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“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

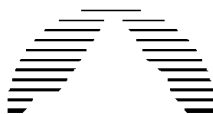
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Arthur W. Pink was born in Nottingham, England, in 1886, and born again by God's Spirit in 1908. He studied briefly at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago before his pastoral work in Colorado, California, Kentucky, and South Carolina, USA, and in Sydney, Australia. In 1934, he returned to his native England, taking his final residence on the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, in 1940, where he remained until his death in 1952.

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

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SIN'S PRESENCE

There are two sides to a Christian's life: a light and a dark, an elevating and a depressing one. His experience is neither all joy nor all grief, but a commingling of both. It was so with the apostle Paul: "As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing" (2Co 6:10). When a person is regenerated, he is not there and then taken to heaven, but he is given both an earnest and a foretaste of it. Nor is sin then eradicated from his being, though its dominion over him is broken. It is indwelling corruption which casts its dark shadow over his joy. The varied experiences of the believer are occasioned by Christ's presence and sin's presence. If, on the one hand, it be blessedly true that Christ is with him all the days, even unto the end; on the other hand, it is solemnly true that sin indwells him all his days, even unto the end of his earthly history. Said Paul, "evil is present with me"; and that, not only occasionally, but sin "*dwelleth* in me" (Rom 7:20-21). Thus, as God's people feed upon the Lamb, it is "with bitter herbs they shall eat it" (Exo 12:8).

The Christian's consciousness of indwelling sin, his mourning over its defiling influence, his sincere efforts to strive against its solicitations, his penitent confessions to God of his failure to master this inveterate foe, are among the unmistakable evidences that he is a regenerate person—for certain it is that none who is dead in trespasses and sins realizes there is a sea of iniquity within his heart, defiling his very thoughts and imagination; still less does he make conscience of the same and lament it. Let the believer recall his own case: in the days of his unregeneracy, he was not cast down by what *now* distresses! We are bidden to "remember" what we were "in time past," and then contrast the "But now" (Eph 2:11-13), that we may be shamed over the former and rejoice and give thanks for the latter. It is cause for fervent praise if your eyes have been opened to see "the sinfulness of sin," and your heart to feel its obnoxiousness. Since it was not always thus, a great change has taken place—you have been made the subject of a miracle of grace.

But the *continuance* of indwelling sin presents a sore and perplexing problem to the Christian. That nothing is too hard for the Lord he is full assured. Why then is evil suffered to remain present with him? Why is he not rid of this hideous thing which he so much loathes and hates? Why should this horrible depravity be allowed to disturb his peace and mar his joy? Why does not the God of all grace rid him of this harassing tyrant? And it must ever be remembered that *His* thoughts and ways are often the very opposite of ours. Yet we must also remember they are infinitely wiser and better than ours. God then must have some valid reason why He leaves sin in His people; and since He loves them with a boundless and unchangeable love, it must be left in them for their benefit. Faith may be fully assured that evil continues to be present with the saint both for the glory of God and for his own good.

Thus, there is a bright side to even this dark cloud. We are apt to think it is a most deplorable thing that sin still indwells us and to imagine it would be far better if we were rid of it. But that is our ignorance. Yea, it is some thing worse: it is a spirit of opposition to God, a rebelling against His dealings with us, an impugning of His wisdom, a casting reflection upon His goodness. Since He has given such abundant proofs that He has our best interests at heart, it must be most reprehensible for any to call into question His ways with them. Rather, may we be fully persuaded that our loving Father had completely removed "the flesh" from the soul of His children at the moment of their regeneration had that been for their highest welfare. Since He has not done so, we must confidently conclude that God has a benevolent purpose in suffering sin to indwell them to the end of their pilgrim journey. But does His Word furnish any hints of His gracious designs therein? Yes, but we must now limit ourselves unto one of them.

God leaves sin in His people to *promote their humility*. There is nothing which He abominates so much as pride. In Proverbs 6:16-17, the Holy Spirit has listed seven things which the Lord hates, and they are headed with "A proud look"! God feedeth the hungry, but the rich He sendeth empty away. He "giveth grace unto the humble," but "resisteth the proud" (James 4:6). It is the egotistical and self-satisfied Laodiceans who are so loathsome in His sight that He spues them out of His mouth (Rev 3:16-17). Now Christian reader, is it really and truly the desire of thy heart that God will "hide pride" from thee (Job 33:17)? If by grace it be so, then are you willing for Him to use His own means and method in accomplishing your desire, even though it be an unpleasant process, yea, galling to your complacency? If you be willing for your natural religiousness to be blasted and to be stripped of your peacock feathers, then it will be by evil remaining in you and bestirring itself to your grief.

Second Timothy 3:2 shows (from its order) that pride springs from inordinate self-love. They who are undue lover of themselves soon grow proud of themselves, which is odious to God, for it robs Him of His

glory. Since God will be glorious unto His saints, as well as glorified by them, He subdues their pride by leaving that in them which humbles their hearts, but makes them admire Him the more for His long-suffering. Divine light exposes filth within, of which they had no previous realization, causing them to cry with the leper, "Unclean, unclean" (Lev 13:45). They have such painful discoveries of indwelling sin as often makes them lament, "O wretched man that I am!" (Rom 7:24). But how thankful we should be if God makes us "abhor" ourselves (Job 42:6), and thereby make way for prizing Christ all the more! In this life, *holiness*, my reader, consists largely of pantings after it and grievings because we feel ourselves to be so unholy.

What would happen to a man still left in this world if he were full of sin one day and then made absolutely sinless the next? Let our present experience supply the answer. Do we not find it very difficult to keep our proper place, both before God and our brethren, when the evil within us is subdued but a little? Is not *that* evidence we require something to deliver us from self-righteousness? Even the beloved Paul needed "a thorn in the flesh" lest he "be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations" given him (2Co 12:7). The man after God's own heart prayed, "O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise" (Psa 51:15): as though he said, "If Thou, Lord, wilt help me to speak aright, I shall not proclaim my own worth nor boast of what I have done, but will give Thee all the glory." As God left some of the Canaanites in the land to prove Israel (Jdg 2:21-22), so He leaves sin in us to humble us. We shall be sinless in heaven, and the sight of the "Lamb as it had been *slain*" (Rev 5:6) will for ever prevent the re-entry of pride into our souls.

Our consciousness of sin's presence has, first, an *emptying* influence: it makes way for a pardoning and cleansing Christ, by convicting the soul of its deep need. Second, it has a continual *abasing* influence, bringing us to realize more and more our utter insufficiency and complete dependence upon God. Third, it has an *evangelical* influence, for it serves to make us more conscious of the perfect suitability of the great Physician for such lepers as we feel ourselves to be. Fourth, it has a *God-honouring* influence, for it brings the renewed soul to marvel increasingly at His "longsuffering to us-ward" (2Pe 3:9). Fifth, it should promote a spirit of *forbearance* to our fellows: we ought not to expect less failure in them than we find in ourselves.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

50. 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, Part 4

“So that may be glorified the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and of [the] Lord Jesus Christ” (2Th 1:12, *Bagster Interlinear*). Here we have, fourth, the *design* of this prayer; and fifth, its *effectuation*. That which the mind of the apostle centered upon was the honouring of Christ by the furthering of the salvation of His people, for in this world, the Head of the Church is now magnified through and by His members. The grand concern which occupied the heart, formed the thoughts, and motivated the activities of His ambassador, was the exalting of his beloved Lord. The whole of his strenuous and self-effacing Christian life is summed up in that memorable confession of his, “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phi 1:20-21). Accordingly, we find that blessed aim actuated him in his prayers equally with his preaching, during his ministerial labours or while suffering imprisonment.

In petitioning the Throne of Grace that these Thessalonians might be divinely enabled to highly esteem and walk worthily of their holy and heavenly calling, by performing every duty which the divine precepts enjoined; and by fulfilling the work of faith with power, the apostle aimed at the honouring of his Master. The design before him was that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ should be glorified in them, and they in Him. In 2 Thessalonians 1:10, he had comforted them with the declaration, “When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.” And therefore for which (“also we pray always,” 2Th 1:11) he had supplicated God suitably thereto, thereby teaching them (and us) *the effect* which that blessed prospect should have upon our walk. The advent of the Redeemer in glory and the glorification of the Church at that time are set before us in Scripture as the grand consummation of the Christian vocation or calling. The hope of the Church is a powerful dynamic in the promotion of her present holiness (1Jo 3:2-3). Only those who truly delight in and pant after holiness will spiritually long for Christ’s return and cry, “Make haste, my beloved” (Song 8:14).

It is often said that “we are saved to serve”: personally, we prefer, “we are saved to please and honour Christ.” His redeemed are left for a season in this scene to represent Him, to “shew forth the praises of him” (1Pe 2:9), to reflect (in their measure) His excellencies, to “follow his steps” as “an example” (1Pe 2:21) which He left them—which may be summarized in living wholly “to the glory of God” (1Co 10:31), and doing “good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal 6:10). The chief and highest end of the creature is to glorify its Creator; and therefore, it is made the fundamental principle of godliness: “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1Co 10:31). It may be inquired, Why did the apostle pray, “That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified” (2Th 1:12) rather than “that *God* may be glorified”? More generally, because God has made Christ the partner of His glory: “That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father” (Joh 5:23); “that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (Joh 14:13). More specifically, because the “persecutions and tribulations” (2Th 1:4) which the Thessalonians were enduring were for the Gospel’s sake, for their uncompromising profession of the Saviour’s name.

The acts of the natural man are prompted by self-love and are done to advance his own interests, comforts, and glory: “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built...by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” (Dan 4:30). It is not from any consideration of or concern for the honour of God that they act. If they refrain from the commission of gross sins, it is for their own reputations, and not from regard to the divine Law. Those who are liberal in contributing to the poor and needy distribute their charity out of compassion to the suffering, and not with their eyes on the divine precept because God enjoins it. Even those of the unregenerate who claim to be Christians are regulated by what is agreeable to themselves, and not by love to Christ and respect for His authority and glory. They are willing to please God just so far as it does not displease them. Others, who wish to obtain a reputation for piety are like the Pharisees who tithed and fasted and made long prayers to satisfy their own ambition—to be seen, heard, and praised by men. But where a miracle of grace is wrought in the soul, self-pleasing is displaced by the denying of self, and gratitude and love now move him to seek the glory of God.

Yet though a new nature be imparted at regeneration, the old nature is not removed nor even bettered. The principle of "the flesh" still indwells the soul, and is continually clamouring for indulgence; and thus, there is a ceaseless conflict within the believer between sin and holiness. His responsibility and lifelong task is to mortify the one and nourish and exercise the other: to deny self and follow Christ. And it is at this very point we should frequently test ourselves, as it is here, we may most surely ascertain whether or no we be growing in grace: to what extent am I dying unto sin and living unto God? How far is my conduct determined by a concern for the divine glory? Have I formed the habit of challenging my inclinations and determinations with the question, "Will this be for the glory of God"? Every plan we form, every action we perform, is either pleasing or displeasing to God, honouring or dishonouring to Him—there is no mean between those alternatives. Each project I entertain will either further the interests of self or serve to magnify Christ, and it is for me to pause and consider *which* of those my heart is really set upon; otherwise, what difference is there between me and the respectable worldling!

"Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1Co 10:31). Am I a young man, giving serious thought to choosing a wife? Then I should first solemnly ponder the question, Do I desire marriage to the glory of God? If I be contemplating a change of situation or residence, or my thoughts turn to the taking of a pleasure journey, before making the decision, it is a bounden Christian duty to ask myself, Will such a course promote the honour of Christ, is it for *His* sake I shall move in the matter? This must also actuate and regulate the minister of the Gospel. It is a horrible profanation of the sacred office to seek the applause of men or covet the fame of being "thought a great preacher." There is something which must take precedence even over seeking the good of souls. If the salvation of sinners and the edifying of saints be my supreme concern, then I am making an idol of the creature, and efforts after "success"—rather than fidelity to my charge—will determine my course. But if I labour with an eye single to the glory of God and aim at magnifying Christ, then I shall be far more concerned about preaching the truth in its purity than in "seeing results."

There are many weighty reasons and motives which should move the Christian to seek the glory of God in all that he does. That which is of the greatest value and consideration should be sought before all else; and surely God's glory has an infinite excellency above all things, and therefore must be preferred before all creature good. Again, since God ever has before Him our good, we ought ever to keep in view His glory: He never forgets us, nor should we Him. Again, how it ought to concern us to make restitution for our former dishonouring of God! In our unregenerate days, we had no regard for Him: never a mercy of His but what we abused. How zealous, then, ought we now to be in ordering our conduct to His praise, and manifesting the genuineness of our repentance over the past by living wholly for Him in the present! Still more so, does the example of Christ show us our duty. "Christ pleased not himself" (Rom 15:3), but ever cherished God's honour. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour"?—No, rather, "Father, glorify *thy* name" (Joh 12:27-28). His example is our best instructor, and in it He has taught us to put the honour of God before our own interests and comfort.

Here are some of the ways by which God is glorified. By ascribing to Him that glory which is His due (Psa 29:1-2). By proclaiming His worth unto others (Psa 34:3). By love's making Him our supreme delight (Psa 73:25). By implicit confidence in Him: Abraham "was strong in faith, [thereby] giving glory to God" (Rom 4:20). By our bodies being dedicated to Him (1Co 6:20). By yielding obedience: "That they [men] may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mat 5:16). By our repentance (Rev 16:9). By confession of sin (Jos 7:19). By cultivating our graces: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (Joh 15:8). By adoring His excellency: "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me" (Psa 50:23). By readiness to suffer for Him and patiently bear afflictions (1Pe 4:14-16). By disowning any credit to ourselves, attributing to Him all good in and from us (Psa 115:3). "That God in *all* things may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1Pe 4:11) is the end we should ever aim at, avoiding whatever is contrary thereto, making all subordinate and subservient to the same.

"That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, *and ye in him*" (2Th 1:12). Making the honour of Christ our supreme concern will preserve us from many snares and follies. All the disastrous bypaths into which we have wandered since we became Christians may be traced back to failure at this very point: instead of being actuated and regulated by the determination to magnify Christ, we yielded to a spirit of self-love and self-pleasing. In seeking the glory of Christ, we, at the same time, are furthering our own salvation, for we then act contrary to the promptings of indwelling sin and are being more conformed to the image of God's Son. Thus, highly esteeming our calling and walking worthily thereof, fulfilling

every precept of God's goodness, and keeping our faith healthy and in vigorous exercise, we both honour Christ and advance our own spiritual interests. Moreover, what an unspeakable privilege and dignity is it to serve such a Master as ours! Is it not glorious indeed to please, yea, to endure persecution for such a glorious Saviour: "Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Act 5:41)! But "if so be that we suffer with him," we shall "be also glorified together" (Rom 8:17).

"And ye in him" has ultimate reference to the next life: the consummation of our salvation, the reward for honouring Christ in this. "God hath appointed this order, that we should glorify Him before He glorifies us; and there is much wisdom and righteousness in that appointment. It would greatly redound to God's dishonour if He should glorify those that do not glorify Him, and make no difference between the godly and the wicked, those that break His laws and those that keep them. If both should fare alike, it would eclipse the righteousness of God's government...God hath not only appointed that we should glorify Him before He glorifies us, but that we should glorify Him upon earth before He glorifies us in heaven. We have Christ for an example: 'I have glorified thee on the earth:...And now, O Father, glorify thou me' (Joh 17:4-5)...Christ takes special notice of those that glorify Him in the world, and it is one of His pleas for His disciples: 'Father...I am glorified in them' (Joh 17:5, 10). He is an Advocate in heaven for those that are factors for His kingdom upon earth...this glory is promised: 'If any man serve me, him will my Father honour' (Joh 12:26)"—Thomas Manton (1620-1677).

"According to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2Th 1:12) is what secures the fulfilment of this prayer. The wider reference is unto all that precedes: our acting suitably to God's holy calling, our fulfilling every good counsel of His goodness and work of faith by His power, our glorifying of His Son, is all from and by divine grace. Scripture is plain and emphatic on this point, and so also must be the tongue and pen of God's servants. It was His sovereign favour which chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and equally so is each blessing which follows it. Therefore do we read of "the election of grace" (Rom 11:5), that our calling is "according to his own purpose and grace" (2Ti 1:9), that we have "believed through grace" (Act 18:27), that we are "justified freely by his grace" (Rom 3:24). It is the same wondrous grace which bears with our dullness and waywardness, which provides for our every need, which renews us day by day in the inner man, and which brings us safely to heaven.

"According to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" refers more immediately to the preceding clause "and ye in him," which principally respects our glorification. For though our glorification be the issue and reward of our perseverance in faith and holiness, yet it is not a reward of debt, but of grace; not something we have merited, but which bestowed by God's free bounty. Hence, we read of "the grace that is to be brought unto [us] at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1Pe 1:13). Thus, all ground for boasting is entirely removed from us, and the praise and glory is His alone. Nothing but His wondrous grace could overcome our obstinacy and bring us into willing subjection to God. Nothing less is able to maintain and keep us in the paths of righteousness. The principle of holiness which was imparted to us at regeneration is but a creature, and therefore, mutable and entirely dependent upon its Giver—both for strength and motion. We can only work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, as God worketh in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phi 2:12-13). The flesh, the world, and the Devil, are far too powerful for us to overcome in our own might. And when the Headstone is brought forth, the whole Church will cry, "Grace, grace unto it" (Zec 4:7).

But if the *balance* of truth is to be preserved here, it requires to be pointed out that though the grace of God be the original cause of our salvation, yet as it does not preclude the worth and work of Christ as its meritorious cause, so neither does it exclude repentance, faith, and obedience, and the means: "By grace are ye saved *through faith*" (Eph 2:8). Though neither faith nor good works has any causal influence in our salvation, much less is a co-cause with the grace of God and of Christ; yet God has appointed this method and way of salvation. Principal causes do not exclude necessary means, but comprise them; and therefore, we must not set grace against grace and say that the elect will be saved whether they believe or no, or that the regenerate will reach heaven no matter how they live. Grace is only magnified by us as we insist that it works "through righteousness" (Rom 5:21), and by bringing forth its holy fruits. Basically and fundamentally, our salvation flows from the sovereign pleasure of God, the good will which He bears us; and it is effectually wrought in us by His power. Yet instrumentally and mediately, salvation issues from the discharge of our responsibility (for God ever treats with us as moral agents) from the heeding of His warning and in using the means He has appointed. "We...believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb 10:3-) and are "kept by the power of God *through faith*" (1Pe 1:5).

It is all-important to insist that “salvation is of the LORD” (Jon 2:9), so that all the glory be fully ascribed unto Him; and also, that we may be encouraged to seek grace from Him, for when sensible of our undeservingness and our ill-deserts, only the realization of His abundant favour will keep the heart from sinking. Yet it is none the less necessary to press the Christian’s responsibility in the use of all proper means, so that he may be preserved from lapsing into Antinomianism and fatalistic inertia. There is a balance to be preserved here: between a sense of our helplessness and our obligation to use the grace which we already have, yea, to seek further and fuller supplication of grace (Heb 4:16). Our entire dependency upon God and our full accountability unto Him are not contradictory, but complementary, parts of one whole. It is the grand privilege of faith to make free use of Christ; and it is our bounden duty to live *unto* Him; yet that is only possible by constantly drawing *from* Him. Without Christ, we can do nothing (Joh 15:5); but energized by Him, we can do all things (Phi 4:13). Then let us see to it that we “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2Ti 2:1).

“According to the grace of our God” is to be regarded, then, as referring to *the whole of* His benignant design toward us. It is on *that* basis all our supplies must be asked for, it is from that fountain all the streams of blessing do flow; and it is to that divine attribute all must be ascribed. It is the grace which sets His power to work on our behalf, and were the operation of His power suspended for a moment, then even the “new man” would instantly be paralysed. He “holdeth our soul in life” (Psa 66:9); and should He “let loose his hand,” we are at once “cut...off” (Job 6:9). To the resisting of any sin or the performing of any duty, we are in need of the gracious power of God moment by moment. Nevertheless, we are not mere automatons: “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it” (Phi 1:6); yet not without our concurrence—as though we were blocks of wood. Finally, note we must not so eye “the grace of our God” as to lose sight of “the Lord Jesus Christ” (2Th 1:12). In the Greek, there is only one article here; and it is in the singular number, which not only exhibits the unity of the divine nature, but also reveals the two Persons engaged in a common work.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

30. *The Captain*

All the leading features of redemption were more or less shadowed forth by the Passover; and therein, God would keep those things in the minds and before the eyes of Israel by their annual memorial of the same. But not only did the Passover furnish a vivid portrayal of the Gospel, it was also a *means* for Israel's good, a gracious provision for their bodily needs. Before another day dawned, they were to leave Egypt and start out for the promised land; and by feeding on the lamb, strength was supplied for the journey which lay before them. Thus it is with the Christian: he must feed on Christ in order for strength as he passes through this wilderness, for the world supplies no nourishment for the soul. So it was at Gilgal (Jos 5:10): as the Passover had been the prelude to Israel's deliverance from Egypt and the commencement of their wilderness history, so it was made introductory to their new experience in Canaan: it was a blessed reminder that while they walked according to the divine precepts, they might count upon God's mighty power. As their feeding on the lamb in Egypt supplied energy for their wilderness journey, equally needful was its strength for the warfare in which they were about to engage.

"And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day" (Jos 5:11). Once more, we would observe how the Holy Spirit delights to take notice of and place on record the details of the saints' obedience. It had been expressly commanded that the pascal lamb must be eaten with "unleavened bread" (Exo 12:8), and strict compliance was here made with that order. They did not say, As long as it is *bread*, what else matters? but subjected their wills to God's. Throughout the Scriptures "leaven" is emblematical of corruption and evil; and therefore, it had been a horrible incongruity and most unsuited to use leavened bread at a feast wherein the immaculate purity of Christ was set forth in the lamb "without blemish." The least tampering with the divine ordinances alters their significance, mars their beauty, and is an act of presumption on man's part. If they be not kept in the letter of them, they certainly are not in their spirit, for true love seeks to please its object in all things.

"In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel" (Exo 12:18-19). Thus, when it is said in Joshua 5:10 that when the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, they "kept the passover," we are to understand that for a whole week, they observed the same. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) pointed out, "They kept the passover in the plains of Jericho as it were in defiance of the Canaanites that were round about them and enraged against them, and yet could not give them any disturbance. Thus, God gave them an early instance of the performance of that promise, that when they went up to keep the feasts, their land should be taken under the special protection of divine providence: Exodus 34:24, 'Neither shall any man desire thy land.' He now 'preparest a table before [them] in the presence of [their] enemies' (Psa 23:5)."

"And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day" (Jos 5:11). A supply of food was already to hand when they entered Canaan: probably in granaries abandoned by its inhabitants as they took refuge in the walled city of Jericho. The Lord is no Egyptian taskmaster, requiring His people to make bricks without supplying them with straw. Now that "the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD" was to be eaten seven days (Lev 23:6), an abundant quantity of grain was available for them. It is blessed to observe that before they used any of it for their own comfort, it was made into unleavened cakes in their worship of Jehovah. Thus did they act on the basis of that essential precept, "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the *firstfruits* of all thine increase" (Pro 3:9). And as the Lord Jesus has taught us, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Mat 6:33), He is to be given the pre-eminence by us in all things; and accordingly as we honour Him, so will He honour us.

This supply of corn upon Israel's first entrance into Canaan was *an earnest* of that promise which God has made through Moses: "And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not" (Deu 6:10-11); the complete fulfillment whereof is recorded in Joshua 24:13. Typically, the "old corn of the land" (Jos 5:11-12), equally

with the manna, spoke of Christ (Joh 12:24), yet in a very different character. The manna—"a small round thing" (Exo 16:14), which lay on the ground and was Israel's wilderness food—was an emblem of Christ in His humiliation; but the old corn of Canaan pointed to Christ in His exaltation. The Christian needs to meditate and act in faith on Christ—not only as He is presented to us in all His moral perfections in the four Gospels, but also upon His official glories as they are set forth in the epistles; particularly does he need to be occupied with Him as portrayed in Hebrews as our great High Priest and Intercessor.

In the earlier articles of this series, we laid considerable emphasis on the fact that the spiritual value and the practical *use* which *we* should make of the book of Joshua is that we should see unfolded therein the principles by which the Christian is to enter into a present possession and enjoyment of his inheritance, and the secrets of successfully fighting the good fight of faith and the spiritual warfare to which he is called. We sought to make plain what are some of those basic principles and essential secrets, as they are illustrated and exemplified by the historical incidents recorded in the first four chapters of this book; and before turning from the first two sections of chapter 5, let us stress the truth that two more of them are here intimated as foreshadowed in the circumcising of the Israelites and their keeping of the Passover. The Christian must be diligent in mortifying his lusts if he would walk in newness of life; and equally necessary is it that he feed daily on Christ—considered both as the sacrificial Lamb and as the great High Priest—in order to obtain strength to overcome the flesh, the world, and the devil. Practically, the corn of Canaan is a portion of our inheritance which faith is to *now* appropriate.

"And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year" (Jos 5:12). "To show that it did not come by chance, or by common providence as snow or hail does, but by the special designation of divine wisdom and goodness; for as it came just when they needed it, so it continued as long as they had occasion for it, and no longer" (M. Henry). The practical lesson which we are to draw therefrom is that we are not to expect extraordinary supplies when they can be had in an ordinary way: God works no unnecessary miracles. It is blessed to remember that the Lord had not discontinued the manna when the people despised it (Num 11:6), nor even when He severed His covenant relation with that evil generation; but had mercifully continued to give it for the sake of their children, who had now grown up and entered Canaan. Here ends the first main division of the book: Joshua 1:1-9 is the Introduction; 1:10-12, concerns the passage of the Jordan; 5:12-13, the conquest of Canaan.

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" (Jos 5:13). Though this verse begins a new section of the book, yet it opens with the word "And"—not simply to preserve the continuity of the narrative, but especially to link this incident with what immediately precedes. God has promised to honour those who honour Him, and Joshua had done so in the circumcising of the people and in the strict observance of the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread; and now the Lord bestows a signal favour upon His servant. How much we lose by failing to render unto our God that full and implicit obedience which is His due! "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest* myself to him" (Joh 14:21) declares the Saviour. That is exactly what He was here doing unto obedient Joshua! It is of His spiritual manifestations to the soul we deprive ourselves by disobedience.

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked" (Jos 5:13). Probably he was here engaged in reconnoitering the walled city with a view to determining his best plan of campaign against it, for as Israel's leader, that was his obvious duty; nor would the firm expectation that the Lord should show Himself strong on behalf of His people discharge him from the performing of it. Even when we are fully assured that God is for us and will undertake for us, it is required that we act as rational creatures, use all proper means and precautions, and put forth our best efforts. To refuse doing so on the pretext of relying wholly on God to do all for us is not faith but presumption. Though Christ was about to supply a miraculous draught of fishes, yet He bade Peter, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught" (Luk 5:4). True, we must not lean unto our own understanding, nor rely on our own strength; yet both the one and the other are to be exercised by us. It was, then, while Joshua was in the path of duty, discharging his responsibility, that the Lord met with him! Only while similarly engaged are *we* warranted in expecting His help.

“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked” (Jos 5:13). The doubling of the verb seems to intimate a two-fold significance about Joshua’s action—a natural and a spiritual: that after viewing the enemy’s citadel, he supplicated the Lord. The *usage* of the verbs confirms this. The “lifted up” his eyes in a natural way, taking a comprehensive survey of things, occurs in Genesis 13:10, 14; while it is found in a spiritual sense in “Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul” (Psa 25:1); for “looked,” see Genesis 8:13 and Exodus 2:25. “And, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand” (Jos 5:13). This represented a real test to Joshua’s valour. God had bidden him, “Be strong and of a good courage” (Jos 1:6), and now he is put to the proof. There is nothing whatever here to intimate that Joshua beheld this Man in a vision, but rather, that He appeared before him objectively and tangibly. Even though He had “his sword drawn in his hand,” Israel’s leader did not panic and flee, but boldly advanced “unto him” (Jos 5:13). We should harbour no fear while in the path of duty, but count upon the divine promise, “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Psa 34:7).

On the other hand, Joshua did not rashly draw his own sword and engage this Man in conflict. Instead, he inquired, “Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?” (Jos 5:13), which challenge intimates Joshua recognized that this stranger was no Israelite. A moment later, he was to discover this Person was more than “a man.” Previously, the Lord had *spoken* unto Joshua (Jos 1:1; 3:7; 4:1, 15), but had made no visible manifestation of Himself unto His servant until now. Observe well how God suits the revelation of Himself unto His saints according to their circumstances and needs: to Abraham in his tent, He appeared as a traveler (Gen 18:1, 2, 13), to Moses at the backside of the desert in a bush (Exo 3:1-2), to Joshua at the beginning of his campaign as “a man of war” (compare Exo 15:3). In the celebrating of the Passover, Christ had been prefigured as the Lamb slain (Exo 12:11); here in Joshua 5:13, with drawn sword in hand, He appeared as “the Lion of the tribe of Juda” (Rev 5:5). It was one of the pre-incarnate appearances of the Son of God, in human form, which brings before us a most blessed yet profoundly mysterious subject, concerning which the reader will probably welcome a few details.

In respect to Their Godhead, each of the three divine Persons is equally invisible: the Triune God is seen alone in Christ. The invisibility of the divine Being to mortal eyes is clearly taught in Old and New Testament alike. “For there shall no man see me, and live” (Exo 33:20), “no man hath seen God at any time” (Joh 1:18), “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see” (1Ti 6:16). That raises the question, How are we to understand those passages in the Old Testament where it is said, “And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel [‘the face of God’]: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (Gen 32:30), “and they saw the God of Israel” (Exo 24:10). In many passages, it was not only that God was seen in vision or symbol, but corporately and actually. As, for example, by Moses: “If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With *him* will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude [‘form’ or ‘likeness’] of the LORD shall he behold” (Num 12:6-8). Those are what infidels term as “contradictions.”

The New Testament makes it known that another Person of the same essence as the Father has had for His office the making known of God unto His people: “The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (Joh 1:18), “he that hath seen me,” said Christ, “hath seen the Father” (Joh 14:9), “Who is the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15 and compare Heb 1:3). The intimate communion between the two Persons appears in Exodus 23:20-21: “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.” Observe how much language is used there by one Person about another Person as precludes our identifying Him as a single Person; yet both are certainly divine. Thus, we must not exclude Jehovah the Father wholly from these communications to the Old Testament saints and attribute all the messages unto the Son immediately. We are to admit the presence of the first Person *per se* (by Himself), as well as the second: two Persons with divine attributes, employing the name of Jehovah in common; the one the Sender, the other the Sent—the latter communicating directly with men.

In each instance, the theophanic manifestation was made by God the Son, sometimes in the form of an angel; at others, in the form of man. It is the same Person, whether called, “the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob” (Exo 3:16), “the God of Israel” (Exo 34:23), or “the messenger [Angel] of the covenant”

(Mal 3:1). Those mysterious appearances were so many intimations that the Son even then personated the character of the Mediator, under which He would yet reveal Himself openly. It was God the Son who thus appeared to Hagar (Gen 16:7), Abraham (Gen 18:1), Jacob (Gen 32:24-30), Israel (Jdg 2:1), Gideon (Jdg 6:12-18), Manoah (Jdg 13:21). In Malachi 3:1, "the messenger [Angel] of the covenant" is called "the Lord" of "his temple." Those theophanies not only disclosed a personal distinction in the Godhead, but show the pre-existence and Deity of our Redeemer. That the Jehovah who manifested Himself again and again unto Israel in the wilderness was none other than the Mediator, is unequivocally established by 1 Corinthians 10:4, 9: "for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was *Christ*...Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." See also Hebrews 11:26.

The appearances of the Son of God to men in human form—sometimes in vision (Eze 1:26; Dan 10:5-6), sometimes in prophecy (Psa 89:17; Dan 7:13), sometimes tangibly (Gen 32:24; Jos 5:13)—were so many anticipations of the Word becoming flesh, and were in order to acquaint the Church with the Person of her Head by providing a blessed intercourse between them. They were endearing manifestations of Christ to His saints (and to none other!) of His love, that His "delights [even then] were with the sons of men" (Pro 8:31). It is most blessed to observe how many and varied ways the Lord Jesus took to display His personal love unto His people by vision and open revelation, by type and tangible similitude, in the early ages of the world, until the time that He became incarnate and tabernacled among men. They were all designed to prepare the minds of His people for His becoming the Son of man and furnishing the supreme proof of His love for them in New Testament times. He graciously adopted such methods to indicate how much He longed for the fullness of time when He should put away their sins and bring in an everlasting righteousness for them.

"And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?" (Jos 5:14). Joshua now discovered it was far more than "a man" who stood before him; and therefore, did he prostrate himself before Him and humbly sought His will. Had this visitor been only an angel, he had rebuked Joshua for worshipping him (Rev 19:10; 22:8-9); but this Person accepted it, thereby evincing His Deity! This faithful servant of His now had a special visit from his Lord to inaugurate the great enterprise on which he was about to engage, namely, the putting of the inhabitants of Canaan to the sword. It was the sign and token that complete victory should be Israel's, a guarantee that success should be granted their warfare. This "man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand" (Jos 5:13) had come as no idle spectator of the conflict, but to command and direct every movement of their battles. "As captain of the host of the LORD am I now come": at the head of the angelic hierarchy stands the Angel of the Lord, "the captain of [our] salvation" (Heb 2:10).

"And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so" (Jos 5:15). Here was further proof that the One speaking to Joshua was infinitely above the highest celestial creature, for the arch-angel's presence had not rendered the very ground whereon he stood sacred. It was in fact none other than the august Person before whom the seraphim veil their faces and cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts" (Isa 6:3 and compare Joh 12:41). It will be noted that the token of reverence required from Joshua was identical with that demanded of Moses by "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" at the burning bush (Exo 3:5-6). That order for the removing of his shoes not only linked together the two incidents, but supplied a further assurance of God's promise to His servant: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Jos 1:5). What an encouragement for faith was that! Who could stand before the Captain of the Lord's host? What was there for Israel to fear under such a Leader! Note how the Spirit again registers Joshua's obedience to the command to remove his shoes: "And Joshua did so" (Jos 5:15). Nothing is too small for God's notice. Our every act is recorded by Him—how solemn! How blessed!

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

14. *The Holy Bible, Part 6*

It also requires to be pointed out that the Pentateuch contains a narration of many events which took place in the actual lifetime, yea, before the eyes of the very people who were called upon to receive those books as authentic. Thus, there was no opportunity for Moses, or any one else, to palm off upon the Hebrews a lot of fictions, for each one of them would know at once whether the records of their cruel bondage in Egypt, the judgments which Jehovah is said to have executed there, and the miraculous deliverance of His people at the Red Sea, were true or not. Had those events been of a commonplace character, few perhaps had been sufficiently interested to scrutinize the narratives of them; still less have taken the trouble to refute them were they untrue. But in view of their extraordinary nature—and especially since those miracles were designed to *authenticate a new religion* upon which their future hopes were to be based, and by which their present deportment was to be regulated—it is unthinkable that a whole nation gave a mechanical assent; and still more so that they unitedly endorsed evidence which they knew to be false, especially when those same narratives inculcated a code of conduct which they certainly had never designed of their own accord.

But more. Not only were many of the Mosaic institutions radically different from those practised by all other nations and from what the Hebrews had themselves observed in Egypt, but they also involved numerous rites which required constant attention and which must have been most irksome and unpleasant. Moreover, those ceremonies subjected the Israelites to considerable expense by the costly sacrifices they were frequently required to offer and the tithes they were commanded to pay the priests. Furthermore, some of the laws bound upon them were of such a character that it is altogether unaccountable—on the principles of political wisdom—that any legislator should have proposed, or that a whole nation should meekly have submitted to them. Such was the law of the Sabbatic year, which forbade them tilling or sowing the ground for a whole twelve months (Exo 23:10-11), such was the law ordering all the males to journey from every part of the land to the tabernacle (Deu 16:16)—leaving their homes unprotected; the law which prohibited their king multiplying horses (Deu 17:16); and more especially the law of jubilee, when all mortgaged property had to be restored to the original owners and all slaves freed (Lev 25:10).

Now we submit that it is utterly incredible to suppose that any sane legislator would, on his own authority, have imposed enactments which interfered so seriously with both private and public liberty, and which involved such hazards as the people dying of starvation while their fields lay fallow, and their wives and children being murdered by invaders when all their men-folk were far removed from them. Still more inconceivable is it that, instead of bitterly resenting and openly revolting against such unpopular statutes, the whole nation should quietly acquiesce therein. It is quite pointless to say that Israel was imposed upon by Moses, that he deceived them into believing those laws were of divine authority. No such deception was possible, for the simple reason that the entire nation was assembled at Sinai and had witnessed the supernatural and awe-inspiring phenomena when the Lord had descended and given those laws audibly—they had with their own ears heard a portion of it published. Israel's reception of such a Law can only be accounted for on the basis that they were fully assured it proceeded from God Himself.

Having demonstrated that the Scriptures could not have been manufactured by either wicked impostors or deluded fanatics, that they were not invented by the Christian Church or the ancient Jews, we are shut up to the only remaining alternative—namely, that they are a revelation from God, His own inspired and infallible Word. No other choice is left; no other explanation is credible. Every other attempt to explain their origin is found, upon critical examination, to be not only altogether inadequate, but utterly absurd. If a thinking man finds it difficult, nay, impossible, to explain a created universe apart from a divine Creator, it is no less so for him to account for the Book of books without a *divine Author*. This is a matter which admits of no compromise: if the Bible has come to us from God, then it has claims upon us which infinitely transcend those of all other writings; if it is not, then it is an impious fraud, unworthy of our attention. There is no middle ground! Moreover, if the Bible be not what it claims to be, then we are left without *any* revelation which, with any reliability or authority, can impart to us the knowledge of God, or warrant its reception by mankind!

5. *It bears the hallmark of genuineness:* the contents of the Bible are just what might be looked for. What are the essential characteristics we should expect to find in a written communication from God unto

fallen mankind? Would they not be, first, the imparting to us of a knowledge of the true God; and second, of that instruction which is best suited to our varied needs? Such is precisely what we have in the Bible. The grand truth taught throughout the Sacred Scriptures is that God does all things for His own glory and for the manifestation of His own perfections. And is not that exactly in accord with right reason? Once men are led to entertain any true conceptions of the Supreme Being, they are brought to the irresistible conclusion that One who is self-existent and self-sufficient, the Creator and Proprietor of the universe could not be swayed by any creature or moved to action from a regard to anything outside of Himself, or irrespective of Himself; that in all His works, both of creation and providence, He will have a supreme regard unto His own honour and the maintaining of His own perfections.

If then the Bible be the Word of God—proceeding from Himself, stamped with the autograph of His own authority—we naturally expect to find it is possessed of *that* characteristic and directed to that end. Thus in fact it is. The cardinal design of the Sacred Scriptures is to make God known, to exhibit the peerless excellencies of his character, to teach us the homage and adoration which are His due. Their supreme end is to display to us the glorious attributes of God, that we may learn to form the most elevated conception of His Being, our own entire dependency upon Him, our deep obligations to show forth His praise. The scope of the entire Bible is to teach us our relations to God, and that the business of our lives is to give Him His true place in our hearts, to act always so as to please Him. Yet the very reverse of *that* is what obtains in human practice: in view of which we are forced to conclude that had men originated the Bible, its teaching thereon had been very different, and that it had contained no such statements as that “The LORD hath made all things for himself” (Pro 16:4) and “whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1Co 10:31).

Again, would we not naturally expect to find a revelation from God couched in a strain very different from that in which one man speaks to another? Since the Creator be so high above the creature, does it not befit Him to address us in terms which become His august majesty? Such is just what we find in the Bible. Its instructions are delivered to us not in an argumentative form, but in an authoritative manner, for while arguments are suited to equals, they would be quite out of place for the All-wise when directing the ignorant. Its precepts are not proffered to us as so much good advice, which we are free to heed or not at our pleasure, but rather as imperial edicts which we disregard to our eternal undoing. The commandments of Scripture admit of no questioning: “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not” are its peremptory terms. In the most uncompromising way, and without the least semblance of apology, the Bible claims the absolute right to dictate unto all men what they should do, condemns them for their failure, and pronounces sentence of judgment upon every offender. From Genesis to Revelation, the contents of Holy Writ are set forth in dictatorial language beyond which there is no appeal. It speaks throughout as from an infinitely elevated plane.

Moreover, the Bible does not single out for address merely the ignorant and the base, but issues its orders unto all classes alike. The cultured as well as the illiterate, the high as well as the low, the rich equally with the poor, are imperatively told what they must do and from what they must abstain. And that one feature alone places the Bible, my reader, in a class by itself; yet if it possessed not the same, then we should have grave reason to suspect its authenticity. It would be most incongruous for the Ancient of days to use a conciliatory tone and employ the language of obsequiousness when vouchsafing a communication to creatures who are but of yesterday. So far from the language of dogmatism being unsuited, it is exactly what might be looked for in a revelation from the most High. Nevertheless, the dictatorial ring of the Bible accords it a unique place in the realm of literature. There is no other book in the world which demands, on pain of eternal perdition, the total submission of all mankind unto its authority; as there is none other which pronounces a fearful curse on any one who has the audacity to take away from its contents. The ring of imperial authority which sounds through all its chapters indicates that it is the voice of the living God who is the speaker.

Yet it will also follow that if the Bible be a divine revelation, then it must be suited to the needs of man—and not simply this or that man, but of all without distinction. One of the clearest marks of the handiwork of God in the material creation is that of design and adaptation: that all His productions are perfectly fitted to answer the ends for which they are made—as the human hand to perform so many different tasks. We should, therefore, expect to find this same characteristic stamped upon the Bible; nor is that expectation disappointed. It imparts to us the knowledge of God’s glorious character and our relations to Him, and reveals the means by which we may regain His favour and secure our own eternal happiness. The Holy Scriptures furnish us with an accurate diagnosis of the human heart and all its manifold workings. They describe to us our enemies and make known the stratagems which they employ, and how they are to

be resisted and overcome. They discover to us the character of that malady which has smitten our moral nature, and the great Physician who is able to recover us therefrom. They specify the most serious of the dangers which menace us, and faithfully warn us against the same. They supply instruction which, if heeded, promotes our welfare in every way.

The Bible makes known to us how wisdom, strength, and true joy are to be obtained here, and how heaven may be our portion hereafter. It supplies salutary counsels which are admirably suited to all our varied circumstances. It is adapted equally to the young as the aged, to those in prosperity or those in adversity. Its language is simple enough for those of little education, yet it has depths in it which the most learned cannot fathom. In the Scriptures, there is as great variety as there is in Nature, something to meet the most diverse temperaments and tastes: history, poetry, biography, prophecy, legislation, the essentials of hygiene, profound mysteries, and a message of glad tidings to those in despair. Moreover, the Bible is self-explanatory. No reference library requires to be consulted in order to arrive at the meaning of anything in it: one part interprets another. The New Testament supplements the Old, and by patiently comparing Scripture with Scripture, the diligent reader may ascertain the signification of any figure, symbol, or term used therein; though its spiritual secrets are disclosed only unto the prayerful and the obedient.

As the light is accommodated to the eye and the eye formed and fitted to receive the light, so though the Scriptures have come from heaven, yet are they perfectly suited to those who live on earth. They contain all the information that is required by man as a moral and accountable being. There is no important problem relating to either our temporal or eternal welfare upon which the Bible does not supply excellent counsel. Though its contents be ineffably sublime, they are at the same time intensely practical, meeting every moral and spiritual need, adapted alike to Jew and Gentile, ancient or modern, rich or poor. The Bible not only makes known how the state should be governed and the church ordered, but it furnishes full instruction to direct the individual and to regulate the home. In a word, the Bible is qualified to be "a lamp unto [our] feet and a light unto [our] path" (Psa 119:105). When then we examine this Book which claims to come from God, and find it possesses all those marks and evidences which could reasonably be expected or desired, that it is exactly suited to answer all the ends of a divine revelation, we are obliged to conclude that our Creator has graciously met our deep need, and therefore, that revelation should be received by us with the utmost reverence and welcomed with the deepest thanksgiving.

6. *Christ and the Scriptures.* What was His attitude toward them? What was His estimate of them? What use did He make of them? The answers to those questions are of supreme importance and must settle the matter once and for all, for what is the opinion of any man worth when placed over against the verdict of the Son of God! Give then your best attention while we seek to furnish a reply to those inquiries. Negatively, Christ never cast the slightest doubt upon their validity, or called into question their authenticity. When His detractors reminded Him, "Moses wrote unto us" such and such a thing, He did not say that Moses was wrong, but told them they "err, because [they] know not the scriptures" (Mar 12:19-24). When a lawyer sought to ensnare Him, so far from brushing aside the authority of the Scriptures, He enforced the same, saying, "What is written in the law?" (Luk 10:26). When engaged in any controversy, His invariable appeal was unto the Old Testament, and declared that what David said was "by the Holy Ghost" (Mar 12:36). Not once did He intimate that it was unreliable and untrustworthy.

But let us turn to the positive side. Behold the Lord Jesus when He was assaulted by the devil, and note well that the only weapon He made use of was the sword of the Spirit. Each time He repulsed the tempter with a sentence from the Old Testament (Mat 4)! And observe that as soon as that mysterious conflict was over, God—to evince His approbation of Christ's conduct—sent the angels to minister "unto him" (Mar 1:13). Mark how He commenced His public ministry, by entering the synagogue, reading aloud from the prophet Isaiah, and saying, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luk 4:16-22). Hear Him as He declared, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Mat 5:17-18). He had come to enforce the teachings of the Old Testament in their minutest detail, to honour and magnify the same, by rendering a personal and perfect obedience to them. He owned the Scriptures as "the word of God" (Mar 7:13) just as they stood, without any reservation or qualification; thereby authenticating all the books of the Old Testament.

So far from regarding the Old Testament as being full of myths and fables, He taught that Abraham, Lot, Moses, and Daniel were real entities. He expressly ratified the very incidents at which the sceptics scoff: the Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven (Luk 17:27-29), and Jonah

being three days and nights in the whale's belly (Mat 12:40); thereby denying they were but "folk lore" and establishing their historicity, Christ placed the words of Moses on a par with His own (Joh 5:46-47). Said He, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luk 16:31), which again evinces our Lord's estimate of the Old Testament. It was of supreme authority to Him. When vindicating Himself for affirming His deity, after quoting from the Psalms, He added, "and the scripture cannot be broken" (Joh 10:35)—it is infallible, inviolable. When engaged in prayer to the Father, He solemnly declared, "Thy word is truth" (Joh 17:17): not simply contains the truth, or even is true, but "*is truth*"—without the least tincture of error, the word of Him "that cannot lie" (Ti 1:2).

When His enemies came to arrest Him in the garden and Peter drew his sword, the Saviour rebuked him, saying, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"; yet note well how He at once added, "But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Mat 26:53-54). Very blessed is that: showing that the written Word was what regulated His every action, and that it was His strong consolation in his darkest hour. Reverently behold Him on the cross, and observe Him placing homage upon the sacred psalter by using *its* words when undergoing the extreme anguish of divine desertion (Psa 22:1; Mat 27:46). But more: "Jesus...that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst" (Joh 19:28). There was yet one detail predicted of His dying sufferings which had not been accomplished, namely, that "in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Psa 69:21); and therefore, in subjection to the divine authority of the Old Testament, He cried, "I thirst"! After rising in triumph from the grave, we find our blessed Lord again magnifying the Scriptures: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luk 24:27).

Thus we are left in no doubt whatever of Christ's attitude toward, estimate of, and the use which He made of the Scriptures. He ever treated them with the utmost reverence, affirmed their divine authority, and considered that one word of *theirs* put an end to all controversy. He averred the Old Testament was "the word of God"—entirely inerrant, verbally inspired, as a whole and in all its parts. He affirmed that the Scriptures are the final court of appeal, and asserted their perpetuity. For the Christian, the testimony of Christ is final: he requires no further evidence or argument. Nor should the non-Christians. It is the height of absurdity to suppose that One who was endowed with infinitely superior wisdom to Solomon should have been imposed upon by a fraud; as it would be horrible blasphemy to say that He knowingly set His imprimatur upon what He knew to be false. Whose judgment, my young friend, do you prefer: that of the so-called, "advanced thinkers" or the verdict of the Son of God? Which deem you the more trustworthy?

ENJOYING GOD'S BEST

Part 2

We have already alluded to Psalm 19:11, where we are told of God's statutes and judgments that "in keeping of them there is great reward"; and we simply call attention now to the tense of that statement: not "shall be," but *is so* now. A part of that present "reward" is described in such verses as "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend [be a 'stumbling-block' to] them" (Psa 119:165); "And the work of righteousness [right doing] shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever" (Isa 32:17). Such too is the testimony of Psalm 58:11, "So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in [governs, administers the affairs of] the earth." "The righteous [i.e. the one whose practices conform to the Rule of Righteousness] shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon... To shew that the LORD is upright" (Psa 92:12-15)—i.e. to make it evident that He takes notice of and richly blesses such. "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth" (Pro 11:31). On the other hand, "The LORD... will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him" (Hos 12:2).

It is an unalterable law of the divine government that as we sow, so shall we reap. That principle is enunciated and illustrated all through the Scriptures. On the one hand, "they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (Hos 8:7); on the other, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy" (Hos 10:12). "Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same" (Job 4:8). "Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way" (Pro 1:31). "But to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward" (Pro 11:18). Our Lord taught precisely the same thing when He said, "There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this *present* time, and in the world to come life everlasting" (Luk 18:29-30). So too the apostles: "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2Co 9:6). "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (Jam 3:18). It is lamentable that such passages are so rarely heard from the pulpit.

It is right here that we have the key to a class of passages which has puzzled and perplexed not a few, namely, those which speak of the Lord's *repenting*. To say that such an expression is a figure of speech, God's condescending to employ our language, though true, really *explains* nothing. But the difficulty is at once removed when it be seen that the reference is not to the modifying of God's eternal decrees, but rather unto His governmental ways; signifying that when men alter their attitude and conduct toward Him, the Lord changes in His *dealings* with them—withholding the judgment threatened, or bestowing the blessing which their sins had kept back. The general principle is clearly expressed in, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; *If* that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; *If* it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them" (Jer 18:7-10).

There is no "if" whatever about the divine foreordination, but there *is* in connection with human responsibility. Necessarily so, for in the enforcing thereof, the alternatives of recompense must be stated. Many of the woes which God pronounces against kingdoms are not declarations of His eternal decrees or infallible predictions of what is about to take place, but rather ethical intimations of His sore displeasure against sin, and solemn threatenings of what must inevitably follow if there be no change for the better in those denounced: whether or no those impending judgments are to become historic realities is contingent upon their readiness to heed those warnings or their refusal to do so. The passage quoted above enunciates that basic moral law by which God governs the world, telling us that He approves of obedience and righteousness wherever it be found, and rewards the same; whereas He hates the opposite and punishes it (see Pro 14:34). Jeremiah 18 sets not before us God as the determiner of human destiny, but as the dispenser of temporal awards, governing in equity and in accordance with the discharge of human accountability, and showing He is ever ready to prosper the righteous.

The same principle pertains unto the individual. "Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments" (1Sa 15:10-11). That does not mean God *regretted* His former act of enth-

roning Saul, but that because of his defection, the Lord would *reverse* it and depose him (1Sa 15:26). Thus we see that God's governmental actions are determined—in part, at least—by man's conduct. We say “in part,” for God does not act uniformly; and some of His ways in providence are “past finding out,” as when He suffers the righteous to be severely afflicted, and the wicked to flourish like a green bay tree. If righteousness were always visibly rewarded and wickedness punished in this life, there would be no room for the exercise of faith in God's justice, for the Day of Judgment would be anticipated instead of presaged. Nevertheless, if we strike a balance and take the history of each nation or individual as a whole, God's moral government is now apparent, for we are daily made to see and feel that we are the losers by sinning and the gainers by holiness.

If the balance is to be duly preserved here and a proper concept formed of God's moral government, then it requires to be pointed out that His justice is tempered with *mercy*, as well as patience. Therefore does He grant “space to repent” (Rev 2:21), and where that clemency be availed of, God acts accordingly. For as many of those divine promises which respect earthly good are conditional upon the performance of obedience, so many of the divine judgments threatened are averted upon a reformation of manners. “If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose [better, ‘think’] to do unto them because of the evil of their doings” (Jer 26:3). Perhaps the most remarkable example of that is seen in the case of wicked Ahab, who, when he heard the sentence of woe pronounced, “rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.” And we are told that the Lord said, “*Because* he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days” (1Ki 21:20-29).

Let us now consider more definitely a few of those Scriptures which make known what God requires of us if we are to enter into and enjoy His best. Some of them have already been before us in a general way, but they require to be examined from a more particular viewpoint. “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for *then* thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and *then* thou shalt have good success” (Jos 1:8). That is so plain no interpreter is needed. “Then,” first, when our speech is ordered by God's Word, all of our converse being consonant thereto. “The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.” And why? “The law of his God is in his heart” (Psa 37:30-31). Second, in order thereto, it must be made our constant “meditation.” It is by daily pondering the words of Scripture that we obtain a better understanding of them, fix the same in our memories, and become more fully conformed to them in our souls. Third, that our meditation must be with a definite design and practical end: to “do,” to walk obediently.

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him” (2Ch 16:9). The word generally used for “perfect” (*tamim*) signifies sincere, but here a different one (*shalem*) is employed, meaning *whole*. A “whole heart” is in contrast with a “divided” one (Hos 10:2), which pertains to him who vainly seeks to serve two masters: the “double minded man” who “is unstable in all his ways” (Jam 1:8). Those with a whole heart love the Lord their God with all their mind, soul, and strength (Mar 12:30). They make Him their portion, find their delight in Him, constantly seek to please and glorify Him. Their affections are undivided, their aim in life is one, like Caleb, they “*wholly* followed the LORD” (Deu 1:36). And such receive distinctive favours from Him. The “eyes of the LORD” speaks of His knowledge and their running “to and fro throughout the whole earth” (2Ch 16:9) means that He governs this world in infinite wisdom. The reference is to His *providential* dealings: His eye directs His hand, and both are employed in His giving special supplies and support to those who make Him their All in all.

“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psa 1:3). *There* is what we intend by one's “enjoying God's *best*.” But to whom does the “he” refer? Why, to the “blessed man” described in the context. The one who has completely broken with the world: who “walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful” (Psa 1:1). Observe that the man whom God pronounces “blessed” is one that is careful about his *walk*. He refuses to follow the advice of the unregenerate. They will urge him to be broad-minded and warn him against being too strict, and press upon him the maxims of the world, but he heeds them not. He is very particular about his associates, knowing that those with whom he is intimate will either be a help or a hindrance to him spiritually. Evil

communications corrupt good manners, and therefore, he refuses to fraternize with the Christless. And so must you, young Christian, if you desire the smile of God to be upon you.

This opening psalm strikes the keynote of the whole psalter, and has for its theme the blessedness of the righteous—i.e. those who tread the paths of righteousness; and contrasts the portion and doom of the ungodly. And the first thing emphasized of the righteous one is that he has turned his back upon the world, for it is at *that* point practical godliness begins. There can be no walking with God, no real communing with Christ, no treading of “the way of peace” (Luk 1:79) until that word is heeded: “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2Co 6:17). Second, it is said of this blessed man, “But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psa 1:2). He is completely subject to God’s authority and makes His revealed will the rule of his life. Nor does he force himself to do so against his inclinations, for his *delight* is in the same. That is evidenced by its constantly engaging his thoughts, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mat 6:21). The mind is regulated by the affections: what the heart is most set upon most engages our thoughts—as gold does the covetous. And the one who conforms to the requirements of Psalm 1:1-2 will certainly experience the blessings of Psalm 1:3.

There is the less need for us to dwell upon other passages, for they speak for themselves. “The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing” (Psa 34:10). That is, those who put Him first (Mat 6:33), who seek Him wholeheartedly (Jer 29:13), who diligently inquire after His will and earnestly endeavour to please and glorify Him in all things, shall not lack any good—which is assured them as an encouragement for obedience. “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Psa 84:11). As the Puritan, Thomas Brooks (1608-1680) pointed out, “Now this choice, this large promise, is made over only to the upright; and therefore, as you would have any share in it, maintain your uprightness.” In his explanation of “them that walk uprightly,” John Gill (1697-1771) included, “Who have their conversation according to the Gospel of Christ, and walk in the sincerity of their hearts.” “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding [see margin] have all they that do his commandments” (Psa 111:10). Upon which J. Gill said, “Some understand it ‘good success’ or ‘prosperity,’” and added, “such usually have prosperity in soul and *body*, in things *temporal* and spiritual,” with which we fully concur.

“Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man” (Pro 3:3-4). Was it not so with Joseph in Egypt (Gen 39)? Was it not so with David in Saul’s household (1Sa 18)? Was it not so with Daniel and his fellows in Babylon? “For God giveth to a man that is *good* in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy” (Ecc 2:26): the phrase “a man that is good in his sight” is rendered “whoso pleaseth God” in Ecclesiastes 7:26. The passages which teach that God deals with men in this life according to their conduct are too many to cite, and the marvel is that the minds of so few professing Christians of this age are really affected by them. Take that well-known word, which has been illustrated all through history, “I will bless them that bless thee [Abram], and curse him that curseth thee” (Gen 12:3), which so far from being exceptional, only exemplifies the principle we are seeking to demonstrate. Take again, “Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth” (Psa 41:1-2).

Consider now some concrete cases. “And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for *because* thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee...And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; *because* thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gen 22:15-18). What could possibly be plainer? So again God said to Isaac, “And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries...*Because* that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments,” etc. (Gen 26:4-5). “But my servant Caleb, *because* he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, *him* will I bring into the land” (Num 14:24). “Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto *him* [Phinehas] my covenant of peace: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; *because* he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel” (Num 25:12-13). “Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb...*because* that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel” (Jos 14:14).

Said David, “The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me” (2Sa 22:21). It seems strange that any one possessed of a spiritual

mind should be perplexed by these words, for if they be understood according to their original and obvious meaning, there is nothing in them to occasion any difficulty. Let them be read in the light of their context, and they are clear and simple. David was alluding to God's delivering of him from Goliath and Saul, and from others of his foes: what had been his conduct toward them? Had he committed any serious crimes such as warranted their hostility? Had he grievously wronged any of them? Had they justly or unjustly sought his life? Read the record of David's history, and it will be found that it contains not a hint that he coveted the throne or hated Saul. As a fact, he was entirely innocent of any evil designs against any of them who so sorely persecuted him. This is plain from one of his prayers to God, "Let not them that are mine enemies *wrongfully* rejoice over me: neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause" (Psa 35:19).

It was because David had neither given his enemies just reason for the persecution—and because so far from retaliating, he had borne them no malice—that he now enjoyed the testimony of a good conscience. His character has been grievously aspersed and many hideous things laid to his charge, but his conduct had been upright and conscientious to an uncommon degree. "By all his persecutions by Saul, he would not injure him or his party; nay, he employed every opportunity to serve the cause of Israel, though rewarded with envy, treachery, and ingratitude"—Thomas Scott (1747-1821). When we are maligned and opposed by men, it is inestimable consolation to have the assurance of our own heart unto our innocence and integrity; and therefore, we should spare no pains when passing through a season of such trial in exercising ourselves "to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Act 24:16). David, then, was not here giving vent to the boasting of a pharisaical spirit, but was avowing his innocence before the bar of *human* equity. One is not guilty of pride in knowing himself to be innocent, nor is he so when realizing that God is rewarding him in providence because of his integrity, for each is an evident matter of fact.

In saying, "The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness," David enunciated one of the principles operative in the divine government of the world. "Albeit that the dispensations of divine grace are to the fullest degree sovereign and irrespective of human merit, yet in the dealings of Providence, there is often discernible a rule of justice by which the injured are at length avenged, and the righteous ultimately delivered"—Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892). The statement evinces an intelligent grasp of the viewpoint from which David was writing, namely the governmental ways of God in time, and *not* the ground upon which He saves eternally. Those declarations of the psalmist had nothing whatever to do with his justification in the high courts of heaven, but concerned the guiltlessness of his conduct toward his enemies on earth, because of which God delivered him from them. It would indeed be most reprehensible for us to transfer such thoughts as are expressed in 2 Samuel 22:20-28, from the realm of providential government into the spirit and everlasting kingdom; for *there*, grace reigns not only supreme, but alone, in the distribution of divine favours. On the other hand, a godly man with a clear conscience must not deny his own consciousness and hypocritically make himself out to be worse than he is.

There are those who would dismiss by a wave of the hand what has been adduced before by the saying, All that is Old Testament teaching, what occurred under the dispensation of Law. But such an objection is utterly pointless, for the principles of the divine government are *the same* in every era; and therefore, the teaching of the New Testament on this subject is identical with that of the Old. For example: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Mat 5:7). That has nothing whatever to do with "salvation by works," for in those verses, Christ is describing the character of His true disciples. Here He tells us they are "merciful," and in consequence, "shall obtain mercy." It is not that God requires the unregenerate to be merciful in order to entitle them unto His saving mercy, but rather that the regenerate *are* merciful; and according as they act in their true character, so will God order His governmental ways and paternal discipline toward them—"with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Mat 7:2). On the one hand, "With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful" (Psa 18:25); on the other, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mat 6:15).

That both Christ and the Father act toward Christians in keeping with their conduct is clear from John 14:21, 23—such "manifestations" are withheld from those who fail to walk obediently. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Heb 6:10), which clearly implies that He would be unrighteous if He did not reward their benevolence. "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace,

and ensue it" (1Pe 3:10-11). "We have here an excellent prescription for a comfortable, happy life in this querulous, ill-natured world"—Matthew Henry (1662-1714). To those who follow that prescription, J. Gill said, "Such shall inherit the blessing both *here* and hereafter:" "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, *because* we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1Jo 3:22)! "*Be-cause* thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev 3:10).

