

The Spirit Cleansing.

The title of this article may possibly surprise some readers, who have supposed that cleansing from sin is by the blood of Christ alone. Judicially it is so, but in connection with experimental purging certain distinctions need to be drawn in order to a clearer understanding. Here, the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit is the efficient cause, the blood of Christ is the meritorious and procuring cause, faith's appropriation of the Word is the instrumental cause. It is by the Holy Spirit our eyes are opened to see and our hearts to feel the enormity of sin, and thus are we enabled to perceive our need of Christ's blood. It is by the Spirit we are moved to betake ourselves unto that "fountain" which has been opened for sin and for uncleanness. It is by the Spirit we are enabled to trust in the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice now that we realise what Hell-deserving sinners we are. All of which is preceded by His work of regeneration whereby He capacitates the soul to see light in God's light and appropriate the provisions of His wondrous mercy.

It is now our purpose to trace out the various aspects of the Spirit's work in purging the souls of believers, for we do not wish to anticipate too much the ground we hope to yet cover in our articles upon "Sanctification," yet this present series of papers would be incomplete were we to pass by this important phase of the Spirit's operations. We shall therefore restrict ourselves unto a single branch of the subject, which is sufficiently comprehensive as to include in it all that we now feel led to say thereon, namely, that of *mortification*. Nor shall we attempt to discuss in detail the varied ramifications of this important truth, for if we are spared we hope some day ere very long to devote a series of articles to its separate consideration, for it is far too weighty and urgent to be dismissed with this brief notice of it.

"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). A most solemn and searching verse is this, and one which we greatly fear has very little place in present-day preaching. Five things in it claim attention. First, the persons addressed. Second, the awful warning here set before them. Third, the duty enjoined upon them. Fourth, the efficient Helper provided. Fifth, the promise made. Those here addressed are regenerated believers, Christians, as is evident from the whole context: the Apostle denominates them "brethren" (v. 12).

Our text, then, belongs to the Lord's own people, who "are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh" (Rom. 8:12); rather are they "debtors" to Christ (who redeemed them) to live for His glory, "debtors" to the Holy Spirit (who regenerated them) to submit themselves to His absolute control. But if an apprehension of their high privilege (to please their Saviour) and a sense of their bounden duty (to Him who has brought them from death unto life) fail to move them unto godly living, perhaps an apprehension of their awful danger may influence them thereto: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die"—die spiritually, die eternally, for "life" and "death" in Romans always signifies far more than natural life and death. Moreover, to restrict "ye shall die" to physical dissolution would be quite pointless, for *that* experience is shared by sinners and saints alike.

It is to be noted that the Apostle did not say "If ye *have* lived after the flesh ye shall die," for every one of God's children did so before He delivered them from the power of

darkness and translated them into the kingdom of His dear Son. No, it is “If ye live after the flesh” now. It is a continual course, a steady perseverance in the same, which is in view. To “live after the flesh” means to persistently follow the inclinations and solicitations of inward corruption, to be wholly under the dominion of the depravity of fallen human nature. To “live after the flesh” is to be in love with sin, to serve it contentedly, to make self-gratification the trade and business of life. It is by no means limited to the grosser forms of wickedness and crime, but includes as well the refinement, morality, and religiousness of the best of men, who yet give God no real place in their hearts and lives. And the wages of sin is *death*.

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.” That is a rule to which there is no exception. No matter what your experience or profession, no matter how certain of your conversion or how orthodox your belief: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap. 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. 6:7, 8). O the madness of men in courting eternal death rather than leave their sinful pleasures and live a holy life. O the folly of those who think to reconcile God and sin, who imagine they can please the flesh, and yet be happy in eternity notwithstanding. “How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her” (Rev. 18:7)—so much as the flesh is gratified, so much is the soul endangered. Will you, my reader, for a little temporal satisfaction run the hazard of God’s eternal wrath? Heed this solemn warning, fellow-Christian: God means what He says, “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.”

Let us now consider the duty which is here enjoined “do mortify the deeds of the body.” In this clause, “the body” is the same as “the flesh” in the previous one, they are equivalent terms for the corruption of nature. The emphasis is here placed upon the body because it is the tendency of indwelling sin to pamper and please our baser part. The soul of the unregenerate acts for no higher end than does the soul of a beast—to gratify his carnal appetites. The “deeds of the body,” then, have reference not only to the outward actions, but also the springs from which they proceed. Thus, the task which is here assigned the Christian is to “mortify” or put to death the solicitations to evil within him. The life of sin and the life of grace are utterly inconsistent and repellent: we must die to sin in order to live unto God.

Now there is a threefold power in sin unto which we must die. First, its damning or condemning power, whereby it brings the soul under the wrath of God. This power it has from the law, for “the strength of sin is the law” (1 Cor. 15:56). But, blessed be God, the sentence of the Divine Law is no longer in force against the believer, for that was executed and exhausted upon the head of his Surety: consequently “we are delivered from the law” (Rom. 7:6). Though sin may still hale Christians before God, accuse them before Him, terrify the conscience and make them acknowledge their guilt, yet it cannot drag them to Hell or adjudge them to eternal wrath. Thus, by faith in Christ sin is “mortified” or put to death as to its condemning power (John 5:24).

Second, sin has a ruling and reigning power, whereby it keeps the soul under wretched slavery and continual bondage. This reign of sin consists not in the multitude, greatness, or prevalence of sin, for all those are consistent with a state of grace, and may be in a child of God, in whom sin does not and cannot reign. The reign of sin consists in the inbeing of sin *unopposed by a principle of grace*. Thus, sin is effectually “mortified”

in its reigning at the first moment of regeneration, for at the new birth a principle of spiritual life is implanted, and this lusteth against the flesh, opposing its solicitations, so that sin is unable to dominate as it would (Gal. 5:17); and this breaks its tyranny. Our conscious enjoyment of this is dependent, mainly, upon our obedience to Romans 6:11.

Third, sin has an indwelling and captivating power, whereby it continually assaults the principle of spiritual life, beating down the Christian's defences, battering his armour, routing his graces, wasting his conscience, destroying his peace, and at last bringing him into a woeful captivity *unless it be mortified*. Corruption does not lie dormant in the Christian: though it reigns not supreme (because of a principle of grace to oppose it) yet it molests and often prevails to a very considerable extent. Because of this the Christian is called upon to wage a constant warfare against it: to "mortify" it, to struggle against its inclinations and deny its solicitations, to make no provision for it, to walk in the Spirit so that he fulfill not the lusts of the flesh.

Unless the Christian devotes all his powers to a definite, uncompromising, earnest, constant warfare upon indwelling sin: unless he diligently seeks to weaken its roots, suppress its motions, restrain its outward eruptions and actions, and seeks to put to death the enemy within his soul, he is guilty of the basest ingratitude to Christ. Unless he does so, he is a complete failure in the Christian life, for it is impossible that both sin and grace should be healthy and vigorous in the soul at the same time. If a garden be overrun with weeds, they choke and starve the profitable plants, absorbing the moisture and nourishment they should feed upon. So, if the lusts of the flesh absorb the soul, the graces of the Spirit cannot develop. If the mind be filled with worldly or filthy things, then meditation on holy things is crowded out. Occupation with sin deadens the mind for holy duties.

But who is sufficient for such a task? Who can expect to gain the victory over such a powerful enemy as indwelling sin? Who can hope to put to death that which defies every effort the strongest can make against it? Ah, were the Christian left entirely to himself the outlook would be hopeless, and the attempt useless. But, thank God, such is not the case. The Christian is provided with an efficient Helper: "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). It is only "*through the Spirit*" we can, in any measure, successfully "mortify the deeds of the body."—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews.

93. *A Call to Steadfastness:* 12:12, 13.

The didactic (teaching) portions of Scripture are very much more than abstract statements of truth: they are designed not only for the instructing of the mind, but also for the influencing of the heart. This is far too little recognised in our day, when the craving for information is so often divorced from any serious concern as to the *use* to be made of the same. This, no doubt, is one of the evil fruits borne by the modern school methods, where instead of seeking to *draw out* (the meaning of the word “educate”) and develop the mind of the pupil, he is made to “cram” or fill his head with a mass of facts and figures, most of which are of no service to him in later life. Not such is God’s method. His method of instruction is to set before us moral and spiritual principles, and then show us how to *ap- ply* them in a practical way; inculcate a motive, and thereby call into exercise our inward faculties. Hence, the test of Christian knowledge is not how much we understand, but how far our knowledge is affecting our lives.

It is one thing to possess a clear intellectual grasp of the doctrines of grace, it is quite another to experience the grace of the doctrines in a spiritual way. It is one thing to believe the Scriptures are the inspired and inerrant Word of God, it is another for the soul to live under the awe of their Divine authority, realising that one day we shall be judged by them. It is one thing to be convinced that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, it is another to surrender to His sceptre and live in personal subjection to Him. What does it profit me to be convinced that God is omnipotent, unless I am learning to lean upon His mighty arm? What avail is it to me that I am assured of God’s omniscience unless the knowledge that His eye is ever upon me acts as a salutary restraint to my actions? What does it advantage me to know that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, unless I am making the acquirement of holiness my chief concern and aim!

That which has been pointed out above has to do with no obscure and intricate subject which lies far above the reach of the rank and file of the common people, but is plain, self-evident, simple. Alas, that our hearts are so little impressed by it and our consciences so rarely exercised over it. When we measure ourselves by *that* standard, have we not all of us much cause to hang our heads in shame? Our intellects are stored with Scripture truth, but how little are our lives molded thereby. Our doctrinal views are sound and orthodox, but how little we know experimentally of “the truth which is after godliness” (Titus 1:1). Has not the Saviour much ground for saying to both writer and reader “Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). O that we may be duly humbled over our sad failures.

The above reflections have been suggested by the *use* which the Apostle makes in our text of the subject he had been discussing in the previous verses. His opening “Wherefore” denotes that he was now going to make a practical application unto those whom he was writing to of the exposition just given of the truth of Divine chastisement. In this we may see him following out the course he pursued in all his Epistles, and which the servants of God are required to emulate today. No matter what was the doctrine under consideration, the Apostle always turned it to a practical end, as his oft-repeated “Therefore” and “Wherefore” intimate. Was he contending for the Christians’ emancipation from the ceremonial law, then he adds, “Stand fast *therefore* in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free” (Gal. 5:1). Was he opening up the glorious truth of resurrection, then he

concludes with “*therefore . . . be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*” (1 Cor. 15:58). Was he setting forth the blessed hope of Christ’s return, then he finishes with “*Wherefore comfort one another with these words*” (1 Thess. 4:18).

It is this which urgently needs to be laid to heart—the *use* we make of the precious truths which the Most High has so graciously revealed to us. That is (partly, at least) what the Saviour had in mind when He said, “Take heed therefore *how* ye hear” (Luke 8:18)—see to it that your hearts are duly affected, so that the truth will regulate all your conduct. It is not sufficient that I assume a reverent demeanor when attending the means of grace, that I pay close attention to what I hear; it is the assimilation of the same, so that I go forth and live under the power thereof, which is the all-important matter. The same is true of our reading; it is not the book which adds to my store of information, or which entertains and thrills, but the one which stirs me up to godly living, which proves the most helpful. So it is with our response to the Scriptures, it is not how many difficult passages do I have light upon, nor how many verses have I memorized, but how many of its commands and precepts am I honestly endeavouring to obey.

This is the keynote struck by the Apostle in the verses which are now to engage our attention. He had thrown not a little light on the distressing circumstance in which the Hebrews then found themselves, namely, the bitter persecution they were encountering at the hands of their unbelieving countrymen. He had pointed out that so far from their afflictions being exceptional, and a warrantable ground for consternation, they were, in some form or other, the common portion of *all* God’s people, while they are left in this scene. He had set before them some most blessed truths, which were well calculated to strengthen their faith, comfort their hearts, and raise their drooping spirits. He had given an exposition of the subjection of Divine chastisement, such as must bring peace and consolation to all who mix faith therewith. He had silenced every objection which could well be made against the duty to which he had called them. And now he presses upon them the practical profit to which they must turn the doctrine inculcated.

“Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed” (Heb. 12:12, 13). Here we have, first, the conclusion drawn from the preceding premises. Second, the several duties enjoined. Third, the reason by which they are enforced. The duties are expressed in figurative language, yet in such terms as the meaning is not difficult to perceive. The enforcing reason or motive for compliance is taken from the evil effects which a non-compliance of their duty would have upon others, which plainly inculcates the importance and value of personal example, and the influence which it exerts upon our fellows.

“Wherefore” means, in view of what has been said: because of the preceding considerations a certain course of conduct ought to follow. There is, we believe, a double reference in this opening “wherefore,” namely an immediate and a remote one. Immediately, it connects with the preceding verse, the most important word of which is “exercised.” The Apostle was alluding again to the well-known Grecian “Games.” In the gymnasium the instructor would challenge the youths to combat. He was an experienced man, and knew how to strike, guard, wrestle. Many severe blows would the combatants receive from him, but it was part of their training, preparing them for their future appearance in the public contests. The youth whose athletic frame was prepared for the coming great venture, would boldly step forward, willing to be “exercised” by his trainer; but he who

shirked the trial and refused to encounter the master, received no help at his hands; but the fault was entirely his own.

This, it seems to us, is the figure carried forward in our text; “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are *exercised* thereby. *Wherefore* lift up the hands which hang down” (Heb. 12:11, 12). The Christian who gives way before trial, who sinks under affliction, who sulks or repines beneath persecution, will bring forth none of the “peaceable fruit of righteousness.” If he “faints” under chastisement, if his hands become idle and his legs no longer capable of supporting him, a profitable use cannot be made of the tribulation through which he is called upon to pass. Then let him pull himself together, gird up the loins of his mind and “*endure* hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3). Let his attitude be, Now is the time of my training, so I will seek to play the man; I will seek grace from God to muster all my faith and courage and valiantly wrestle with whatever opposes and oppresses me.

More remotely, our opening “Wherefore” looks back unto *all* that has been said in the previous verses. Hebrews 12 opens with a stirring call for God’s people to persevere in the course of Christian duty, to go forward in the spiritual life, no matter what impediments might stand in their way; to “run with patience (or perseverance) the race that is set before us,” drawing strength from the Christ for enablement (vv. 1, 2). Then he anticipated an objection: We are being sorely oppressed, tempted to renounce our profession, hounded by our unbelieving brethren. To this he replies, Consider your Master, who went before you in the same path of suffering (v. 3). Bear in mind that your lot has not become extreme: ye have not yet been called upon to experience a martyr’s death (v. 4). Furthermore, you are losing sight of that scriptural exhortation, “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord” (v. 5). This led the Apostle to open to them, in a most precious manner, the whole subject of Divine chastisement. Let us present a brief summary of the same.

The trials through which the children of God are called upon to pass are not Divine punishments, but gracious discipline designed for their good. We are expressly bidden “not to faint” beneath them (v. 5). The rod is wielded not in wrath, but in tender solicitude, and is a manifestation not of God’s anger but of His love (v. 6). Our duty then is to “endure” chastening as becometh the children of God (v. 7). To be without chastisement so far from being an evidence of our spiritual sonship, would demonstrate we were not sons at all (v. 8). Inasmuch as we gave reverence to our earthly parents when they corrected us, how much more ought we to be in subjection to our heavenly Father (v. 9). God’s design in our afflictions is our “profit,” that by them we might become increasingly “partakers of His holiness” in an experimental way. Though these chastenings are unpleasant to flesh and blood, nevertheless “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” issues therefrom when we are suitably “exercised thereby” (v. 11).

Now from these considerations a very obvious conclusion is drawn, and by them a bounden duty is enforced. In view of the “great cloud of witnesses” by which we are encompassed (v. 1), seeing that the saints of other days—in themselves as weak, as sinful, as much oppressed by the world as we are—fought a good fight, kept the faith, and finished their course, let us gird ourselves for the contest and strain every effort to persevere in the path of duty. In view of the fact that our Leader, the Captain of our salvation, has left us such an example of heroic endurance (v. 3), let us earnestly seek to follow His

steps and acquit ourselves like men. Finally, because God Himself is the Author and Regulator of our trials—the severest of our chastenings proceed from a loving Father, seeking our good—then let us not be cast down by the difficulties of the way nor discouraged by the roughness of the path; but let us nerve ourselves to steadfastness in the faith and fidelity to our Redeemer.

Thus the coherence of our opening “Wherefore” is perfectly obvious and the duty it presses so plain that there cannot be misunderstanding. In view of all the above-mentioned considerations, and particularly in view of the fact that the most precious fruits issue from afflictions when we are duly “exercised” by them, then let us not be dejected in our minds nor faint in our spirits by reason thereof. As the champions in the public “Games” used their hands and arms to the very best of their ability, and as the runners in the races used their legs and knees to the best possible effect—and in case their hands and knees began to fail and flag, exerted their wills to the utmost to rouse up their members to renewed effort—so should we be very courageous, zealous and active, and in case our hearts begin to fail us through multiplied discouragements, we must marshal all our resolution and strive prayerfully and manfully against giving way to despair.

“Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down.” The duty here enjoined is set forth in figurative language, but the meaning is none the less obvious because of the graphic metaphors used. The Apostle transferred unto members of our physical body the condition in which the faculties of our souls are liable to fall under certain trials. For the hands to hang down and the knees to become feeble are figurative expressions, denoting the tendency to abandon the discharge of our Christian duty because of the opposition encountered. For the hands of a boxer or fencer to hang down means that his arms are become weary to the point of exhaustion; for the knees to be feeble signifies that through the protracted exertions of the runner his legs have been debilitated by their nervous energy being spent. The spiritual reference is to a decay in the Christian’s courage and resolution. Two evils produce this: despondency as to success—when hope is gone effort ceases; weariness in the performance of duty.

This same figure is employed in other passages of Scripture. In Ezekiel 7:16, 17 we read, “But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity. All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak as water”: here the reference is to that inertia which is produced by poignant conviction of sin after a season of backsliding. Again, in Ezekiel 21:7 we are told, “When they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shalt answer, For the tidings; because it cometh: and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water”: where we behold the paralysing effects of consternation in view of the tidings of sore judgment. But in our text the reference is to the disheartenment caused by fierce opposition and persecution. Despair and becoming weary of well-doing are the two evils in all our afflictions which we most need to guard against. It is failure at this point which has led to so many scandalous backslidings and cursed apostacies. Such an exhortation as the one before us intimates that the Hebrews had either already given way to an enervating spirit of gloom or were in great danger of so doing.

Now “It is the duty of all faithful ministers of the Gospel to consider diligently what failures or temptations their flocks are liable or exposed to, so as to apply suitable means for their preservation” (J. Owen). This is what the Apostle is seen doing here. In view of

the lethargy of the Hebrews he exhorts them to “*lift up* the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.” The word “lift up” signifies not simply to elevate, but to “rectify” or set right again, restoring them to their proper state, so as to apply them to duty. It was a call to steadfastness and resolute perseverance; be not dejected in your minds nor faint in your spirits by reason of the present distress, nor be so terrified of the threatening danger as to give up hope and be completely overwhelmed. Under sore trial and affliction, persecution and the prospect of yet sorer opposition, the temptation is for the heart to sink within us and the path of duty to be forsaken.

“Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees”: literally, “hands which are loose” or slack, dangling inert; “feeble knees” is still stronger in the Greek, being almost the equivalent of palsied knees—enervated knees which need bandages to brace them. In view of which he calls them to arouse themselves, to stir up all their graces unto exercise, to refuse taking the line of least resistance, to renew their courage and bear up under their trials. Resolution will accomplish much to stimulate jaded nerves and flagging energies. The Christian life, from start to finish, is a struggle, a fight, an unceasing warfare against foes within and without, and only he who endures to the end shall receive the crown of life. To give way to dejection is harmful, to sink into despair is dangerous, to quit the discharge of our duties is the fore-runner of apostasy.

But the question arises *how* are we to set about this particular task? To say that we are helpless in ourselves affords no encouragement; in fact to affirm that the Christian is utterly impotent is to deny that there is any vital difference between himself and those who are dead in sins. Christians in their greatest weakness have *some* strength, some grace, some spiritual life; and where there is some life, there is some ability to stir and move. And God is pleased to assist where there is *sincere endeavour*. The believer is responsible to arm his mind against discouragements by considering God’s design in them, and the blessed fruits which issue from trials and afflictions when we are duly exercised by them. Of what value is a clear intellectual grasp of the nature and end of Divine chastisements unless it produces a practical effect upon the heart and life? Let the distressed saint ponder anew the blessed considerations set before him in Hebrews 12:1-11 and find in them motives and incentives unto renewed courage, fidelity and perseverance.

Let the hope of ultimate victory nerve you. Look forward to the goal: the determination to reach home is a powerful stimulus to a weary traveller. Earnestly endeavour to counteract every disposition to faintness and despondency by viewing your trials and persecutions as a part of God’s discipline for your soul: then submit to them as such, and seek to get them sanctified to your spiritual profit. Remember that you cannot fight with hands hanging down, nor run the race set before you if your knees give way; so summon all your resolution to remain steadfast in the discharge of every duty God has appointed and assigned you. Rest in the love of your heavenly Father, assured that all of the present distress is designed for your ultimate good, and this will reinvigorate the soul. Finally, seek grace to lay hold of and plead the promise, “They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength” (Isa. 40:31).

It is to be noted that this exhortation is couched abstractly. It is not “lift up *your* hands,” which would restrict it individually; nor is it “lift up the hands of those who are dejected,” which would limit the exhortation to a ministry unto others. Worded as it is there is a *double* reference: it is a call to the individual Christian to persevering activity, and it is an exhortation for him to seek the well being of his fellow-Christians. That our

text *has* a reference to our seeking to encourage and strengthen fellow-pilgrims is clear from a comparison of Job 4:3, 4 and Isaiah 35:3, 4, with which 1 Thessalonians 5:14 may be compared. The best way for the individual Christian to strengthen the hands of his feeble fellows is by setting before them a worthy example of faith, courage, and steadfastness. In addition, he is to pray for them, speak words of encouragement, remind them of God's promises, relate to them His gracious dealings and powerful deliverances in his own life.

"And make straight paths for your feet." The previous verse concerns the inward frame and spirit of the believer's mind; this one has respect to his outward conduct. As Barnes has well pointed out, the term used here signifies "straight" horizontally, that is level and plain, all obstacles are to be removed so that we do not stumble and fall—cf. Proverbs 4:25-27. The word for "paths" is derived from one meaning "a wheel" and signifies here "the marks made by a wheel"—it is paths marked out for others, leaving the tracks which may be followed by them. The reference, then, is to the believer so manifesting his course that his fellows may see and follow it. The Christian course is *exemplary*, that is, it is one which impresses and influences others. How very careful should we be then as to our conduct!

Here, then, is an exhortation unto the Christian to see well to his *walk*, which means the regulating of all his actions by the revealed will of God, to be obedient unto the Divine precepts, to follow not the ways and fashions of an evil world, but to cleave to the narrow way, and turn not aside from the Highway of Holiness. "It is our duty not only to be found in the ways of God in general but to take care that we walk carefully, circumspectly, uprightly and diligently in them. Hereon depends our own peace, and all our usefulness toward others. It is a sad thing when some men's walk in the ways of God shall deter others from them or turn them out of them" (J. Owen).

"And make straight paths for your feet." A most timely word for us today when iniquity abounds and the love of many waxes cold, when the poor and afflicted in Zion stand in need of all the godly encouragement they can obtain. We are summoned by a "*crooked* generation," both of professing and profane, whose evil ways we are but too apt to learn; we are beset on every hand by temptations to turn aside into what Bunyan termed "By-path Meadow," to enter paths which God has prohibited, to feed on pride and indulge our lusts. How the heart of the mature Christian aches for the lambs of Christ's flock, and how it behooves him to walk softly and carefully lest he put some stumbling block in their way. Solemn indeed is "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity" (Psa. 125:5), and also "They have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein *shall not know peace*" (Isa. 59:8).

"Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." The word "lest" is a translation of two Greek words, "that not." It is a word of caution and prevention, warning each of us that carelessness as to our own walk is likely to have an ill effect upon weaker Christians. The word "lame" is transferred from the body to some defects in our graces which unfits the soul for the discharge of Christian duty: one who is lame is ill-capacitated to run in a race, and one who is lacking in courage, zeal, and perseverance is ill-fitted to fight the good fight of faith. Walk carefully then, my brother, if for no other reason than for the sake of the feeble saints. Backslidden Christians are the plague of the church: inconsistencies in God's people spread discouragement among weak believers.

There are always some “lame” sheep in God’s earthly flock. While there are some Christians with strong and vigorous faith, so that they “mount up with wings as eagles, run and are not weary,” and make steady progress in practical holiness, all are not so highly favoured. In most families of any size there is one frail and sickly member; so it is in the various branches of the Household of Faith. Some are constitutionally gloomy, temperamentally vacillating, physically infirm, and these have a special claim upon the strong. They are not to be snubbed and shunned: they need an example of cheerfulness set before them, wise counsel given to them, their arms supported by prayer and love’s solicitude for their good. Whatever is weak in their faith and hope, whatever tends to dishearten and discourage them, should be carefully attended to, so far as lies in our power. A stitch in time saves nine: many a sheep might have been kept from falling into the ditch, had one with a shepherd’s heart gone after it at the first sign of straying.

“But let it rather be healed.” “Heal” signifies to correct that which is amiss. It is the recovering of a lapsed one which is here in view. Instead of despising sickly Christians, exercise love’s sympathy toward them. While we should be thankful if God has granted us healthy graces, we must beware of presumption: “If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; *considering thyself*, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). To those groaning under the burden of sin, tell them of the sufficiency of Christ’s blood. To those fearful about the future, remind them of God’s faithfulness. To those who are despondent, seek to cheer by citing some of God’s precious promises. Study the holy art of speaking a word in season to the needy. You will be of great value to the church if you develop a spirit of compassion and the gift of lifting up those fallen by the wayside.—A.W.P.

The Life of David.

45. His Conquests.

2 Samuel 8 opens with, “And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Methegammah out of the hand of the Philistines. And he smote Moab . . . David smote also Hadadezer” (vv. 1-3). The thoughtful reader may well ask, What is there here for me? Why are such matters as these recorded in God’s Word, to be read by His people in all generations? Are they merely a bare account of incidents which happened thousands of years ago? If so, they can hardly hold for me anything more than what is of historical interest. But such a conclusion will be far from satisfactory to a devout inquirer, who is assured there is something of profit for his soul in *every* portion of his Father’s Word. But how to ascertain the spiritual value and practical lessons of such verses is that which sorely puzzles not a few: may it please the Lord to now enable us to render them some help at this point.

Whilst it be true that none but the One who inspired the Holy Scriptures can open to any of us their hidden depths and rich treasures, yet it is also true that He places no premium upon sloth. It is the prayerful and meditative reader who is rewarded by the Holy Spirit’s illumination of the mind, giving him to behold wondrous things out of God’s Law. “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the *diligent* shall be made fat” (Prov. 13:4). If, then, any verse of Scripture is to really speak to our hearts, there has to be not only a crying unto God for the hearing ear, but there must be a girding up the loins of our minds and a careful pondering of each word in the verse.

“And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Methegammah out of the hand of the Philistines. And he smote Moab . . . David smote also Hadadezer” (2 Sam. 8:1-3). As he carefully weighs these statements, the spiritually-minded can hardly fail to discern One more eminent than David, even his greater Son and Lord. Here we may clearly behold in type the Lion of the tribe of Judah (to which tribe the son of Jesse belonged!), springing upon and overcoming His enemies. In figure, it is the Lord as “a man of war” (Exo. 15:3), going forth “conquering and to conquer” (Rev. 6:2), of whom it is written “For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet” (1 Cor. 15:25). Yet, precious as this is, it fails to direct us to the practical application of the passage unto our own particular case.

The question, then, returns upon us, What direct message is there in these verses for the Christian today? Not simply what curious signification may be found to amuse him during a few minutes’ recreation, but what practical lessons are here inculcated which can be turned to useful account in his struggle to live the Christian life. Nothing short of *that* should be before the Satan-harassed, sin-afflicted, temptation-tried soul, when he turns to the Word of God for help, instruction, strength and comfort. Nor will God fail him if he seeks in the right spirit—confessing his deep need, pleading the all-prevailing Name of Christ, asking God to grant him for the Redeemer’s sake that wisdom, understanding and faith he sorely craves. Yet, let us add, prayer is not designed to encourage laziness, for it is not a substitute for diligent effort: the Scriptures must be “searched” (John 5:39) and “studied” if they are to yield food to the soul.

But *how* is the devout and anxious reader to get at the spiritual meaning and practical value of the verses quoted above? Well, the first thing to observe is that the central thing in them is, *David overcoming his enemies*. Put in *that* form, the application to ourselves is obvious. David is here to be viewed as a type of the Christian who is menaced by pow-

erful foes both within and without. These are not to be suffered to lord it over the believer, but are to be engaged in mortal combat. Second we note that David is not said to have exterminated or annihilated those enemies, but to have “subdued” them (v. 1), which is true to the type, and supplies a key to its practical interpretation. Third, we must pay due attention unto the time-mark which is given in the opening verse—“And *after this* it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines”—for this is another key which unlocks for us its meaning. It is by attending carefully unto such details that we are enabled to burrow beneath the surface of a verse.

“And *after this* it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines” (2 Sam. 8:1). These words look back to what was before us in 7:1, “And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies.” May we not apply these words to the first coming of a sinner to Christ, heavily laden with a conscious load of guilt, sorely pressed by the malicious foes of his soul, now finding *spiritual rest* in the only One in whom and from whom it is to be obtained. Hitherto David had been assailed again and again by the surrounding heathen, but now the Lord granted him a season of repose. That season had been spent in sweet communion with God, in the Word (2 Sam. 7:4-17) and prayer (2 Sam. 7:18-29). Blessed indeed is that, but let it be duly noted that communion with God is intended to animate us for the discharge of duty. It is not upon flowery beds of ease that the believer is conducted to Heaven. Being led beside the still waters and being made to lie down in green pastures is a blissful experience, yet let it not be forgotten that it is a means to an end—to supply strength for the carrying out of our obligations.

“And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them.” We may observe a very noticeable change here: previously the Philistines had been the aggressors. In 2 Samuel 5 we read, “But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David . . . the Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim . . . And the Philistines came up yet again” (vv. 17, 18, 22). From their assaults God had graciously given His servant “rest” (2 Sam. 7:1). But now he evidently received a commission from the Lord to make war upon them. Thus it is in the initial experience of the Christian. It is a sense of sin—its vileness, its filthiness, its guilt, its condemnation—which drives him to Christ, and coming to Christ, he finds “rest.” But having obtained forgiveness of sins and peace of conscience, he now learns that he must “strive against sin” (Heb. 12:4) and fight the good fight of faith. Now that the young believer has been delivered from the wrath to come, he discovers that he must “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3), and spare not anything within him which opposes God.

“And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them.” While these words may be legitimately applied to the *initial* experience of the believer, they are by no means to be restricted thereunto. They contain a principle which pertains to the Christian life as a whole, and to every stage thereof. That principle is that, before we are fitted to engage our spiritual enemies we must first spend a season in communion with God: only thus and only then can strength be obtained for the conflict which lies before us. Renewed efforts to subdue our persistent foes can only be made (with any degree of success) as we are renewed by the Spirit in the inner man, and that is only to be obtained by feeding on the Word (2 Sam. 7:4-17) and by prayer (2 Sam. 7:18-29)—the two chief means of communion with God.

“And David took Methegammah out of the hand of the Philistines.” Here our passage passes from the general to the particular, and a most important practical truth is here inculcated. This is another case when Scripture has to be compared with Scripture in order to understand its terms. 1 Chronicles 18 is parallel with 2 Samuel 8, and by comparing the language of the opening verse of the former we are enabled to arrive at the meaning of our text: “Now after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them, and took *Gath and her towns* out of the hand of the Philistines.” Thus “Methegammah” has reference to “Gath and her towns.” Now Gath (with its suburbs) was the metropolis of Philistia, being a fortified city on a high hill (2 Sam. 2:24). In our text it is called “Methegammah” which means “the bridle of the mother city.” It had long acted as a “bridle” or curb upon Israel, serving as a barrier to their further occupation of Canaan. So much, then, for the etymological and historical meaning: now for the typical.

What was denoted spiritually by “Gath and her towns”? In seeking the answer to this question let us carefully bear in mind the three details mentioned above: Gath occupied a powerful eminence, it was the metropolis or mother-city, it had served as a “Bridle” upon Israel. Surely the practical application of this to ourselves is not difficult: is it not some *master* lust in our souls or *dominant* sin in our lives which is here represented? And is it not *this* which is to occupy first attention in the warfare against our spiritual foes? Of what avail is it to dress a wound while the blood-stream itself remains poisoned? What use would it be to guard chickens against cats and dogs when the wolf is allowed to assail them? Saul might slay all the other Amalekites, but for sparing “Agag *the king*,” the kingdom was rent from him (1 Sam. 14). Loudly ought that to speak unto our hearts to-day.

It is not the eyelashes which require trimming, but the “eye” itself which must be plucked out; it is not the fingernails which need paring, but the “right hand” which must be cut off (Matt. 5:29, 30), if the Christian would make any headway in overcoming his inward corruptions. It is to his special “besetting sin” he must direct his attention. No truce is to be made with *it*, no excuses offered for it. No matter how firmly entrenched it may be, nor how long it has held sway, grace must be diligently and persistently sought to conquer it. That darling sin which has so long been cherished by an evil heart must be slain: if it be “spared,” as Saul spared Agag, it will slay us. The work of mortification is to begin at the place where sin has its strongest hold upon us.

The subduing of the Philistines, and particularly the capture of Gath, was vitally essential if Israel was to gain their rights, for as yet they were not in full possession of the land to which, by the Divine promise, they were entitled. Canaan had been given to them by God as their heritage, but valiant effort, hard fighting, was called for, in order to their occupation of the same. This is a point which has surely puzzled many. It is clear from Scripture that the land of Canaan was a figure of Heaven, but there is no *fighting* in Heaven! True, but the believer is not yet in Heaven; nevertheless, Heaven ought to be in him, by which we mean that even now the believer should be walking in the daily enjoyment of that wondrous portion which is now his by having been made a joint-heir with Christ. Alas, how little is this fact appreciated by the majority of God’s dear people to-day, and how little are they experimentally *possessing* “their possessions” (Oba. 17).

It is greatly to be regretted that so many of the saints relegate to *the future* the time of their victory, joy, and bliss; and seem content to live in the present as though they were spiritual paupers. For example, how very generally are the words “For so an entrance

shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11) regarded as referring to the time of the believer's glorification. But there is nothing whatever in the context to warrant such a view, nothing required in it to understand that "abundant entrance" as belonging to a day to come, nothing to justify us postponing it at all in our thoughts. Instead, there is much against it. In the preceding verses the Apostle is exhorting the believer to make his calling and election "sure," and this by adding to his faith "virtue" etc. (vv. 5-7), assuring him that by so doing he shall "never fall," and adding "for *so* an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly."

Legally, the believer has already been "delivered from the power of darkness, and hath translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son" (Col. 1:13), but experimentally an "abundant entrance" thereinto is dependent upon his spiritual growth and the cultivation of his graces. The believer has already been begotten unto "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven" for him (1 Peter 1:4), but his practical *enjoyment* thereof turns upon the exercise of faith. "Abraham," said Christ, "rejoiced to see My day" (John 8:56): and *how* did the patriarch "see" it? Why, *by faith*, for there was no other way in which he could see it: by the exercise of faith in the sure promises of God. And what was the effect upon Abraham of this entrancing vision which faith brought to him? This, "and he saw it and *was glad*." In like manner, the believer now is to use the long-distance lens of faith and view his promised inheritance, and *re-joyce* therein; then will "the joy of the LORD" be his "strength" (Neh. 8:10).

Israel had a valid title to the land of Canaan: it was theirs by the gift of God. But enemies sought to prevent their occupation of it: and enemies seek to hinder the Christian from faith's appropriation and enjoyment of *his* "inheritance." And what are those enemies? Chiefly, the lusts of the flesh, sinful habits, evil ways. *Faith cannot be in healthy exercise while we yield to the lusts of the flesh*. How many a saint is sighing because his faith is so feeble, so spasmodic, so fruitless. Here is the cause: allowed sin! Faith and sin are opposites, opponents, and the one cannot flourish until the other be subdued. It is vain to pray for more faith until we start in earnest to mortify our lusts, crucify our Christ-dishonouring corruptions, and wrestle with and overcome our besetting sins; and that can only be accomplished by fervently and untiringly seeking enabling grace from on High.

"David *smote* the Philistines, and *subdued* them." In figure that represents the believer waging unsparing warfare upon all within him that is opposed to God, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts" in order that he may "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12). It represents the believer doing what the Apostle speaks of in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "But I *keep under* my body, and bring it into subjection": his "body" there referring not so much to the physical, as to the "old man" within, the "body of sin" (Rom. 6:6), this "body of death" (Rom. 7:24 margin); or as it is spoken of elsewhere as "the body of the sins of the flesh" (Col. 2:11). Indwelling sin is spoken of in these passages as a "body" because it has, as it were, a complete set of members or faculties of its own; and these must be *subdued* by the Christian: "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

"And David took Methegammah out of the land of the Philistines." Typically this turns, as we have previously said, from the general unto the particular—from the work of mortification as a whole to the crucifying of a special sin which prevails against the saint.

In figure it represents the believer concentrating his attention upon and conquering his master lust or chief besetting sin, that “mother” evil which is the prolific source of so many iniquities, that “bridle” which has for so long hindered his entering into God’s best for him. But our space is exhausted: as the subject is of such vital moment we will continue it in our next.—A.W.P.

The Divine Covenants.

4. *The Abrahamic.*

We are now to be engaged with one of the most illustrious characters set before us in the pages of Holy Writ, one who is expressly designated “the Friend of God” (James 2:23), and from whom Christ Himself derives one of His titles, “the Son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1). Not only was he the one from whom the favoured nation of Israel sprang, but he is also “the father of all them that believe” (Rom. 4:11). It is scarcely consonant with our present design to review here the remarkable life of this man, yet the history of Abraham—in its broad outlines, at least—is so closely bound up with the covenant which Jehovah made with him, that it is hardly possible to give any exposition of the latter without paying more or less attention to the former: nevertheless, we shall be obliged to pass by many interesting episodes in his varied experience if our discussion of the Abrahamic Covenant is to be kept within anything like reasonable bounds.

A period of more than three hundred years passed from the time that the Lord made the covenant with Noah and the appearing of Abraham upon the stage of sacred history. We may here note briefly two things which occurred in that period, and we do so because of the bearing which they have and the light they throw upon our present subject. The first of these is the remarkable prophecy uttered by Noah: Genesis 9:25-27. Passing by the sad incidents which immediately preceded and gave rise to the prediction, we would observe particularly its pronouncements as they intimated the future development of God’s purpose of grace. This comes out first in the “Blessed be the LORD God of Shem,” or as it should more properly be rendered, “Blessed be (or “Praised be”) Jehovah, the God of Shem.” This is the first time in Scripture that we find God calling Himself the “God” of any particular person; moreover, it was *as Jehovah* He should be related to Shem.

Jehovah is God made known in *covenant* relationship: it is God in His *manifested* personality as taking subjects into His free *favour*; it is God granting a revelation of His institutions for redemption. These were to be the specific portion of Shem—in sharp contrast from the “curse” pronounced upon Ham; not of Shem simply as an individual, but as the head of a distinct section of the human race. It was with *that* section God was to stand in the nearest relation: it was a spiritual distinction which they were to enjoy: a covenant relation, a priestly nearness; a special interest in the Divine favour is what was denoted in this primitive prediction concerning Shem. His descendants were to be the line through which the Divine blessing was to flow: it was among them that Jehovah was to be known, and where His kingdom was to be set up and established.

“God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant” (Gen. 9:27). The obvious meaning of the first clause is, God would give Japheth a numerous posterity, with widely extended territories, which has been fulfilled in the fact that they have not only gained possession of all Europe, North and South America, and Australia, but likewise a large portion of Asia. The stock of Japheth was to be the most energetic and ambitious of Noah’s descendants, giving themselves to colonization and diffusive operations, pushing their way and establishing themselves far and wide. But it is the second clause of Genesis 9:27 we are now more concerned with: “and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem”—he was to enjoy *fellowship* in the high spiritual privileges of Shem. Japheth was to come under the Divine protection and be admitted to the blessings which were the peculiar but not exclusive portion of Shem.

Throwing the light of the New Testament upon this ancient prophecy, we find it clearly announced that it was through the line of Shem the gifts of grace and the blessings of salvation were more immediately to flow; yet so far from them being confined unto that section of the human family, the larger portion of it (Japheth) would also share their good. The Shemites were to have them first hand, but the descendants of Japheth were also to participate in them. "The exaltation of Shem's progeny into the nearest relationship to God, was not that they might keep the privilege to themselves, but that first getting it, they should admit the sons of Japheth, the inhabitants of the isles, to share with them in the boon, and spread it as wide as their scattered race should extend" (P. Fairbairn).

Here, then, in this early prediction through Noah we have the germ of what is more fully developed in the later Scriptures. Though couched in so few words, it was marvelously comprehensive in its scope. It was only by entering the tents of Shem that Japheth could enter the place where Divine blessing was to be found, which, in the language of the New Testament, is only another way of saying that *from the Jews would salvation flow forth unto the Gentiles*. But before we develop that thought a little further, we would mention a very striking point brought out by E. W. Hengstenberg in his most suggestive three-volume work on "The Christology of the Old Testament." Amid his dry and technical notes on the Hebrew text, he shows how that "as the reaction against Ham's sin had *originated with Shem* (Gen. 9:23), Japheth only joining himself in it, so in the future, the rich home of salvation and piety would be with Shem, to whom Japheth, in the felt need of salvation, should come near."

"And he (Japheth) shall dwell in the tents of Shem." The earth was to be possessed and peopled by the three sons of Noah; of them Shem was the one selected to be the peculiar channel of Divine gifts and communications, but these were to be not for his own exclusive benefit, but rather to the end that others might share in the blessing. The kingdom of God was to be established in Shem, but Japheth should be received into its community. Therein was intimated not only that "salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22), but also the mystery of Romans 11:11, etc. Though "salvation is of the Jews," nevertheless, Gentiles should be partakers of it. Though Shem alone be the real *root* and trunk, yet into their tree the Gentiles should be "grafted"! Though he appeared to speak dark words, yet, by the Holy Spirit, Noah was granted amazing light and was given a deep insight into the secret councils of the Most High.

The connection between what we have briefly dwelt upon above with our present subject is so obvious that few words are called for in connection therewith. The remarkable prophecy of Noah began to receive its historical unfolding when the Lord announced to the patriarch, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). Abraham was of the stock of *Shem* (Gen. 11:1, 23, 26), and he was now made the depository of the Divine promises (Gal. 3:16); yet God's blessing was to be confined neither to himself nor to his lineal descendants, but "all families of the earth" were to be the gainers thereby. Yet, notwithstanding, it was only through Abraham that the Gentiles were to be advantaged: "*In thee* shall all families of the earth be blessed"—the central promise in the Abrahamic Covenant. What was that but re-affirming, in more specific detail, "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell *in the tents of Shem*"? How perfect is the harmony of God's wondrous Word!

The second thing to be noted, which happened during the interval between the Noahic

and the Abrahamic Covenants, and which clearly had a bearing upon the latter, is the incident recorded in Genesis 11, namely, the building and overthrow of the Tower of Babel. It is a great mistake to regard that event as an isolated occurrence, rather is it to be considered as the heading up of an evil course and movement. Of the events which transpired from the Deluge to the call of Abraham—embracing an interval of over four centuries—the information we possess is brief and summary, yet enough is recorded to show that the character of man is unchanged, the same in principle and practice as it had been before the Flood. It might perhaps have been expected that so terrible a judgment would have left upon the survivors and their descendants for many generations a deep and salutary impression, which would have acted as a powerful restraint upon their evil propensities. Alas, what is man!

Even in the family of Noah, and while the remembrance of the awful visitation of God's wrath was still fresh in their minds, there were indications which testified to both the existence and exercise of sinful dispositions, which the recent judgment had failed to eradicate or even curb. The sad failure of Noah himself, and the wicked behaviour of his son on beholding the fall of his father, afforded awful proof that the evil which is in the heart of fallen man is so deeply rooted and so powerful that nothing external, no matter how frightful, can subdue it; and supplied a distinct foreboding of what was soon made manifest on a wider scale and in a much worse form. Idolatry itself quickly found an entrance and speedily established itself among the inhabitants of the earth in their dispersion. Joshua 24:2 gives more than a hint of this, while Romans 1:21-23 casts a flood of light upon that dark situation.

Within a short time after the Deluge human depravity resumed its old course, and manifested itself in open defiance of Heaven. As the population of the earth increased, evil schemes of ambition began to be entertained, and soon there appeared on the scene one who took the lead in wickedness. He is first brought before us in Genesis 10:8: "Nimrod: who began to be a mighty one in the earth." It is to be noted that he belonged to the line of Ham, upon which the Divine curse had been pronounced, and significantly enough "Nimrod" means "*the Rebel*"—suitable title for the one who headed a great confederacy in open revolt against God. This confederacy is described in Genesis 11, and that it *was* an organized revolt against Jehovah is clear from the language of Genesis 10:9, "Nimrod, the mighty hunter *before the Lord*." If that expression be compared with "The earth also (in the days of Noah) was corrupt *before God*" (Gen. 6:1), the impression conveyed is, that this "Rebel" pursued his impious and ambitious designs in brazen defiance of the Almighty.

Four times over we find the word "mighty" connected with Nimrod. First, in Genesis 10:8 it is said "he *began to be* a mighty one in the earth," which suggests that he struggled for the pre-eminence, and by force of will and ability obtained it; the "mighty one *in the earth*" intimates conquest and subjection, becoming a leader and ruler over men. This is confirmed by "the beginning of his kingdom was Babel" (Gen. 10:10), so that he reigned as a king. In the previous verse we are told, "He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD"—the reference probably is to his being a hunter *of men*. In so brief a description the *repetition* of those words "mighty hunter before the LORD" are significant. The word for "mighty" is "gibbor" and is translated in the Old Testament "chief" and "chieftain." In 1 Chronicles 1:10 we are told, "And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be mighty upon the earth."

The Chaldee paraphrase of this verse says, "Cush begat Nimrod, who began to prevail in wickedness, for he slew innocent blood and rebelled against Jehovah."

"And the beginning of his kingdom was *Babel*" (Gen. 10:10). Here is the key to the first nine verses of the 11th chapter. In the language of that time "*Babel*" meant "*the gate of God*" (see Young's Concordance), but afterwards, because of the Divine judgment inflicted there, it came to mean "Confusion." By coupling together the various hints which the Holy Spirit has here given us, it seems quite clear that Nimrod organized not only an imperial government over which he presided as king, but that he also introduced a new and idolatrous worship, most probably demanding, under pain of death, that Divine honours be paid his own person. As such he was an ominous and striking type of the Anti-christ. "Out of that land he went forth into Assyria (margin) and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah" etc. (vv. 11, 12): from these statements we gather the impression that Nimrod's ambition was to establish *a world empire*.

Though Nimrod is not mentioned by name in Genesis 11, it is clear from 10:10 that *he* was the "chief" and "king" who organized and headed the movement and rebellion there described. "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" (Gen. 11:4). Here is discovered a concerted effort in most blatant defiance of God. He had said "Be fruitful, and multiply, *and replenish the earth*" (Gen. 9:1), but Nimrod and his followers deliberately refused to obey that Divine command, given through Noah, saying, "Let us make us a name, *lest we be scattered abroad* upon the face of the whole earth" (11:4).

It is clear from Genesis 10 that Nimrod's ambition was to establish *a world empire*. To accomplish this two things were necessary. First, *a centre* of unity, a city-headquarters; and second, *a motive* for the inspiration and encouragement of his fellows. The first was secured in "the beginning of his kingdom was Babel" (10:9); the second was supplied in the "let us make us a name" (11:4), which intimated an inordinate desire for fame. Nimrod's aim was to keep mankind together under *his* leadership—"lest we be scattered abroad." The idea suggested by the "Tower"—considered in the light of its whole setting—was that of *strength*, a stronghold; while its name "*the gate of God*" tells us that Nimrod was arrogating to himself Divine honours. In it all, we may discern Satan's initial attempt to forestall the purpose of God concerning His Christ, by setting up a universal ruler of men of *his* providing.

The response of Heaven was swift and drastic. "And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let Us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth" (Gen. 11:6-9). Once again the human race had been guilty of open apostasy, therefore did God intervene in judgment, bringing to naught the ambitious scheme of Nimrod, confounding the speech of his subjects, and scattering them abroad on the face of the earth.

The effect of God's intervention was the origination of the different nations, and the formation of "the world" as it continued up to the time of Christ. Then it was that men

were abandoned to their own devices, when God “suffered all nations to walk in their own ways” (Acts 14:16). Then was executed that terrible judicial hardening, when “God also gave them up to uncleanness,” when “God gave them up unto vile affections,” when “God gave them over to a reprobate mind” (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). Then and thus it was that the way was cleared for the next stage in the outworking of the Divine plan of mercy, for where sin had abounded, grace was now to superabound. Having abandoned (temporarily) the nations, God now singled out one man, Abraham, from whom the Chosen Nation was to spring.—A.W.P.

Our Brother, Mr. O.T. Waite, 27 Mac Dade, Glen Olden, PA., has recently published several new tracts written by the editor. If American readers send him twenty-five cents, he will forward them a package of sample copies. He deserves to be encouraged in this good work. [A note to his readers of **1935** from Brother Pink!]

Crucified with Christ

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). That all mankind are in the same condition as the Apostle, in the days of his unregeneracy, was, is, a melancholy fact, of which every renewed soul is by sad consciousness too sensible. Born in the sinful likeness of fallen Adam, they are all partakers of the curse under which he brought himself and all his posterity by his transgression, namely, “thou shalt surely die.” But to every contrite soul awakened to its state of loss and ruin, the Gospel of the grace of God proclaims salvation from the curse, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

When this saving truth is brought home with power to the heart of a child of God, through the almighty working of the eternal Spirit, his understanding is enlightened to see himself in the position of the regenerated Apostle in the language of our text, in which is to be observed he speaks of the change of which he had been the subject. He had been “dead in trespasses and sins,” but now he was dead to sin and alive unto God. Observe also with what energy he speaks of two persons—Christ and *me*—and with what determination he clings to Christ, and claims the merits of His death, the privileges of His life.

The first branch of the text is “I am crucified with Christ.” He claims to have fully paid the penalty of sin when Christ died, from which we gather: 1. That Christ, on the cross, was not a private, but a public Person, representing all His people; so that when He died and suffered, we died and suffered in Him. As the first Adam did not sin only for himself, but for all his natural seed that should come of him, by ordinary generation, so the last Adam did not die for Himself at all, but for all His seed. 2. There is a real, spiritual, and indissoluble union between Christ and all His people that believe in Him, inso-much that His being crucified is the same as if they had been crucified in their person.

The second branch of the text is, “Nevertheless, I live.” It is not an annihilation of my being, but a renovation and reformation of my former being. Though I be crucified and dead, yet I live a new life. I am not what I was, nor whose I was, nor where I was. I am not what I was: I am not Saul the persecutor, but Paul the believer, the preacher. I am not whose I was: I was Satan’s, but now I am Christ’s. I am not where I was: I am living in another world, breathing another air—I live.

The third branch is, “Yet not I.” “Not I.” Who then? Why, what solemn contradictions are here! “I am crucified and dead.” Then there is an end, for death is the end of all. Nay, but hear him again: “Nevertheless I live.” Why, this is a short death that is so soon restored to life! Or is he at one and the same time both dead and alive? Yes, Paul is dead, and Paul lives. “I live.” It is not “I was crucified and dead,” but, “I am crucified with Christ.” “I am dead, and yet I am living,” and “yet not I.” Here is another contradiction or paradox—“Not of myself but by the life of Another.” No soul can animate this body but my own; yet neither soul nor body can live but by God. Thus does he annihilate himself, that he may magnify his Master, and that Christ may be *all in all*.

The fourth branch of the text is, “Christ liveth in me.” Christ is the Root and Fountain of all spiritual life, having it so superabundant in Himself that He can convey it to all His members. Christ is said to live in the believer by virtue of the spiritual union, whereby He and they are one spirit. The soul doth not more properly live in the body than He doth quicken the soul, and will quicken the body. Christ is the Sun of Righteousness to the soul. His absence leaves us dead; His presence revives us; and happy he that can say,

“Christ liveth in me.”

The fifth branch is, “The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.” “I live, and live in the flesh.” By “flesh” he means not the corruption of nature, for to that he was dead when “crucified with Christ,” but the mortal body. It is one thing to live in the flesh, another to live *to* the flesh or after the flesh. Paul did not lead such a life as he did before, for that was *to* the flesh. His life now is but *in* the flesh. In the former state he was dead while he lived, “but now I am alive,” says he. What a mercy were it if all who read this could say, they *live* before they go hence, and cease living.

But what sort of a life is it? “I live,” says he, “by the faith of the Son of God.” Here is life—“I live.” He was very sure of it, for he had said it before—“I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me”; and here again, “I live.” Well, here is the means of this life: “I live by faith”—“by the faith of the Son of God.” We live primarily and properly by Christ, as the body by the soul; but mediately and instrumentally by faith, as by the spirits which are the bonds of soul and body. “He that hath the Son hath life”; he that hath faith hath the Son.

Here further is the designation given to this faith. It is called “faith of the Son of God,” because, first, He is the Revealer of it. Neither nature nor law could open the door of faith. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). “No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him” (v. 18). Secondly, He is the Approver and Favourer of faith. There is nothing more acceptable to Him. When He finds it strong in man or woman, He is ready to say, “O man, O woman, great is thy faith. Be it to thee even as thou wilt!” Thirdly, He is the Author of faith. He is both the Seeker and the Giver of it. Faith is the gift of God; and He that calls us to believe, He only works it in us. Fourthly, He is the Increaser of it, therefore the disciples pray, “Lord, increase our faith”—He that gives it, gives the increase of it. Fifthly, He is the “Finisher of our faith”—both the Author and Finisher (Heb. 12:2). He that begins this good work, He perfects the work of faith with power. Sixthly, He is the Object of faith. Faith desires to know nothing but “Christ and Him crucified.” On these accounts it may be called, “the faith of the Son of God,” where again you have the Object of faith described from His glorious Person. He is the Son of God, a Person of quality, and of such quality as to be equal with God the Father, “higher than the highest, without beginning and without end, the Faithful Witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, which was, and which is, and which is to come, the Almighty, He who hath on His vesture and on His thigh this name written, KING of kings and LORD of lords.”

And then the Object of faith is described from His works—“He loved me and gave Himself for me,” which is the sixth branch of the text. The Apostle had, in the preceding words, challenged Christ for his own: “I am crucified with Christ, and I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” He engrosses Him to himself, as if He were his own, and no man’s else. “And the life I live I live is by the faith of the Son of God, who is likewise mine, for He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” It is the noble art of faith to challenge Christ for his own, and that with an “I” and “me,” as if none else were concerned but itself; and hence this whole verse is made up of so many “I’s” and “me’s.” Oh glorious Lover! the Son of God! Oh gracious act! “He loved” and Oh strange object whom He loved—me—unlovely me! But how did He manifest His love? Even by His gift—He gave. What did He give? Himself. For whom? For me, unworthy me! Every word hath

weight, and every act of faith hath a “me” in the bosom of it—Christ liveth in me; He loved me; and gave Himself for me.—An ancient Author, unknown.

Union and Communion.

3. *Mystical.*

In the introductory article we pointed out that “There are three principal unions revealed in the Scriptures which are the chief mysteries and form the foundation of our most holy faith. First, the union of three Divine Persons in one Godhead: having distinct personalities, being co-eternal and co-glorious, yet constituting one Jehovah. Second, the union of the Divine and human natures in one Person, Jesus Christ, Immanuel, being God and man. Third, the union of the Church to Christ: He being the Head, they the members, constituting one mystical body. Though we cannot form any exact idea of any of these unions in our imaginations, because the depth of such mysteries is beyond our comprehension, yet it is our bounden duty to believe them all because they are clearly revealed in Scripture, and are the necessary foundation for other parts of Christian doctrine. Hence it is our holy privilege to prayerfully study the same, looking unto the Holy Spirit to graciously enlighten us thereon.”

Having shown in the previous articles—very stumblingly and inadequately—how that a plurality of Persons in the Godhead made possible the Mediatorial union, we are now ready to consider how the Son of God taking upon Himself our nature made possible the union of the Church to Him. While orthodox theologians have written clearly upon the Divine union which exists between the three Persons in the Godhead, and while they have treated helpfully the nature of the Mediatorial union, the same can hardly be said of their discussion of the union which exists between God’s elect and their glorious Head. Though not a little has been written thereon, most men have generalized far too much, failing to distinguish between the various aspects of that oneness which exists between Christ and His people. Not a few have jumbled together what needs to be considered apart, if a clear view is to be obtained thereof.

It is not to be expected that Arminians should have any clear grasp of the exceedingly precious subject which is now to engage our attention. Making man, rather than God, the centre of their system, they necessarily begin at the wrong place. They make the union of the believer with Christ to commence at his conversion, when faith lays hold of and makes Him ours. But this is to start at the middle, instead of at the beginning. They fail to recognize that there must be a *vital* union before there can be a fiducial one, that the soul must first be made alive spiritually before it is capacitated to trust savingly in Christ. One who is dead in trespasses and sins has no more ability to perform spiritual acts—and appropriating the Lord Jesus as our own *is* a spiritual act—than a corpse in the grave is qualified to perform physical acts. Life itself must be present before there can be any evidence and exercises of it.

Calvinists do not fall into the error just pointed out above. They perceive that the sinner must first be quickened before he can savingly believe the Gospel. They insist that the Holy Spirit must unite the soul vitally to Christ ere there can be any drawing from the fullness which is in Christ. We must be livingly united to Him before any of His benefits become ours. I must be a son before I can be an heir. So far so good. But at this point not a few modern Calvinists fail to trace the effect back to its proper source. It is not sufficient to point out that faith necessarily presupposes spiritual life, for that spiritual life itself presupposes something else prior to the communication of it. The Holy Spirit does not regenerate all. *Who* are the ones He brings from death unto life? Galatians 4:6 tells us, “Because ye are *sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts.”

There is, then, a relation to God *prior to* regeneration.

Now a relation to God previous to regeneration necessarily presupposes *a relation to Christ* previous to regeneration, for we have no spiritual relation to God Himself apart from the Mediator. The elect are God's "sons" because united to His Son: "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me" (Heb. 2:13) is His own language. Before He came into this world it was said, "Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21)—those who were to be saved by Him were "His people" *before* He became incarnate. They were one with Him by an indissoluble bond long ere the Lord of glory took upon Himself human nature. There was a mystical and eternal union subsisting between Christ and the Church, which formed the basis of that vital union which is effected by the Holy Spirit during a time state, the latter *making manifest* the former, the former being the ground upon which the latter is effected.

Not a few of the older Calvinists firmly adhered to this foundation truth of the mystical union subsisting between Christ and His Church, but it is to be regretted that they did not define more definitely the *real nature* of that mystical union, and distinguish between the different elements which composed it, or rather, the various aspects which it comprises. Some have narrowed it down to a mere legal or federal union, failing to see that this also presupposed a prior relationship. Some have confined the oneness between Christ and His people to that of the Surety and those whom He represented. Others have spoken of the *covenant-union* between Christ and His Church, without stating in detail *of what* that covenant-union consists. Still others, employed the expression "election-union," which though coming nearer to the mark, still leaves the subject clouded in a certain vagueness.

The one writer who appears to have been blest with a clearer insight into this great mystery than most of his fellows was John Gill—to whom we are indebted for some of the leading thoughts in what follows—though he, in turn, received help, no doubt, from the writings of James Hussey, the high Calvinist of the seventeenth century. Those men rightly traced back the covenant and federal union which the Church has with its Head to the eternal *love* of the Triune God, which, operating by His everlasting decree, gave them *an election-union* with Christ. It needs to be pointed out that the eternal decree of Jehovah gave Christ—as the God-man Mediator—a real subsistence before Him before the foundation of the world, and a real subsistence unto the elect in Him, so that "*before* the mountains were settled . . . while as yet He had not made the earth," He could say "My delights were with the sons of men" (Prov. 8:25, 26, 31).

The technical name by which the oneness between Christ and His people is designated by theologians is "mystical union." This term has been employed—for want of a better—not because the union is vague or unreal, but because it far transcends all earthly analogies in its intimacy of fellowship and reciprocal partnership, both in the very nature of it, the power of its influence, and the excellency of its consequence. "On the one hand, this union does not involve any mysterious *confusion* of the Person of Christ with the persons of His people, and, on the other hand, it is not such *a mere association* of separate persons as exists in human societies" (A.A. Hodge). It is a relation far more intimate than any which may be formed by any external bonds. This union is presented to us in Scripture as a matter of fact, without any explanation, to be credited on the ground of Divine testimony.

But though the union between Christ and His Church far transcends all natural analo-

gies, the Scriptures set forth its variety and fullness, element by element, by means of several partial analogies. Because this union is so high and and mysterious, it has pleased God to make use of various resemblances for the describing of it, that He might thereby make it more credible and intelligible to us. It is observable that the Holy Spirit has referred to various unions, natural, relative, and artificial, that He might by all of them more clearly and distinctly shadow out the grand union betwixt Christ and His saints. Yet let it be pointed out that useful as are these particular analogies as to the end designed, yet they all come short of the mystical union which they refer to. They may indeed illustrate it—so far as temporal and natural things can—but they cannot reach or equal it.

The first of these typical resemblances which may be mentioned is that of husband and wife. Upon the conjugal relation there is a very close and intimate conjunction. Now Christ and His people stand in this conjugal relation each to the other. He is their “Husband” (Isa. 54:5), they are His “Wife” (Rev. 19:7). They are “espoused” to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2), “married” to Christ (Rom. 7:4), “betrothed” to Him “for ever” (Hosea 2:19); their name is “Hephzibah” (“My delight is in her”) and “Beulah”—“Married” (Isa. 62:4). This marriage-union Paul applies to Christ and believers: “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones” (Eph. 5:28-30), to which the Apostle adds, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (v. 32)—I am using this union between husband and wife to point to that higher and spiritual union which exists between Christ and His people: the husband and the wife are “one”; and Christ and the Church are so much more.

The second of these natural analogies is found in the physical head and members. In the human body there is a close conjunction between these two, for they are joined the one to the other, and together form one and the same organism. Thus it is with Christ and believers in the body mystical, to which the Holy Spirit has repeatedly applied the terms pertaining to this physical adumbration: Christ is the Head, they are the several members belonging to that Head. Of Christ it is said, God “gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body” (Eph. 1:22, 23), “and He is the Head of the Body, the Church” (Col. 1:18). Of the members it is said, “Now ye are the Body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Cor. 12:27), and “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Rom. 12:5). As truly and as intimately as the head and members of the physical body are united, so truly and intimately are Christ and believers united also.

The third of these earthly adumbrations is found in that of the root and the branches growing out of the same. There is not only a connection between them, but a vital oneness, otherwise how should the one convey life, sap, growth to the other? So it is with Christ and His people: He is the Root, they are the tendrils issuing therefrom. “I am the vine, ye are the branches” (John 15:5). To this analogy the Holy Spirit frequently makes reference: “We have been *planted together* in the likeness of His death” (Rom. 6:5); “If the Root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree” (Rom. 11:16, 17); “Rooted and built up in Him” (Col. 2:7). Thus there is a blessed resemblance between Christ and His Church and the root and its branches, both in point of union and of influence: the root is united to the branches

and they to it; the root conveys life, nourishment and fruitfulness to the branches; so does Christ to believers.

Another resemblance is found in the foundation and the building. Here again is union, for in a building all the stones and timbers are joined and fastened together upon the foundation, making but one entire structure. So it is with believers and Christ. This figure is also used in Scripture again and again. The Lord Himself likened the one who heard and obeyed His sayings to “a wise man, which built his house upon a rock” (Matt. 7:24). The Apostle Paul reminded the saints, “Ye are God’s building” and added, “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:9, 11); and again they are said to be “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). As a man builds upon the foundation, laying the weight of the whole building upon it, so the faith and confidence of the Christian is built upon that “sure Foundation which God has laid in Zion” (Isa. 28:16).

Now as there is nothing in this natural world which more sweetly and securely knits souls together than *love*, so the cementing bond which unites Christ and the Church must be traced back to the love of God. If love can be so effectual among men in binding one heart to another, how infinitely more powerful must love in the heart of God attract and unite the objects of it to Himself, giving them a nearness to Him such as finite minds are quite incapable of fully comprehending. *This* is the bond of union of saints one to another, for their hearts are “knit together in love” (Col. 2:2), and therefore is love called “the bond of perfectness” (Col. 3:14). *Love*, then, the everlasting love of the Father, Son, and Spirit, is the *origin* of the Church’s union with Christ. “This is that cement which will never loosen, that union-knot which can never be untied, that bond which can never be dissolved, from whence there can be no separation” (John Gill).

Now *election* was the first and fundamental act of God’s love toward His people, giving them a subsistence in Christ from everlasting, “according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). God does not love His people because He elected them, rather did He elect them because He had set His heart upon them. The Divine order is plainly intimated in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, “Brethren *beloved* of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning *chosen* you to salvation.” The same precious truth is brought out again in Ephesians 1: “*In love* having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (vv. 4, 5). This was the supreme act and instance of everlasting love, by which the elect were considered in Christ and one with Him, He being chosen as the Head, they as His members—obviously we could not be *in* Christ without being one *with* Him.

“He is the Head of the body, the Church: who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). Yes, *Christ* was “the beginning” even in connection with election: there too He had “the preeminence.”

“Be Thou My first elect He said,

Then chose the Church in Christ its Head.”

Christ was not chosen for the Church, but the Church for Him. There was an *order* in God’s counsels, as there is in all His works; and *Christ* occupies the first place therein. The ever-blessed and all-sufficient God was pleased to desire *creature* fellowship and society, instead of dwelling alone for ever in His own infinite immensity. The eternal Father therefore ordained that His co-essential Son should take unto Himself a created nature, uniting the man Christ Jesus into indissoluble union to His Divine Person. God fixed

upon the Person of Christ, as God-man, as the one great and everlasting object of His love, delight and complacency. He was as God-man “set up from everlasting,” being possessed by Jehovah as “the Beginning of His way” (Prov. 8:22, 23).

Next, God was pleased to decree that an elect number of Adam’s race should be united to Christ and be for His glory. As the man Christ Jesus was Jehovah’s “Elect” in whom His soul “delighteth” (Isa. 42:1), and as He was (by infinite grace) taken to be Jehovah’s “Fellow” (Zech. 13:7), so those who were elected in Christ became His “delight” (Prov. 8:31) and were to be *His* “fellows” (Psa. 45:7), to be everlastingly glorified in and with Him. Though in the order of time Christ and His Church were elected together, to form one complete mystical Body, yet in the order of God’s counsels Christ was elected first, and then His people were chosen in Him. “Christ was *the Head* of election, and of the elect of God; and so in order of nature elected first, though in order of time we were elected with Him. In the womb of election, He, the Head, came out first, and then we the members. He is therefore said *in predestination* to be the Firstborn of all His brethren—see Romans 8:29” (Thomas Goodwin). This is a profound depth, yet a most important truth, and needing further amplification.

“God in the act of election looked not at us apart and singly as in ourselves, so as by one act to choose us, and by another act to give us to Christ. But as of the soul it is by one and the same act of God’s both created and infused into the body, as so subsists not one moment apart; likewise God in the act of choosing us gave us to Christ, and in giving us to Christ He chose us. And thus, He never considering us apart, but as members of Christ and given to Him in the very act of choosing, hence our very choice itself is said to be ‘in Him.’ And so, on the other side, in the first view and purpose God took up concerning Christ, and in electing Him, He looked not at Him apart as a single Person in Himself, but as a Head to us His body, chosen in Him and with Him. So it is not that Jesus Christ was chosen by one act to be man, and then to be a Common Person by another; but at the very *same instant* that He was chosen the one, He was chosen the other, under that very consideration to be a Common Person.

“It was in this as in the creation of Adam, Christ’s shadow; who when he was first made, was not made as a single man, he was made ‘a living soul’ (1 Cor. 15:45). What is that? To be a *public* person, to convey life to others as well as to have life personally in himself. That is the meaning, as appears by the following words, ‘The last Adam,’ that is, Christ ‘was made a quickening spirit,’ that is, not for Himself, but to others. So that the very first view that God in election took of Christ, was not of Him only as a single Person considered, but as a Common Person. In a word, as in the womb head and members are not conceived apart, *but together*, as having relation each to other, so were we in Christ, as making up one mystical body unto God, formed together in that eternal womb of election. So that God’s choice did completely terminate itself on Him and us; us with Him, and yet us in Him; He having the priority to be constituted a Common Person and root to us” (Thomas Goodwin).

Now God’s eternal decree gave His elect a super-creation subsistence before Him, so that they were capable of being “loved” (Jer. 31:3) and of receiving a grant of grace: “Who hath saved us, and called us with an 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” (2 Tim. 1:9)—note well, it was not simply that God purposed to give His chosen people grace, but that grace “*was* given us in Christ Jesus before the world be-

gan.” If, then, grace was actually “given us in Christ” ere time commenced, then we must have a real subsistence in Him before God from everlasting. This too, is above our powers to fully comprehend, yet is it a truth to be held fast on the ground of the Divine testimony. In God’s eternal thoughts and foreviews, the elect were conceived and contemplated *in the Divine mind* as real entities, in a state of pure creaturehood, above and beyond the consideration of the Fall.—A.W.P.

The Doctrine of Sanctification

6. *Its Nature.*

We have now reached what is, in several respects, the most important aspect of our theme. It is very necessary that we should seek after a clear and comprehensive view of the character of sanctification itself, what it really consists of; or, at best, our thoughts concerning it will be confused. Since holiness is, by general consent, the sum of all moral excellence, and the highest and most necessary attainment, it is of the utmost moment that we should well understand its real nature and be able to distinguish it from all counterfeits. How can it be discovered whether or not *we* have been sanctified, unless we really know what sanctification actually is? How can we truly cultivate holiness, until we have ascertained the real substance or essence of holiness? A right apprehension of the nature of sanctification or holiness is a great aid to the understanding of much in the Scriptures, to the forming of right conceptions of the Divine perfections, and to the distinguishing of true religion from all that is false.

We have also now reached what is the most difficult and intricate aspect of our many-sided subject. The task of defining and describing the nature of sanctification is by no means a simple one. This is due, partly, to the many different aspects and angles which have to be borne in mind, if anything like a comprehensive conception is to be obtained. Scripture speaks of the believer being sanctified by God the Father; other passages speak of being sanctified in Christ and by His sacrifice; still others of being sanctified by the Spirit, by the Word, by faith, by chastisements. Of course these do not refer to so many different sanctifications, but to the various branches of one complete sanctification; which, nevertheless, need to be kept distinctly in our minds. Some Scriptures present sanctification as an objective thing, others as subjective. Some times sanctification is viewed as complete, at others as incomplete and progressive. These varied phases of our subject will pass under review (Lord willing) in later articles.

As we have consulted the works of others on this subject, we have been struck by the paucity of their remarks on *the nature of* sanctification. While many writers have treated at length on the meaning of the term itself, the manner in which this gift has been provided for the believer, the work of the Spirit in imparting the same, the varying degrees in which it is manifested in this life, yet few indeed have entered into a clear description of what holiness actually *is*. Where false conceptions have been mercifully avoided, yet, in most cases, only partial and very inadequate views of the truth thereon have been presented. It is our conviction that failure at *this* point, inattention to this most vital consideration, has been responsible, more than anything else, for the conflicting opinions which prevail so widely among professing Christians. A mistake at this point opens the door for the entrance of all kinds of delusion.

In order to remove some of the rubbish which may have accumulated in the minds of certain of our readers, and thus prepare the way for their consideration of the truth, let us briefly touch upon the negative side. First, Scriptural sanctification is not a blessing which may be and often is separated from justification by a long interval of time. Those who contend for a “second work of grace” insist that the penitent sinner is justified the moment he believes in Christ, but that he is not sanctified until he completely surrenders to the Lord and then receives the Spirit in His fullness—as though a person might be converted without fully surrendering to Christ, or become a child of God without the Holy Spirit indwelling him. This is a serious mistake. Once we are united to Christ by the

Spirit and faith, we become “joint heirs” with Him, having a valid title to *all* blessing in Him. There is no dividing of the Saviour: He is the holiness of His people as well as their righteousness, and when He bestows forgiveness, He also imparts heart purity.

Second, scriptural sanctification is not a protracted process by which the Christian is made meet for Heaven. The same work of Divine grace which delivers a soul from the wrath to come fits him for the enjoyment of eternal glory. At what point was the penitent prodigal unsuited to the Father’s house? As soon as he came and confessed his sins, the best robe was placed upon him, the ring was put on his hand, his feet were shod, and the word went forth, “Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this My son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found” (Luke 15:23, 24). If a gradual progressive work of the Spirit was necessary in order to fit the soul to dwell on High, then the dying thief was not qualified to enter Paradise the very day he first believed in the Lord Jesus. “But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 6:11)—those three things cannot be separated. “Giving thanks unto the Father, which *hath* made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12).

Third, scriptural sanctification is not the eradication of the carnal nature. The doctrine of the “Perfectionists” hardens souls in delusion, calling evil good, and allowing themselves in sin. It greatly discourages sincere souls who labour to get holiness in the right way—by faith in Christ—and leads them to think they labour in vain, because they find themselves still sinful and far from perfect, when they have done their best to attain it. It renders meaningless many Scriptural exhortations, such as Romans 6:12; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 4:22; 2 Timothy 2:22—“flee also youthful lusts,” shows plainly they were still present even in the godly Timothy! Was the carnal nature gone from the Christian, he would be quite unfitted for such duties as the confessing of sins (1 John 1:9), loathing himself for them (Job 40:4), praying earnestly for the pardon of them (Matt. 6:12), sorrowing over them with godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10), accepting the chastisement of them (Heb. 12:5-11), vindicating God for the same (Psa. 119:75), and offering Him the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart (Psa. 51:17).

Fourth, scriptural sanctification is not something wholly objective in Christ, which is not in anywise in ourselves. In their revolt against sinless perfectionism, there have been some who have gone to an opposite extreme: Antinomians argue for a holiness in Christ which produces no radical change for the better in the Christian. This is another deceit of the Devil, for a deceit it certainly is for anyone to imagine that the *only* holiness he has is in Christ. There is no such thing in reality as a perfect and inalienable standing in Christ which is divorced from heart-purity and a personal walk in righteousness. What a flesh-pleasing dogma is it, that one act of faith in the Lord Jesus secures eternal immunity from condemnation and provides a lifelong license to wallow in sin. My reader, a faith which does not transform character and reform conduct is worthless. Saving faith is only proved to be genuine by bearing the blossoms of experimental godliness and the fruits of personal piety.

In our quest after the actual nature of holiness certain definite considerations need to be kept steadily before us, as guide-posts along the track which we must follow. First, by noting what is holiness in God Himself, for the creature’s holiness—be it the angels’, Christ’s, or the Christian’s—must conform to the Divine pattern. Though there may be many degrees of holiness, there cannot be more than one kind of holiness. Second, by

ascertaining what Adam had and lost, and which Christ has regained for His people. While it be blessedly true that the Christian obtains far more in the Second Man than was forfeited by the first man, yet this is a point of considerable importance. Third, by discovering the true nature of sin, holiness is its opposite. Fourth, by remembering that sanctification is an integral and essential part of salvation itself, and not an extra. Fifth, by following up the clue given us in the threefold meaning of the term itself.

1. What is connoted by the holiness of God? In seeking an answer to this question very little help is to be obtained from the works of theologians, most of whom contented themselves with *a set of words* which expressed no distinct thing, but left matters wholly in the dark. Most of them say that God's holiness is His purity. If it be enquired, in what does this purity consist? the usual reply is, In that which is opposite to all sin, the greatest impurity. But who is the wiser by this? That, of itself, does not help us to form any positive idea of what God's purity consists of, until we are told *what* sin really is. But the nature of sin cannot be experimentally known until we apprehend what holiness is, for we do not fully learn what holiness is by obtaining a right idea of sin; rather must we first know what holiness is in order for a right knowledge of sin.

A number of eminent theologians have attempted to tell us what Divine holiness is by saying, It is not properly a distinct attribute of God, but the beauty and glory of all His moral perfections. But we can get no concrete idea from those words, until we are told what is this "beauty and glory." To say it is "holiness" is to say nothing at all to the point. All that John Gill gives us for a definition of God's holiness is, "holiness is the purity and rectitude of His nature." Nathaniel Emmons, the perfecter of the "New England" scheme of theology, tells us, "Holiness is a general term to express that goodness or benevolence which comprises everything that is morally amiable and excellent." Though sound in their substance, such statements are too brief to be of much service to us in seeking to form a definite conception of the Divine holiness.

The most helpful description of God's holiness which we have met with is that framed by the Puritan, Stephen Charnock, "It is the rectitude or integrity of the Divine nature, or that conformity of it in affection and action to the Divine will, as to His eternal law, whereby He works with a becomingness to His own excellency, and whereby He hath a delight and complacency in everything agreeable to His will, and an abhorrence of everything contrary thereto." Here is something definite and tangible, satisfying to the mind; though perhaps it requires another feature to be added to it. Since the law is "a transcript" of the Divine mind and nature, then God's holiness must be His own harmony therewith; to which we may add, God's holiness is His ordering of all things for His own glory, for He can have no higher end than that—this being His own unique excellency and prerogative.

We fully concur with Charnock in making the will of God and the law of God one and the same thing, and that His holiness lies in the conformity of His affections and actions with the same; adding, that the furtherance of His own glory being His design in the whole. Now this concept of the Divine holiness—the sum of God's moral excellency—helps us to conceive what holiness is in the Christian. It is far more than a "position" or "standing." It is also and chiefly a moral quality, which produces conformity to the Divine will or law, and which moves its possessor to aim at the glory of God in all things. This, and nothing short of this, could meet the Divine requirements; and this is the great gift which God bestows upon His people.

2. What was it that Adam had lost? What was it which distinguished him from all the lower creatures? Not simply the possession of a soul, but that his soul had stamped upon it *the moral image* and likeness of his Maker. This it was which constituted his blessedness, which capicitated him for communion with the Lord, and which qualified him to live a happy life to His glory. And this it was which he lost at the Fall. And this it is which the Last Adam restores unto His people. That is clear from a comparison of Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:23: the “new man,” the product of regeneration, is “*renewed* in knowledge (in the vital and experimental knowledge of God Himself: John 17:3) after the image of Him that created him,” that is, after the original likeness bestowed upon Adam; and that “new man” is distinctly said to be “created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Thus what the first Adam lost and what the Last Adam secured for His people, was the “image and likeness” of God stamped upon the heart, which “image” consists of “righteousness and holiness.” Hence to understand that personal and experimental holiness which the Christian is made partaker of at the new birth, we have to go back to the beginning and ascertain what was the nature or character of that moral “uprightness” (Eccl. 7:29) with which God created man at the beginning. Holiness and righteousness was the “nature” with which the first man was endowed: it was the very law of his being, causing him to delight in the Lord, do those things which are pleasing in His sight, and reproduce in his creature measure God’s own righteousness and holiness—compare our recent articles upon the Adamic Covenant. Here again we discover that holiness is a moral quality, which conforms its possessor to the Divine law or will, and moves him to aim only at the glory of God.

3. What is sin? Ah, what man is capable of supplying an adequate answer: “*Who can understand his errors?*” (Psa. 19:12). A volume might be written thereon, and still much be left unsaid. Only the One against whom it is committed can fully understand its nature or measure its enormity. And yet, from the light which God has furnished us, a partial answer at least can be gathered. For example, in 1 John 3:4 we read, “sin is the transgression of the law,” and that such transgression is not confined to the outward act is clear from “the *thought* of foolishness is sin” (Prov. 24:9). But what is meant by “sin is the transgression of the law”? It means that sin is a trampling upon God’s holy commandment. It is an act of defiance against the Lawgiver. The law, being “holy and just and good,” it follows that any breach of it is an evil and enormity which God alone is capable of estimating.

All sin is a breach of the eternal standard of equity. But it is more than that: it reveals an inward enmity which gives rise to the outward transgression. It is the bursting forth of that pride and self-will which resents restraint, which repudiates control, which refuses to be under authority, which resists rule. Against the righteous restraint of law, Satan opposed a false idea of “liberty” to our first parents—“Ye shall be as gods.” And he is still playing the same argument and employing the same bait. The Christian must meet it by asking, Is the disciple to be above his Master, the servant superior to his Lord? Christ was “made under the law” (Gal. 4:4), and lived in perfect submission thereto, and has left us an example that we should “follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). Only by loving, fearing, and obeying the law, shall we be kept from *sinning*.

Sin, then, is an inward state which precedes the evil deeds. It is a state of heart which refuses to be in subjection to God. It is a casting off the Divine law, and setting up self-

will and self-pleasing in its stead. Now, since holiness is the opposite of sin, this helps us to determine something more of the nature of sanctification. Sanctification is that work of Divine grace in the believer which brings him back into allegiance to God, regulating his affections and actions in harmony with His will, writing His law on the heart (Heb. 10:16), moving him to make God's glory his chief aim and end. That Divine work is commenced at regeneration, and completed only at glorification. It may be thought that, in this section, we have contradicted what was said in an earlier paragraph. Not so; in God's light we see light. Only after the principle of holiness has been imparted to us, can we discern the real character of sin; but after it has been received, an analysis of sin helps us to determine the nature of sanctification.

4. Sanctification is an integral part of "salvation." As this point was dwelt upon at length in the March article, there is less need for us to say much upon it here. Once it be clearly perceived that God's salvation is not only a rescue from the penalty of sin, but is as well, and chiefly, deliverance from the pollution and power of sin—ultimating in complete freedom from its very presence—there will be no difficulty in seeing that sanctification occupies a central place in the process. Alas that while there are many who think of Christ dying to secure their pardon, so few today consider Christ dying in order to renew their hearts, heal their souls, bring them unto obedience to God. One is often obliged to wonder if one out of each ten professing Christians is *really* experimentally acquainted with the "*so great* salvation" (Heb. 2:3) of God.

Inasmuch as sanctification is an important branch of salvation, we have another help towards understanding its nature. Salvation is deliverance from sin, an emancipation from the bondage of Satan, a being brought into right relations with God; and sanctification is that which makes this *actual* in the believer's experience—not perfectly so in this life, but truly so, nevertheless. Hence sanctification is not only the principal *part* of salvation, but it is also the chief *means* thereto. Salvation from the power of sin consists in deliverance from the *love* of sin; and that is effected by the principle of holiness, which loves purity and piety. Again; there can be no fellowship with God, no walking with Him, no delighting ourselves in Him, except as we tread the path of obedience (see 1 John 1:5-7); and that is only possible as the principle of holiness is operative within us.

Let us now combine these four points. What is scriptural sanctification? First, it is a moral quality in the regenerate—the same in its nature as that which belongs to the Divine character—which produces harmony with God's will and causes its possessor to aim at His glory in all things. Second, it is the moral image of God—lost by the first Adam, restored by the Last Adam—stamped upon the heart, which "image" consists of righteousness and holiness. Third, it is the opposite of sin. Inasmuch as all sin is a transgression of the Divine law, true sanctification brings its possessor into a conformity thereto. Fourth, it is an integral and essential part of "salvation," being a deliverance from the power and pollution of sin, causing its possessor to love what he once hated, and to now hate what he formerly loved. Thus, it is that which experimentally fits us for fellowship with and the enjoyment of the Holy One Himself.—A.W.P.