believe are justified from all things” (Act 13:39).

But my soul, while the consciousness of thy possessing the smallest evidences of faith in thy Beloved gives thee joy unspeakable and full of glory, dost thou not blush to think what ungrateful returns thou art making to thy Redeemer in the littleness of thy faith in such a God and Saviour? Whence is it that thine affections are so warm in a thousand lesser things and so cold toward Christ? Whence that His Holy Word thou so often hearest as though thou heardest not? Whence the ordinances of Jesus’ house, the promises of His Scriptures, the visits of His grace, whence these pass again and again before thee and thou remainest so cold and lifeless in thy affections? Whence that the temptations of Satan, the corruptions of thine heart, the allurements of the world, gain any influence upon thee? Whence that thou art so anxious about things that perish, about anything, about nothing, deserving to be called interesting, whence so seldom at the court of the heavenly King, where thou oughtest to be found daily, hourly, waiting, and whence under trials or the want of answers at a mercy-seat, fretful, impatient, and misgiving—whence all these, and numberless other evils, but from the weakness and littleness of thy love to Christ, and thy trust in Christ, and thy dependence upon Christ, and thy communion with Christ? All, all arise out of this one sad cause, my soul, thine unbelief. Jesus, Master, look upon me, put the cry with earnestness within my heart, that I may unceasingly, with the apostle’s prayer, be sending forth this as the first and greatest petition of my whole soul—”Lord, increase my faith.” (Robert Hawker, 1825)

ASSURANCE

2. Its Basis

The task which these articles sets before us is by no means easily executed. On the one hand, we wish to be kept from taking the “children’s bread, and casting it to the dogs” (Mat 15:26). On the other, it is our earnest prayer that we may be delivered from casting a stumbling block before any of God’s “little ones.” That which occasions our difficulty is the desire to expose an empty profession and to be used of God in writing that which, under His free Spirit, may be used in removing the scales from the eyes of those who, though unregenerate, are resting with carnal confidence on some of the divine promises given to those who are in Christ—for while a sinner is out of Christ, none of the promises belong to him. See 2 Corinthians 1:20. Notwithstanding, it behooves us to seek wisdom from above so that we may write in such a way that any of Christ’s who are yet

unestablished in the faith may not draw the conclusion they are still dead in trespasses and sins.

Having before us the twofold object named above, let us ask the question, Is a simple faith in Christ sufficient to save a soul for time and eternity? At the risk of some readers turning away from this article and refusing to read further, we unhesitatingly answer, No, it is not. The Lord Jesus Himself declared, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luk 13:3). Repentance is just as essential to salvation as is believing. Again, we read that, "Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead" (Jam 2:20). A "simple faith" which remains alone, a faith which does not purify the heart (Act 15:9), work by love (Gal 5:6), and overcome the world (1Jo 5:4) will save nobody.

Much confusion has been caused in many quarters through failure to define clearly *what it is* from which the sinner needs saving. Only too often the thought of many minds is restricted to hell. But that is a very inadequate conception, and often proves most misleading. The only thing which can ever take any creature to hell is unrepented and unforgiven *sin*. Now on the very first page of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit has particularly recorded it that the incarnate Son of God was named "Jesus" because "He shall *save* his people *from their sins*" (Mat 1:21). Why is it that that which God has placed at the forefront is relegated to the rear by most modern evangelists? To ask a person if he has been saved from hell is much more ambiguous than to inquire if he has been saved from his sins.

Let us attempt to enlarge on this a little, for thousands of professing Christians in these days have but the vaguest idea of what it means to be saved *from sin*. First, it signifies to be saved from the *love* of sin. The heart of the natural man is wedded to everything which is opposed to God. He may not acknowledge it, he may not be conscious of it, yet such is the fact nevertheless. Having been shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin (Psa 51:5), man cannot but be enamoured with that which is now part and parcel of his very being. When the Lord Jesus explained why condemnation rests upon the unsaved, He declared, "Men *loved darkness* rather than the light" (Joh 3:19). Nothing but a supernatural change of heart can deliver any from this dreadful state. Only an omnipotent Redeemer can bring us to "abhor" (Job 42:6) ourselves and loathe iniquity. This He does when He saves a soul, for, "The fear of the LORD is to *hate evil*" (Pro 8:13).

Second, to be saved from our sins is to be delivered from the *allowance* of them. It is the unvarying tendency of the natural heart to excuse evildoing, to extenuate and gloss it over. At the beginning, Adam declined to acknowledge his guilt, and sought to throw the blame upon his wife. It was the same with Eve. Instead of honestly acknowledging her wickedness, she attempted to place the onus on the serpent. But how different is the regenerated person's attitude toward sin! "For that which I do I *allow not*" (Rom 7:15): Paul committed sin, but he did not approve, still less did he seek to vindicate it. Nay, more. The real Christian repents of his wrongdoing, confesses it to God, mourns over it, and prays earnestly to be kept from a repetition of the same. Pride, coldness, slothfulness, he hates, yet day by day he finds them re-asserting their power over him. Yet nightly he returns to the fountain which has been opened "for sin and for uncleanness" (Zec 13:1), that he may be cleansed. The true Christian desires to render perfect obedience to God and

cannot rest satisfied with anything short of it, and instead of palliating his failures, he mourns over them.

Third, to be saved from our sins is to be delivered from the *reigning power* or mastery of them. Sin still indwells the Christian, tempts, annoys, wounds, and daily trips him up. "In many things we offend all" (Jam 3:2). Nevertheless, sin is not the complete master of the Christian, for he resists and fights against it. While far from being completely successful in his fight, yet on the other hand, there is a vast difference between him and the helpless slaves of Satan. His repentings, his prayers, his aspirations after holiness, his pressing forward unto the mark set before him, all witness to the fact that sin does not have "dominion" (Rom 6:14) over him. Undoubtedly there are great differences of attainment among God's children. In His high sovereignty, God grants more grace unto one than to another. Some of His children are far more plagued by constitutional sins than others. Some who are very largely delivered from outward transgressions are yet made to groan over inward ones. Some who are largely kept from sins of commission have yet to bewail sins of omission. Yet sin is no longer complete master over any who belong to the household of faith.

The last sentence may perhaps discourage some who have a sensitive conscience. He who is really honest with himself and has had his eyes opened in some degree to see the awful sinfulness of self, and who is becoming more and more acquainted with that sink of iniquity, that mass of corruption which still indwells him, often feels that sin more completely rules him now than ever it did before. When he longs to trust God with all his heart, unbelief seems to paralyze him. When he wishes to be completely surrendered to God's blessed will, murmurings and rebellion argue within him. When he would spend an hour in meditation on the things of God, evil imaginations harass him. When he desires to be more humble, pride seeks to fill him. When he would pray, his mind wanders. The more he fights against these sins, the farther off victory seems to be. To him it appears that sin is very much the master of him and Satan tells him that his profession is vain. What shall we say to such a dear soul who is deeply exercised over this problem? Two things.

First, the very fact that you *are* conscious of these sins and are so much concerned over your failure to overcome them is a *healthy* sign. It is the blind who cannot see; it is the dead who feel not—true alike naturally and spiritually. Only they who have been quickened into newness of life are capable of real sorrow for sin. Moreover, such experiences as we have mentioned above, evidence a *spiritual growth*—a growth in the knowledge of self. As the wise man tells us, "He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" (Ecc 1:18). In God's light we see light (Psa 36:9). The more the Holy Spirit reveals to me the high claims of God's holiness, the more I discover how far short I come of meeting them. Let the midday sun shine into a darkened room, and dust and dirt which before was invisible is now plainly seen. So with the Christian—the more the light of God enters his heart, the more he discovers the spiritual filth which dwells there. Beloved brother, or sister, it is not that you are becoming more sinful, but that God is now giving you a clearer and fuller sight of your sinfulness. Praise Him for it, for the eyes of the vast majority of your fellows (religionists included) are blind and cannot see what so distresses you!

Second, side by side with sin in your heart, is *grace*. There is a new and holy nature within the Christian as well as the old and unholy one. Grace is active within you, as well as sin. The new nature is influencing your conduct as well as the old. Why is it that you so desire *to be* conformed to the image of Christ, to trust Him fully, love Him fervently, and serve Him diligently? These longings proceed not from the flesh, No, my distressed brother or sister, sin is *not* your *complete* master. If it were, all aspirations, prayers, and strivings after holiness would be banished from your heart. There are “as it were the company of *two* armies” (Song 6:13) fighting to gain control of the Christian. As it was with our mother Rebekah—“The children struggled together within her” (Gen 25:22)—so it is with us. But the very “struggle” shows that the issue is not yet decided. Had sin *conquered*, the soul would no longer be able to *resist*. The conqueror disarms his enemy so that he can no longer fight back. The very fact that you *are* still “fighting,” proves that sin has not vanquished you! It may *seem* to you that it soon will, but the issue is not in doubt—Christ will yet save you from the very *presence* of sin.

Having sought in the above paragraphs to heed the injunction found in Hebrews 12:13-14 to “Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;” and to “make straight paths” for the feet of God’s little ones, “*lest* that which is lame be turned out of the way,” let us again direct our attention unto those who “have not a doubt” of *their* acceptance in Christ and perhaps feel in no personal need for what has been said above. The Lord declared that a tree is known by its fruits, so there cannot be anything wrong in examining the tree of our hearts, to ascertain *what* kind of “fruit” it is now bringing forth and discover whether it be such as may proceed from mere nature or that which can only issue from indwelling grace. It may at once be objected, “But nothing spiritual can issue from ourselves.” From our *natural selves*, yes. But how can an evil tree ever be any different? Christ said, “Make the tree good, and his fruit good” (Mat 12:33). This is typed out by engrafting a new slip on an old stock.

All pretensions unto the present enjoyment of the assurance of faith, by those whose daily lives are unbecoming the Gospel, are groundless. They who are confident of entering that eternal happiness, which consists very much in a perfect freedom from all sin, but who now *allow* themselves in the practice of sin (persuading themselves that Christ has fully atoned for the same), are deceived. None truly desire to be free from sin in the future, who do not sincerely long to forsake it in the present. He who does not pant after holiness here, is dreadfully mistaken if he imagines he desires holiness hereafter. Glory is but grace consummated. The heavenly life is but the full development of the regenerated life on earth. Neither death nor the second coming of Christ will effect any radical change in the Christian. It will only *perfect* what he already has and is. Any, then, who pretend unto the assurance of salvation, boast of their pardon and present possession of eternal life, but who have not an experience of deep sorrow for sin, real indignation against it, and hatred of themselves because of transgressions, know nothing at all of what *holy assurance* is.

In considering the *basis* of the Christian’s assurance, we must distinguish sharply between the ground of his *acceptance before God* and his own knowledge *that he* is accepted by Him. Nothing but the righteousness of Christ—wrought out by Him in His virtuous life and vicarious death—can give any sinner a perfect legal standing before the thrice holy God. And nothing but the communication of a new nature, a supernatural work

of grace within, can furnish proof that the righteousness of Christ *has been* placed to my account. Whom God legally saves, He experimentally saves; whom He justifies, them He also sanctifies. Where the righteousness of Christ is *imputed* to an individual, a principle of holiness is *imparted* to him; the former can only be ascertained by the latter. It is impossible to obtain a scriptural knowledge that the merits of Christ's finished work are reckoned to my account, except by proving that the efficacy of the Holy Spirit's work is evident in my soul.

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2Pe 1:10). Why that order of "calling" before "election"? Here it is the converse of what we find in Romans 8:29-30, "Whom he did [1] predestinate, them he also [2] called"; but here in Peter the Christian is bidden to make sure (1) his "calling" and (2) his "election." Why this variation of order? The answer is simple—in Romans 8:29-30, it is the execution of God's eternal counsels, but in 2 Peter 1, it is the Christian's obtaining an experimental knowledge of the same. I have to work back from effect to cause, to examine the fruit so as to discover the nature of the tree. I have no immediate access to the Lamb's Book of Life, but if I obtain clear proof that I have been effectually called by God out of the darkness of sin's enmity into the light of reconciliation, then I *know* that *my* name is written there.

And *how* am I to make my "calling and election *sure*"? The context of this passage tells me very plainly. In 11 Peter 1:5-7 we read, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness charity." There we have a summary of those graces which make up the Christian character. The word "add" signifies "supply in connection with," just as in a choir a number of parts and voices unite together in making harmony or as in a rainbow the various colors, side by side, blend into one beautiful whole. In the previous verses, the apostle had spoken of the grace of God manifested toward His elect. By regeneration they had "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Now he adds, Rest not satisfied with a negative salvation, but press forward unto perfection. Be in thorough earnest to "add to your faith" these virtues. Faith is not to be alone, but the other spiritual graces must supplement and adorn it.

In 11 Peter 1:8-9, the Spirit moved the apostle to set before us the consequences of a compliance or a non-compliance with the duties specified in verses 5-7. The "these things," in verse 8, are the seven graces of the previous verses. If "all diligence" be devoted to the acquiring and cultivating of those lovely virtues, then a certain consequence is sure to follow—as cause stands to effect, so is fruitfulness dependent on Christian diligence. Just as the neglect of our daily food will lead to leanness and feebleness, just as lack of exercise means flabby muscles, so a disregard of the divine injunction of verse 5 issues in soul-barrenness, lack of vision, and loss of holy assurance. This brings us now to verse 10.

The, "Wherefore the rather, brethren," of 11 Peter 1:10, points a contrast from the sad tragedy presented in verse 9. There we see the pitiful results of being in a backslidden state of soul. There is no remaining stationary in the Christian life. He who does not progress, retrogrades. He who does not diligently heed the divine precepts, soon loses the good of the divine promises. He who does not add or conjoin with his "faith" the graces mentioned

in verses 5-7, will soon fall under the power of unbelief. He who does not cultivate the garden of his soul, will quickly find it grown over with weeds. He who neglects God's exhortations will lose the joy of His salvation and will lapse into such a state of doubting that he will seriously question his divine sonship. To prevent this the apostle says, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2Pe 1:10).

The obvious meaning, then, of this exhortation in 2 Peter 1:10 is, Bestir yourselves, take pains to secure satisfactory evidence that you are among the effectually called and elect of God. Let there be no doubt or uncertainty about it. You profess to be a child of God, then justify your profession by cultivating the character and displaying the conduct of one. Sure proof is this that something more than a mere resting upon John 5:24 or Acts 16:31 is demanded of us! It is only in proportion as the Christian manifests the fruit of a genuine conversion that he is entitled to regard himself and be regarded by others as one of the called and elect of God. It is just in proportion as we add to our faith the other Christian graces that we have solid ground on which to rest the assurance we belong to the family of Christ. It is not those who are governed by self-will, but "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom 8:14).

"In times so critical to the interests of vital religion and amidst such awful departures from the faith as we are daily called upon to behold, it becomes a very anxious inquiry in the breasts of the humble—Is there no method under divine grace by which the believer may arrive to a well-grounded assurance, concerning the great truths of the Gospel? Is it not possible for him to be so firmly settled in those great truths, as that he shall not only be ready 'to give answer to every one that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him,' but to find the comfort of it in his own mind, that his faith 'doth not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God'?" To this inquiry I answer, Yes, blessed be God, there is. An infallible method is discovered at once to secure from the possibility of apostasy and to afford comfort and satisfaction to the believer's own mind concerning the great truths of God, namely, *from the Spirit's work in the heart*, by the sweet influences of which he may find 'joy and peace in believing and abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit'" (Robert Hawker, 1803).

Christian assurance, then, is a scripturally-grounded knowledge that I am in the narrow way which leadeth unto life. Thus, it is based upon the Word of God, yet consists of the Holy Spirit enabling me to discern in myself a character to which the divine promises are addressed. We have the same Word to measure ourselves by now as God will judge us by in the day to come. Therefore, it behooves every serious soul to prayerfully and carefully set down the scriptural marks of God's children on the one side and the characteristics of his own soul and life on the other and determine if there be any real resemblance between them. We will close this section by quoting from the saintly Samuel Rutherford (1637):

"You may put a difference betwixt you and reprobates if you have these marks—If ye prize Christ and His truth so as you will sell all and buy Him and suffer for it. If the love of Christ keep you back from sinning more than the law or fear of hell does. If you be humble and deny your own will, wit, credit, ease, honour, the world, and the vanity and glory of it. Your profession must not be barren and void of good works. You must in all things aim at *God's* honour. You must eat, sleep, buy, sell, sit, stand, speak, pray, read, and hear the

Word with a heart purpose that God may be honoured. Acquaint yourself with daily praying, commit all your ways and actions to God by prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving and count not much for being mocked, for Christ Jesus was mocked before you.” (God willing, to be continued.)

THE ONE THING NEEDFUL

Sermon by C. H. Spurgeon

Part 2

III. The next word is CONCENTRATION: “*One* thing is needful” (Luk 10:42). I am glad it says “one thing,” because a division of ends and objects is always weakening. A man cannot follow two things well. Our life-blood suffices not to fill two streams or three. There is only enough water, as it were, in our life’s brooklet to turn one wheel. It is a great pity when a man fritters away his energies by being “everything by turns and nothing long,” trying all things and mastering nothing. Oh, soul, it is well for thee that there is only one thing in this world that is absolutely necessary, give thy whole soul to that. If other things are necessary in a secondary place, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mat 6:33).

One thing is needful and this is well arranged, for we cannot follow two things. If Christ be one of them, we cannot follow another. Is it not written, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or cleave to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Mat 6:24). Not only would it be very weakening for you to attempt to serve both, but it is absolutely impossible that you should do so. Jesus Christ is a monopolizer of human hearts, He will never accept a portion of our manhood. He bought us altogether and He will have the whole of our personality. Christ must be everything or He will be nothing. He does not love Christ who loves anything as well as Christ, neither does he trust Him who trusts in anything besides. Christ must reign alone. “Jesus only” must be the motto of our spirit. It is well for us, therefore, that only one thing is necessary, for only one thing is possible.

It is an unspeakable mercy that this one thing needful is a very simple one. Little child, thou couldst not climb the mountain, but thou canst sit down at Jesus’ feet. Thou canst not understand hard doctrine, but thou canst love Him who said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (See Luk 18:16). Take the Incarnate Wisdom to be thy Master and sit as a little child at His feet to learn with all thine heart. That is all He asks of thee. The one thing needful is very easy except to proud hearts, which cannot brook to accept any thing gratis and to be beholden to sovereign mercy. To sit at Jesus’ feet in humble submission and quiet rest, He the Master and I the little child, I the vessel waiting to be filled and He my fullness. This is all in all to me.

Let us remark that, though this is only one thing and so concentrated, yet it is also comprehensive and contains many things. Imagine not that to sit at Jesus' feet is a very small, unmeaning thing. It means peace, for they who submit to Jesus find peace through His precious blood. It means holiness, for those who learn of Jesus learn no sin, but are instructed in things lovely and of good repute. It means strength, for they that sit with Jesus and feed upon Him are girded with His strength.

If we say that in an army the one thing needful is loyalty to the sovereign, we know what that means, for the loyal soldier will be sure to be obedient to his officers, and if attracted to his queen, he will be brave in the day of battle and do his duty well. If we said that the one thing needful in a family was love, we should not require a small thing, for love will place husband and wife in their true position. Love will produce obedience in children and diligence in servants. Let love permeate everything and other virtues will grow out of it, as flowers spring from the soil. So when we say that sitting at Jesus' feet is one thing needful, we have not uttered a mere truism. It comprehends a world of blessings.

And here would I address a word to the church of God in this country at the present time. She too is as Martha, "cumbered with much serving" (Luk 10:40). It were her wisdom and strength if she would become more like Mary and sit at Jesus' feet. Just now we need revival. O that God would send it! Oh for a mighty flood of spiritual influences that would bear the stranded churches right out into a sea of usefulness. But how can we get revival? We shall have it, brethren, when we commune with Christ. When the saints habitually sit at Jesus' feet they will be revived and of necessity the revival will spread from them and the hearts of sinners will be touched. There is a great talk now-a-days of union. The walls of the various churches are to be broken down and the denominations are to be blended. Think not of it in such a fashion. The only union possible or desirable is that we all unite to sit at Jesus' feet. It is not allowable that we concede one truth and you another—that is not natural charity, but common treason to Christ.

We have no right to yield an atom of the truth under the pretense of charity. Truth is no property of ours. We are only God's stewards and it behooves us to be faithful to our trust. Neither one church nor another has any right to bate its testimony one jot, if it be true. To alter the statute-book of Christ is blasphemy. True union will come when all the churches learn of Christ, for Christ does not teach two things opposed to each other. There are not two baptisms in the Bible. We shall not find two sets of dogmas diametrically opposite to each other. If we give up the various things that are of man and hold fast each of us only that which is of God, we shall be united in principle and in doctrine, and "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" will once again be emblazoned upon the banners of the church of God. Sit at Jesus' feet, O thou church of Christ, and true unity will come to thee.

