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STUDIES

IN THE

SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

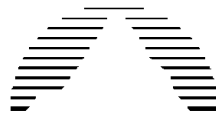
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Studies in the Scriptures appeared without interruption from 1922 to 1953, each issue including six to eight articles addressing a different topic in a series. While virtually unknown to the Christian world when he died, his writings continue to grow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

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DISCOURAGEMENT

We turn now to consider its *correctives*; and obviously, these must be a diligent and resolute opposition to those evils which work in us faint-heartedness. As we have previously intimated, most of our discouragements result from disappointments; and they, in turn, issue from unrealized expectations—the dashing of our hopes. Whether it be persons or things, when they yield not that which we look for, our souls are cast down; and the stronger our expectation, the keener our disappointment when it be not fulfilled. 1. Learn then, dear reader, to *hold all temporal things with a light hand*. Discipline thyself to do so. Set your affections upon things above and “*not on things on the earth*” (Col 3:2). There is nothing whatever under the sun which can satisfy the heart; and if we seek our gratification therein, then “vexation of spirit” (Ecc 1:14) will be our certain portion. God is a jealous God and will brook no rival; and if we make an idol of any object, He will break it to pieces or give us to discover it is made of clay. Be careful then not to make too much of the creature. The less we expect from others, even from fellow saints, the less shall we be disappointed and discouraged.

2. *Cultivate a life of faith*. A being unduly occupied with the creature is an evidence that faith is not in operation, for faith is ever engaged with things unseen. Israel’s despondency in the wilderness was due to their eyes being removed from the Lord. When the disciples became so faint-hearted and affrighted in face of their storm-tossed boat, Christ put His finger upon the seat of their trouble by saying, “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” (Mat 8:26). And how is a life of faith to be cultivated? By daily meditating on God’s Word, for *that* is its appointed food: “Nourished up in the words of faith” (1Ti 4:6). If that spiritual food be neglected, then faith will weaken and languish—more specifically, by laying hold of and making your own the divine promises. If you rest upon the promises of men, they will prove but a broken reed; but if we count upon God’s fulfilling His covenant engagements, we shall not be disappointed, for “faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1Th 5:24). “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isa 26:3).

3. *Cultivate a spirit of contentment*. That was where Israel failed: their discouragement sprang from dissatisfaction with the provision God made for them—lusting after the fleshpots of Egypt, they wearied of the manna. There can be no peace of mind or rest of soul while we are displeased with the portion God has allotted us. But how is our proneness unto such sinful dissatisfaction to be overcome? By diligently and daily seeking grace to heed that precept, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have” (Heb 13:5). It is the spirit of covetousness which makes real contentment impossible. They who are greedy cannot enjoy what God has already given them. O how we punish ourselves by our inordinate desires! It is not the possession of things which brings satisfaction, but the use we make of them and the pleasure we get out of them. Be thankful for God’s present mercies, and trustfully leave the morrow with Him. Count your many blessings and develop the habit of gratitude.

4. Let your *surrender to God’s sovereignty* be more complete and constant. Israel were peeved and dejected because they could not have their own way, and much of our discouragement springs from the same evil root. The corrective lies in yielding ourselves to the good pleasure of God. He apportions His favours as He pleases; and it is not for us to murmur at the same, but rather to say from the heart, “the will of the Lord be done” (Act 21:14). Shall the creature quarrel with the Creator, because He has bestowed this and that upon his fellows and withheld the same from him? To do so is horrible arrogance and presumption. But how am I to learn the holy art of meekly acquiescing unto divine providence? By living under an habitual sense of your own unworthiness in the sight of God; realizing daily that “It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed” (Lam 3:22). Nothing will so much render us submissive to God’s dispensations than the remembrance that He is dealing far better with us than we deserve.

5. “In *your patience* possess ye your souls” (Luk 21:19). Israel’s discouragement sprang from their failure at this very point. They became disheartened at the prospect of a circuitous course rather than a direct approach unto Canaan. Much of our discouragement is really a chafing over delays. What is the corrective? Self-discipline, the mortification of the spirit of restlessness and fretfulness. Cultivate “a meek and quiet spirit” (1Pe 3:4). But how is *that* to be achieved? By faith’s recognition that God has charge of our affairs, for that enables us to calmly endure whatever He appoints. “He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa 28:16). Israel failed, as we often do, because “*they waited not* for his counsel” (Psa 106:13).

Daily beg the Lord to place his cooling hand upon your fevered flesh. Only by waiting on God and for Him shall we maintain peace of mind, cheerfulness of heart, and steadfastness in the performance of duty.

Its cure. “And David was greatly distressed...but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God” (1Sa 30:6). The context is very solemn, showing that the best of men are but men at the best. Seeking help from the ungodly, David had placed himself under obligation to the king of Gath. He had pretended to be a friend of the Philistines and the enemy of his own people. Accordingly, Achish determined to make use of David and his men in the attack he had planned upon Israel. But the Lord turned against David the hearts of the other “lords of the Philistines” (1Sa 29:2-7), and Achish was obliged to dispense with their service, so that they were suffered to depart. Unconscious of the sad disappointment awaiting them, David and his men made for Ziklag, where he had left his wives and children. Arriving there on the third day, “behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep” (1Sa 30:3-4).

That was an experience calculated to overwhelm the stoutest soul. Arriving at the place where he had left his family and possessions, the city was a mass of smoking ruins, and those whom he loved were not there to welcome him. Broken-hearted over this calamity, further trouble now came upon David, for his men murmured and mutinied—“for the people spake of stoning him” (1Sa 30:6). They blamed their leader for having journeyed to Achish and leaving Ziklag defenceless, and for provoking the Amalekites (1Sa 27:8-9), who had thus avenged themselves. To add to his grief, David knew that his own folly had brought down upon him this sore chastisement of the Lord. “And David was greatly distressed.” He had cause to be so: never before had he been called upon to drink so bitter a cup. What, then, was his reaction? Did he yield to his sorrow and sink into abject despair? No, he “encouraged himself in the LORD his God.” *That* was where he found relief: that is the grand remedy for faint-heartedness!

David had sinned grievously, but conviction and contrition were now wrought in him. First, then, he took heart from the *mercy* of the Lord. God had promised His people that “if they shall confess their iniquity” and “be humbled” and “accept of the punishment of their iniquity,” He would “remember” His covenant with their fathers (Lev 26:40-42). It was on *that* ground he now acted: “David encouraged himself in the LORD *his* God”—i.e. his covenant God. “I acknowledge my sin unto thee...I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Psa 32:5). However low the saint may fall, if he humbles himself before God, and confesses his sins, he may encourage himself in the divine mercy, for “the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting” (Psa 103:17). Second, he encouraged himself in God’s *righteousness*: “I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me” (Psa 119:75)—and that took the sting out of it.

Third, David encouraged himself in God’s *goodness*. He reviewed God’s favours to him in the past, and recalled how often He had delivered him from trying situations. Fourth, he encouraged himself in God’s *omnipotency*, realizing that nothing is too hard for Him, no situation hopeless unto His almighty power, assured that He was able to overrule evil unto good, and to bring a clean thing out of an unclean. Fifth, he encouraged himself in God’s *promises*: he “*hoped*” in God (Psa 119:74), counting upon Him to undertake for him. When we are at our wit’s end, we should not be at faith’s end, but trust in God’s sufficiency. David had sadly departed from God, but now he turned unto Him in penitence and faith. Nor did the Lord fail him: read the sequel (1Sa 30:7-8) and behold how God enabled him to overtake the Amalekites and recover “all” (1Sa 30:18-19)! When discouraged, encourage thyself in the Lord your God.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

54. 2 Thessalonians 3:5, Part 2

A brief word upon the *properties* of this love. "It is not a speculative but practical love, not consisting in lofty airy strains of devotion too high for the common rate of us poor mortals. No; it is put upon a surer and infallible test—our obedience to God. Again, it consists not in a bold familiarity, but in a humble subjection and compliance with God's will: 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me' (Joh 14:21). God's love is a love of bounty, but ours is a love of duty; therefore, we are properly said to love God when we are careful to please Him and fearful to offend Him—'ye that love the LORD, hate evil' (Psa 97:10). When we are fearful of committing or omitting anything which may be a violation of His Law, a grief to His Spirit, or a dishonour to His name, then we are said to love God. Whatever lofty strains of devotion we may otherwise please ourselves with, here will our trial rest"—Thomas Manton (1620-1677). Nothing but an honest endeavour to walk before the Lord "unto all pleasing" (Col 1:10) must be made the touchstone or proof of the genuineness of our love.

True lovers of God are not those who speak of their "*dear* Father, " nor those who talk about their intimate communion with Him, nor those who can discourse most accurately of His attributes; but rather, they who are most conscientious and diligent in performing unto Him the duties which He has assigned them. Again, real love to God is a transcendent and pre-eminent one: He is loved above all others. "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" (Pro 23:26) is His peremptory demand. He requires the chief place in our affections and in our lives, so that the glorifying of Him is our supreme aim: otherwise we have no real love to Him. If His interests are subordinated unto ours, then God is not loved as God. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Mat 10:37). By this, too, we must test our alleged love to God. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Psa 73:25). Unless that really be the language of our hearts, we are deceived if we imagine ourselves to be lovers of God.

But love to God, however sincere and transcendent, is not all there is in the Christian's heart: there are also powerful corruptions which lust after most ungodly things, and compete for his affections. Hence his urgent need of crying, "*Unite* my heart to fear thy name" (Psa 86:11). Yet the very fact that he *is* constrained to so cry, that he is acutely conscious of the fickleness as well as the feebleness of his love, is sure evidence of his regeneration—for the natural man is a total stranger to any such painful exercises of soul. It is the same with the Christian's love as it is with his faith. Not until a divinely begotten faith be born within are we in the least conscious of the presence and workings of unbelief: only as we become aware of the latter do we say, "*with tears*, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mar 9:24). So too "the love of God" has to be "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" (Rom 5:5) before we can realize how disloyal to Him our affections really are. And as faith is dependent upon its Author for its continuance and growth, so love is dependent upon its Giver for its health and activities.

That brings us to consider more closely this petition: "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God" (2Th 3:5). The reference is not unto the furnishing of counsels for our guidance, but to the bending and setting straight of what is crooked and awry. "After grace *is* received, our hearts are apt to wander and return to their old bent and bias again; therefore, the apostle prays that God would form and set their hearts straight, that they may be more indeclinably fixed toward God"—T. Manton. Alas, how many of God's dear children have reason to mourn the abating of this love! Though the grace itself can never be lost, yet the freshness and fervour of it may. It is our sin and misery that we so often set our affections upon wrong objects. Not only will an immoderate pursuit of the things of this world chill our love, but undue familiarity, and fellowship with unbelievers and empty professors will do so. Unto how many of His people has Christ reason to complain today, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left [not 'lost'] thy first love" (Rev 2:4)—that affection for Me which marked thee in the early days of thy Christian life: "The love of thine espousals" (Jer 2:2)!

There are many things which seek to draw our hearts another way. Since the devil hates God, it is one of his chief employs to draw off from Him the hearts of His people, both by aspersing his character and by means of counteractions. He gained the ear of Eve by causing her to doubt God's goodness, and when His providences cross our wills and painful trials become our portion, he seeks to make us question His loving-kindness. Or, he endeavours to seduce the soul by material things, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira.

Therefore are we bidden, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith" (1Pe 5:8-9) and not tamely yield to him. Our own lusts tempt, seek to draw away from God, and entice us (Jam 1:14); and therefore are we bidden to "Mortify therefore [our] members which are upon the earth" (Col 3:5). The world offers many baits to the same end and purpose; and therefore are we commanded, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1Jo 2:15). An undue attachment unto any of the things of time and sense chill our affections for God—how many of the saints have proved this to their sorrow!

There is, then, a real and pressing need that we should earnestly supplicate the Lord the Spirit to "direct [our] hearts into the love of God." That He would strengthen us with His might in the inner man, and thereby enable us to sternly resist every temptation to become attached to any earthly idol. That He will more and more enlighten our understandings to perceive the utter vanity of all earthly enjoyments and wean our fickle hearts from them. That He will graciously occupy us daily with the ineffable perfections of God and grant us such soul-ravishing views of Him as will deaden us to the empty baubles of this world. That He will engage our minds more frequently and effectually with the wondrous love of God unto us and thereby excite ours to Him. That He will so enthrall us with His electing grace, His having singled us out to be the objects of His favour, the ones upon whom He set His heart from all eternity, that we shall be constrained to love Him with all our souls, minds, and strength. That He will so melt us by giving His dear Son for us and to us that we shall be wholly devoted to Him, delight ourselves in Him, seek to please and glorify Him in all things.

If we had a clearer concept of what love to God consists in, we should be far more conscious of the defects of our love. It is a powerful inclination and earnest bent of the heart toward God as our chief good and last end: that is, He is realized to be One who is infinitely worthy and desirable, so that all our efforts are directed to the enjoyment of and the pleasing of Him. If that really be the dominant passion in our souls, then by it, we shall decide what is to be avoided and what is to be employed as fit means to the realization thereof. Contrariwise, we shall be conscious that not only are all sins contrary to the making of God's glory our supreme end or design, but that all foolish and trifling actions are inconsistent therewith. Measuring our lives by such a standard, how much do we live unto self, and how little unto God! How many of our desires, schemes, words, and actions have no real respect unto God at all! It is not sufficient that we surrendered our hearts at conversion: we need to beg Him daily to reclaim them from their vain wanderings and bind them afresh to Himself; that He will maintain and increase our love to Him.

Not only are there innumerable objects in this scene to draw away our unstable hearts from God, but the cares of this life, and the slavish fears to which we so often give place, hinder our delight in Him. Such cares oppress and such fears prevent comfortable communion with God in the means of grace. When we are worried over our present lot or harassed about supplies for the future, the heart is straitened and the spirit of praise is chilled. When we are occupied more with our sins than we are with Christ, more with our corruptions than with His blood, more with our failures than God's covenant faithfulness, doubts will assail, assurance will be lost, and rejoicing in God becomes a thing of the past. In such a case, the means of grace may still be used and duties performed, but there is no joy in the one or thankful gratitude behind the other: it is more the service of a slave than of a son. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment" (1Jo 4:18). But if our hearts be directed into the love of God, then our obedience to Him will be a delight, and we shall serve Him by inclination and not compulsion.

When the means of grace become irksome and tedious to us and the works of obedience distasteful and burdensome, it is a sure sign that our love to God has grievously declined. "All goes on easily, freely, acceptably, when love is at the bottom. Seven years to Jacob seemed as a few days for the love he had to Rachel (Gen 29:20); and so love sweetens obedience"—T. Manton. Thus it was with Christ Himself: love to His Father, love to His people, constrained all that He did. "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup," and there did He add, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places." "I have set the LORD always before me... Therefore my heart is glad" (Psa 16:5-9). But when we yield to the promptings of self-love or to our carnal lusts, the light of God's countenance becomes eclipsed, our affections gradually cool off, and His ways are no longer our delight. The profits and pleasures of this world attract us, and we have disinclination to the performance of spiritual duties. If we take our fill of carnal delights, the Spirit is grieved, and He ceases to take of the things of Christ and of the Father and show them unto us.

"There needs much to be done about our love *after* it is planted in the soul: we need to get it rooted, to get it increased, to get it continually excited and kept in act and exercise" (T. Manton)—and all of that is

our bounden duty and Christian responsibility. We are as equally obligated to care for our spiritual life as for our natural, yea, far more so, as the latter exceeds in value and importance the former; to look after the health and well-being of our souls as of our bodies. God has commanded us to "Keep thy heart with all diligence" (Pro 4:23); and still more expressly, "Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21), which means preserve in a healthy state your love to God—that principle of love which has been shed abroad in our hearts. If it be asked, Why is *that* termed "the love of God"?—the answer is, Because God is its Author, because He is its Object, because He is its Perfecter. To keep himself in the love of God is the great work committed to the Christian, for if that be properly attended unto, everything else will be well with him. It must be his daily care to see to it that that precious but tender plant be nourished, increased, and made manifest by its fruits.

Once more, we must remind ourselves of the clear implication in all the petitions of the apostles' prayers: namely, that the things asked for, it is our responsibility to produce, yet that we can only do so properly by divine enablement. Asking God to direct our hearts into His love does not release us from our obligations in connection therewith, but is a begging Him to quicken us in the discharge of the same. As T. Manton pointed out, our first concern must be to see to it that our love to God be firmly established—"rooted and grounded in love" (Eph 3:17). We must not be contented with occasional good moods and ecstatic feelings, nor with meltings under a sermon, but diligently seek after and pray for solid, steady, and durable affection for God. And how is that to be accomplished? By getting the heart fixed in *His* love to you, for the firmer be your assurance of that, the more will your love to Him be inflamed; as the more we walk in the genial rays of the sun, the warmer become our bodies. Again, daily observe God's blessings—both spiritual and temporal—for a renewed realization of His goodness, will renew your gratitude unto Him.

It is at this point we take in or combine the *passive* sense of these words, "the love of God," for sure it is that unless we bask often in the sunshine of God's love to us, ours to Him will be neither fervent nor fruitful. Certainly nothing is so invigorating to our love and more calculated to make us sensible of how infinitely worthy God is of our love than the contemplation of His to us. As Paul prayed for the Ephesians that they might be "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph 3:17)—their love firmly fixed and indeclinably settled upon God, so he requested for the Philippian saints that their "love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment" (Phi 1:9), which could only be through a fuller and more affecting apprehension of God's love unto them. For this it is alike our duty and privilege to strive and pray: that we may increasingly cleave unto God as our absolute good, and rest in Him as our supreme delight. Love will not remain static: if it does not grow and increase, it will inevitably weaken and diminish. Nothing is more conducive to the decline and decay of our love than to be content with and rest satisfied in the present measure or degree of it.

If our affections unto God are to be preserved fresh and warm, then we must make conscience of everything which has a tendency to chill the same and take the heart off from Him. The allowance of any known sin, conformity to the spirit and ways of the world, making too much of the creature, giving way to unbelief, and slackness in using the appointed means of grace are some of the evils which must be avoided if God is to have His proper place in our hearts. Every day that passes, the Christian should be more and more out of love with sin, with self, with the world, and more in love with God. Again, we need to watch closely against any abatement in our love: that is obviously one part of the duty inculcated in "Keep thy heart with all diligence" (Pro 4:23). If we fail to do so, if we become careless and indifferent to the measure and strength of our love, then it will rapidly deteriorate. Backsliding and the open dishonouring of the Lord is only prevented by observing closely the first decline of our love: the longer that be unattended to—like the neglect of a bodily ailment—the more serious our case becomes. Love *has* certainly cooled when we are less diligent in seeking to please God and are less careful in striving against sin.

Not only do we need to get our love firmly rooted and steadily increased, but "It also needs to be continually excited and kept in act and exercise. All religion is in effect but love. Faith is a thankful acceptance of Christ, and thankfulness is an expression of love. Repentance is but mourning love: as she wept much to whom much was forgiven (Luk 7:47). Diligence in the holy life is but seeking love; by obedience is pleasing love; self-denial is the mortification of inordinate self-love; sobriety is a retrenching of our carnal love. If love be not acted and kept at work, carnal love will prevail. The soul of man cannot be idle, especially our affections cannot: either they are carried out to God, or they leak out to worldly things. When our love ceaseth, yet concupiscence ceaseth not, and the love of the world will soon grow superior in the soul; for

the neglected principle languisheth, while the other principle gets strength...The constraining influence of love is that which keeps us from living to ourselves, and this makes us diligent. Labour and love are often coupled in the Scripture: 'your work of faith, and labour of love' (1Th 1:3), and 'God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name' (Heb 6:10)"—T. Manton.

Then how earnestly we should pray for the succouring, strengthening, and stimulating of our love! "The Spirit is given us for this end: to stir up love to God. 'The water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life' (Joh 4:14). It is not in the heart a dead pool, but a living spring. The same is intimated in 'He that believeth on me...out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit...)' (Joh 7:38-39). The Word is appointed to this end: to represent God amiable to us both for the goodness in Him and the goodness proceeding from Him, especially in our redemption by Christ; and also for those rich preparations of grace He hath made for us in another world, to blow up this holy fire. All the dainties that are set before us in the Lord's Supper do all taste and savour of love. Our meat is seasoned with love, and our drink flows out of the winepress of love. All the providences of God tend to this end: that we may love God—all His mercies are as new fuel to keep in this fire. 'I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications' (Psa 116:1). All the sharp corrections God sends are to recover our love to Him"—T. Manton.

Let us remember that earnest prayer to God for the strengthening of love does not absolve us from a diligent use of means. *Daily meditation upon* the nature and evidences of God's love to us is the most effectual way of feeding and increasing ours to Him. Ponder, Christian reader, the freeness and sovereignty of His love. That He set not His heart on you because of any loveliness of thine, for it antedated your existence, and therefore proceeded from naught but His good will. Consider its discrimination: that it passed by multitudes of your fellows, and fixed itself on thee: "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom 9:13). Think of its immutability: it is as invariable as His nature: "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (Joh 13:1). That love proceeds from One "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jam 1:17). God's love to thee is everlasting and therefore nothing can or shall ever separate thee from it. Revel in its unparalleled degree: "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph 2:4-5). Matchless, amazing love! "God is love," and therefore His love is infinite, incomprehensible, adorable. Feed on it now, as it shall be thine endless delight in heaven.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

34. Jericho, Part 4

“And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD. And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD” (Jos 6:6-7). Lack of space prevented the completion of our remarks upon these two verses in our last. There we dwelt at length upon the former one, and sought to show that Israel's priests, on this occasion, shadowed forth the ministers of the Gospel, and how that the appointed (spiritual) weapons of their warfare are made “mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds” (2Co 10:4). Care needs to be taken against carnalizing that expression and interpreting it in a manner unwarranted by the Analogy of Faith. It is not the Gospel converting people *en masse* (in a body)—“Glasgow for Christ” or “Chicago for Christ,” as Arminian slogans express it—but the delivering of *individual* souls from that powerful “refuge of lies” in which the natural man is entrenched. The meaning of 2 Corinthians 10:4 is explained in the next verse:

“Casting down imaginations [or ‘reasonings’], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2Co 10:5). The heart of the natural man is stoutly opposed to God, being filled with enmity against Him. It is fortified by the love of sin against every appeal unto holiness. The unregenerate are so inured and hardened by habit and practice that the Holy Spirit declares, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil” (Jer 13:23). Their wills are enslaved, so that they “will not come to [Christ]” (Joh 5:40). They are steeled against both the terrors of the Law and the attractions of the Gospel. Furthermore, they are the captives of the devil (Luk 11:21; 2Ti 2:26), and are unable to emancipate themselves. Naught but a miracle of grace can free them; and the means used by the Spirit in accomplishing that miracle is the preached Word, effectually applied to the heart by His power. Then is the proud rebel humbled into the dust before God, delivered from the dominion of sin and Satan, transformed into a loving and loyal subject of Christ.

In the seventh verse of Joshua 6, instructions were given to the people. On this occasion, they were to accompany the priests! When crossing the Jordan, the priests went “before the people” (Jos 3:6), and stood alone “in the midst of Jordan” until all “the people hastened and passed over” (Jos 4:10). *There* they foreshadowed our great High Priest, who “by himself” opened a way through death for His people (see July 1947 article). But *here* the priests typified the servants of Christ, as engaged on their evangelistic labours. Consequently, the hosts of Israel must now *accompany them*. What a word is that for the rank and file of the people of God today! Only too often has the minister of the Gospel to go forth alone. He does not receive that moral and spiritual support to which he is entitled, and which he so much needs. No wonder so many faithful preachers are discouraged when the prayer-meetings are so thinly attended, and when so few are holding up their hands at the Throne of Grace! O that it may please God to use this paragraph in stirring up professing Christians to be more definite and fervent in praying for all godly ministers. Only a preacher knows what difference it makes to have the assurance that the hearts of his people are *with* him!

“And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the LORD, and blew with the trumpets: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them” (Jos 6:8). Observe, first, how precise is the *time-mark* here of the priests' action: they did not move forward until the people had taken their allotted position according to the instructions they had received from their leader. There was to be *conjoint* action: the priests accompanied by the people—exemplifying what we have said in the above paragraph. Second, since there is nothing meaningless or superfluous in Holy Writ, note how the Spirit has again emphasized the rude nature of the priests' “trumpets.” No less than five times in this chapter are we told that those employed on this occasion were made of “rams' horns”—a cruder or meaner material could scarcely be imagined. They were in designed and striking contrast with the “trumpets of silver” which were normally used in the camp of Israel (Num 10:1-10). It was God pouring contempt on *the means used*—those which were despicable in the eyes of men—that Israel's pride might be stained and Himself glorified, for His strength is ever made perfect through weakness (2Co 12:9).

Bearing in mind that Israel's priests here foreshadowed the true servants of Christ, their using trumpets of rams' horns is deeply significant, albeit, very distasteful to that pride of heart which glorifies in the flesh.

It not only emphasized the feebleness of the means used by God in accomplishing His purpose of grace—namely, that it hath pleased Him “by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1Co 1:21)—but also indicated the *type of men* God deigns to employ as His mouthpieces. When our Lord chose the men who were to be His apostles and ambassadors, He selected not those who occupied eminent stations in the world, nor those who had passed through the schools of learning, but unlettered fishermen and a despised tax-gatherer—that was the antitype of “the rams’ horns” in contrast with “the trumpets of silver”—men of lowly origin, despised by those who are great and wise in their own eyes! To effect the mightiest of all works, God employs what is to the mind of the natural man the most inadequate means, in order that *His* wisdom and power may be the more apparent. The Gospel does not depend for its success on human wisdom—a fact lost sight of by the churches today.

That same flesh-withering truth is clearly expressed in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, though few have perceived it. The immediate design of the apostle in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2 was to show that the great and grand change wrought in the hearts of believers is not to be ascribed to any wisdom or power possessed by the preacher (who is but a channel thorough which God condescends to work), but is to be attributed wholly to the divine grace in making his message effectual. The Corinthians were glorying in *human instruments*, setting up one against another (see 1Co 1:12); and the apostle shows how utterly baseless and foolish was such glorying. He pointed out that it was not the learning of Paul, nor the eloquence of Apollos which could convert a soul, but that *God* must, from beginning to end, accomplish the same. This he demonstrates by describing the *type of instruments* which He makes to be vehicles of blessing unto sinners. “For ye see your calling, brethren [i.e. ye perceive from your own calling out of darkness into God’s marvellous light], how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble” (1Co 1:26)—“are employed” (by God) is a far better and more pertinent supplement than “are called.”

“But God hath chosen [for His servants] the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not [non-entities, nobodies], to bring to nought things that are.” Thus, 1 Corinthians 1:26-28 are to be connected with the whole context, and not simply with verses 24-25. In them, we behold again the “trumpets of rams’ horns”—God employing instruments which appear utterly inadequate to carnal reason. *That interpretation* is clearly confirmed by “that no flesh should glory in his presence” (1Co 1:29), for the Corinthians were not glorying in themselves, but in their *ministers* (1Co 1:12; 3:4)! It is clinched by the next words: “But of *him* [and not by Paul, or Apollos, or any worm of the earth] are ye in Christ Jesus” (1Co 1:30). Thus, Paul was showing that it was not through learned philosophers nor highly trained rabbins that the Corinthians had heard the Gospel of their salvation, but rather through those whom both the one and the other regarded with contempt. If further corroboration be needed, verse 31 supplies it!

God is jealous of His honour and will not share it with another. It pleases Him, as a general rule, to select for His instruments those who have no glittering accomplishments: rather, plain, simple, homely men. It is not silver-tongued orators through whom He most shows forth His praises, but by those who have nothing more, naturally, to commend them unto their hearers than that which resembles the “rams’ horns”! His most eminent servants have not been those of royal blood, noble birth, or high station, but taken from the lower walks of life. Martin Luther (1483-1546), the principal agent used by God in the mighty Reformation, was the son of a miner. John Bunyan (1620-1677) was but a tinker, yet his book *Pilgrim’s Progress* has been translated into more languages, had a much wider circulation, and been used in blessing to a far greater number of souls than all the writings put together of the learned John Owen (1616-1683) and Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680)! Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) had neither university nor college training, nor was he a graduate of any seminary! However, after God’s call to the ministry, each of them studied hard and long to improve himself! In proportion as the churches have made an idol of education and theological learning in their ministers has their spirituality waned: that is a *fact*, however unpalatable it may be.

There is a third thing in Joshua 6:8 which claims our notice, namely, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams’ horns “passed on before the LORD.” This is generally understood to mean that they preceded the ark, but that can scarcely be its significance, unless we are ready to conclude there is needless tautology here, for the same verse ends by declaring, “and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them.” What then is imported by they “passed on before the LORD”? It is very much more than a bare historical detail, which has no relation unto us today—alas, that so few search for the present application *to themselves* of all in the Bible. There is that here which the servants of Christ need to observe and

take to heart: something of vital importance and blessedness. That brief statement reveals to us the inward condition of the priests. It expressed their attitude unto Jehovah, and the Spirit of Truth delighted to record the same. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1Sa 16:7); and the hearts of Israel's priests were engaged with Him, and they comported themselves accordingly. By carefully comparing Scripture with Scripture, we may ascertain the meaning of this clause.

In Genesis 5:24, we are told that "Enoch walked *with* God." In 1 Samuel 2:21, that "the child Samuel grew *before* the LORD." In Deuteronomy 13:4, that Israel were bidden to "walk *after* the LORD [their] God." While in Colossians 2:6, Christians are exhorted, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye *in* him." In those four prepositions, we have an outline of the whole privilege and duty of the saint in his relation to God. To "walk with God" is only possible unto one who has been reconciled to Him, for "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amo 3:3). Thus, it is expressive of holy *communion* with God. To go or walk "before the LORD" is to conduct ourselves in the realization that all our actions are being scrutinized by Him: "For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings" (Pro 5:21). Thus it is expressive of holy *fear*. To walk "after the LORD" is to live in complete subjection to His revealed will: "And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul" (2Ch 34:31). There it is expressive of unreserved *obedience*. To "walk in Christ" is expressive of *union*, like a branch in the vine, and signifies to live by His enablement, strengthened by Him, "rooted and built up in him" as Colossians 2:7 explains it.

But the one passage which more expressly explains these words of the priests passing on "*before* the LORD" is Genesis 17:1, when He said unto Abraham, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." That was said, first, by way of *rebuke*, right after his impatient and carnal conduct with Hagar. Second, that was said for his instruction and encouragement: to show him that there was no occasion for taking matters into his own hands. The Lord now made known Himself to Abraham as "the Almighty"—*El Shaddai*—the fully competent One, able to supply all his need, without the patriarch resorting to any fleshly devices. In view of which Abraham was bidden to "walk before me, and be thou perfect": that is, count upon My infinite resources. Thus, when it is said that Israel's priests "passed on before the LORD," the meaning is that they acted in complete *dependence* upon God's all-sufficiency, confidently counting upon His undertaking for them. In the light of Proverbs 5:21, it signifies, too, that they moved forward in God's *fear*, conscious that his eye was upon them, and therefore, they dared not depart from the orders which he had given them.

Let every preacher who reads this article endeavour to recognize that *this*, too, has been recorded for *his* learning, his guidance, his encouragement. Let him seek to realize, first, that he is beneath the all-seeing eye of his Master: that his actions are "before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings" (Pro 5:21). Let him bear that in mind while he is out of the pulpit: that the One to whom he must yet render an account of his stewardship takes stock whether he is an idler and slacker, or one who faithfully devotes his time to prayer and *study*, and not only to "sermon preparation." And, second, let him view by faith the all-sufficiency of the One before whom he walks, refusing to depart from His instructions, confidently counting upon Him fulfilling His purpose by and through him. Let him constantly call to mind that He is none other than "the Almighty," the self-sufficient Jehovah. No other provider, no other protector is needed. It was because Abraham forgot *that* that he stooped to fleshly devices; and when *we* forget it, we are very apt to depart from His rule and resort to carnal methods. It is distrust of God which lies behind the fleshly and worldly devices now so commonly employed in the churches.

"And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rereward came after the ark, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets" (Jos 6:9). Here, our attention is directed away from the priests unto the remainder of the children of Israel, and they are divided into two companies: those who went before, and those who followed behind the ark of the covenant. The ones taking the lead consisted of the fighting force, who were to advance when the walls of Jericho fell down and slay those within the city. This arrangement originated not in the mind of Joshua, for at no point was he required to lean unto his own understanding. The Lord had previously given orders through Moses that the fighting men of the tribes of Reuben and Gad should 'go armed before the LORD to war...until he hath driven out his enemies from before him' (Nu 32:20-21). It was in obedience thereto that Joshua here acted. As the margin more correctly renders, it was the "gathering host" of Israel who made up the rearward. In that twofold division,

we may find a hint that only a few of the Lord's people are possessed of a courageous spirit and prepared to show a bold front to the enemy.

ENJOYING GOD'S BEST

Part 6

Many other passages might be quoted, both from Old and New Testaments, which illustrate the principle and fact which we have demonstrated in these articles, wherein we have shown that if we conduct ourselves contrary to the revealed will of God, we shall certainly suffer for it both in soul and in body; that if we follow a course of self-pleasing, we shall deprive ourselves of those spiritual and temporal blessings which the Word of God promises to those whose lives are ordered by its precepts. The teaching of Holy Writ is too clear to admit of any doubts, that it makes a very real and marked difference whether a Christian's ways please or displease the righteous Ruler of this world: the difference of whether God be for him or against him—not in the absolute sense, but in His governmental and providential dealings. Sufficient should have been adduced to convince any candid mind that God acts towards His saints today on precisely the same basis as He did with them under the old economy, that His ways with them are regulated by the same principles now as then. This supplies a solution to many a problem and explains not a little in God's dealings with us—as it furnishes the key to Jacob's chequered life, and shows why the chastening rod of God fell so heavily upon David and his family.

Nevertheless, much of what has been represented in the previous articles is no doubt new and strange to many, if not to most of our readers. Alas, that it should be so, for what can be of greater practical importance than for the Christian to be instructed in how to please God and have his providential smile upon his life? What is more needed today than to warn him against the contrary, specifying what will forfeit the same; and to make known the way of recovery to one who *has* missed God's best? How very much better for preachers to devote themselves unto *such* subjects, rather than culling sensational items from the newspapers or the radio to "illustrate" their vain speculations upon Prophecy. So, too, how much more profitable than for them to deliver abstract disquisitions upon what are termed "the doctrines of grace," or uttering contentious declamations against those who repudiate the same. The *practical* side of the truth is sadly neglected today; and in consequence, not only are many of God's dear children living far below their privileges, but they have never been taught what those privileges are, nor what is required in order for them to enjoy the same in this life.

Since the ground we have been covering is so unfamiliar to many, we felt it would not be satisfactory for us to close where we left off in our last article: that though what we have advanced is so clearly and fully based upon and confirmed by the teaching of God's Word, yet probably various questions have arisen in the minds of different readers to which they would welcome an answer, difficulties raised in their thoughts which they would like to have removed. It is only right that we should squarely face the principal objections which are likely to be made against what we have said. Yet, let it be pointed out, first, that no objection brought against anything which is clearly established from the Word can possibly invalidate it, for Scripture never contradicts itself. And second, that our inability to furnish a satisfactory solution is no proof that our teaching is erroneous—a child can ask questions which no adult can answer. In all the ways and works of God there is, to us, an element of *mystery*: necessarily so, for the finite cannot comprehend the infinite. The wisest among God's saints and servants now "see through a glass, darkly" and know but "in part" (1Co 13:12); and therefore, it is their wisdom to pray daily, "that which I see not teach thou me" (Job 34:32).

Yet, while acknowledging that there *is* an element of mystery, profound and impenetrable, that is far from saying that God has left His people in darkness; or that they have neither the capacity nor the means of knowing scarcely anything about the principles which regulate the Most High in His dealings with the children of men. If, on the one hand, it be true that His judgments "are a great deep" (Psa 36:6), that "thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known" (Psa 77:19) to carnal reason; on the other hand, we are told, "he discovereth deep things out of darkness" (Job 12:22) and "he *revealeth* the deep and secret things" (Dan 2:22). While it be true that God's judgments are unsearchable and His ways "past finding out!" (Rom 11:33) by human wisdom; yet it is also true, blessedly true, that "in thy light shall we see light" (Psa 36:9) that "he *made known* his ways unto Moses" (Psa 103:7). In His Word, the Lord has been pleased to make known unto us not a little, and it is our privilege and duty to thankfully receive *all* the light which God has therein vouchsafed us; to attempt to go beyond it, to enter into speculation, is not only useless, but impious.

1. How is it possible for any person to “miss God’s best,” since He has foreordained everything that comes to pass (Rom 11:36), and therefore, has eternally appointed the precise lot and portion of each individual? That, we think, is a fair and frank way of stating the principal objection which Calvinists are likely to make. Our first reply is, Such an objection is quite beside the point, for in these articles, we are not discussing any aspect of God’s sovereignty, but rather are treating of that which concerns human responsibility. If the rejoinder be made, But human responsibility must not be allowed to crowd out the essential and basic fact of God’s sovereignty, that is readily granted; nor, on the other hand, must our adherence to God’s sovereignty be suffered to neutralize or render nugatory the important truth of man’s responsibility. One part of the truth must never be used to nullify another part of it: both Romans 11:36 and Galatians 6:7 must be given their due places. When we attempt to *philosophize* about God’s sovereignty and human accountability, we are out of our depth. They are to be received by faith, and not reasoned about. Each of them is plainly taught and enforced in the Scriptures, and both must be held fast by us, whether or no we perceive their “consistency.”

Nothing is easier than to raise difficulties and objections. If some of the “hypers” prefer reasoning to the actings of faith, let us meet them on their own ground for a moment and give them some questions to exercise their minds upon. “Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?” (1Sa 23:12). It is unmistakably evident from the sequel that God had ordained that David should escape; yet He answered, “They *will* deliver thee up.” Query: How could they, since God had decreed otherwise! “And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers; and they buried him in Samaria: and Joash his son reigned in his stead. “Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; *then* hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice” (2Ki 13:9,19). Query: what possible difference to the issue could be made by the number of times the king smote upon the ground? If God had predestinated that Syria should be “consumed,” could any failure in the faith of Joash prevent or even modify it? On the other hand, do not those words of Elisha plainly signify that the extent to which Israel would vanquish Syria turned upon the measure of the king’s appropriation of the promise, “for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them” (2Ki 13:17)? Which horn of the dilemma does the reasoner prefer?

Again, when the wicked Haman induced Ahasuerus to seal the decree written in his name, that all the Jews scattered abroad throughout his kingdom should be slain on a certain day, Mordecai was grief-stricken by the terrible news. Esther sent one of the royal chamberlains to ascertain the cause of his sorrow. Whereupon her uncle handed the messenger a copy of the decree to show unto Esther, with the charge that “she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him” (Est 4:8). Esther sent back the messenger to Mordecai to say, “Whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days” (Est 4:11). To which Mordecai replied, “If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed” (Est 4:14). Query: if God had eternally purposed that the Jews should be delivered through the intervention of Esther, how could it possibly come “from *another* place” and she and her family be destroyed!

If our minds be dominated by and our outlook upon life narrowed down to a consideration of the inexorableness of the divine determinations, then a spirit of irresponsibility will necessarily ensue. It is with the revealed and not with the secret will of God we need to be concerned. “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed [in His Word] belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may *do* all the words of this law” (Deu 29:29). It is the divine precepts and promises which are to engage our attention. “According to your faith be it unto you” (Mat 9:29) said Christ, *not* “according unto the divine decrees.” Are we intimating that faith can set aside the divine decrees or obtain something superior to them? Certainly not: instead, we are pointing out *where* the great Teacher placed *His* emphasis. We must not resolve all of God’s dealings with us into bare sovereignty: to do so is to lose sight of His righteousness. The unbalanced teaching of hyper-Calvinism has produced a most dangerous lethargy—unperceived by them, but apparent to “lookers on.” Those who dwell unduly upon the divine decrees are in peril of lapsing into the paralysis of fatalism. There were times when even Mr. J. C. Philpot (1802-1869) felt that, as the following quotations from his writings will show:

“However sovereign the dispensations of God are, no one who fears His great name should so shelter himself under divine sovereignty as to remove all blame from himself. When the Lord asks, ‘Hast thou not

procured this unto thyself?' (Jer 2:17) the soul must needs reply, Yea, Lord, I surely have. This is a narrow line, but one which everyone's experience, where the conscience is tender, will surely ratify. Though we can do nothing to comfort our own souls, to speak peace to our own conscience, to bring the love of God into our hearts, to apply the balm of Gilead to bleeding wounds, and summon the great Physician to our bedside, we *may* do many things to *repel* this moment what we should seem to invite the next... We cannot make ourselves fruitful in every good word and work, but we may by disobedience and self-indulgence bring leanness into our souls, barrenness into our frames, deadness into our hearts, and in the end, much guilt upon our consciences" (Sermon on Jer 8:22). The same writer when exposing the error of non-chastisement said, "It nullifies the eternal distinction between good and evil, and makes it a matter of little real moment whether a believer walk in obedience or disobedience." Then let those who have succeeded him devote more of the endeavours into pressing God's precepts upon His people, and stressing the necessity, importance, and value of an obedient walk; and in faithfully showing the serious losses incurred by disobedience.

2. To affirm that our having God's blessing upon us is the consequence of the Christian's pleasing of Him, may appear unto some as derogatory unto Christ, as militating against His merits. They will ask, Does not the believer owe every blessing to the *alone* worthiness of his Surety? Answer: that is to confound things which differ. We must distinguish between God's sovereign will as the originating cause, the work of Christ as the meritorious cause, the operation and application of the Spirit as the efficient cause, and the repentance, faith, and obedience of the Christian as the instrumental cause. Keep each of those in its order and place, and there will be no confusion. If that be too abstruse, let us put it this way. Is not Christ most glorified by them when His redeemed follow the example which He has left them and walk as He also walked (1Jo 2:6)? If so, will not the governmental smile of God be upon such? Conversely, would God be honouring His beloved Son if His providences were favourable unto those who act in self-will, rather than in subjection to their Master? Further, if God's *present* rewarding of our obedience impugn the merits of Christ, then equally so will the *future* rewarding He has promised, for neither time nor place can make any difference in the essential nature of things.

It is so easy for us to mar the fair proportions of truth and destroy its perfect symmetry. In our zeal, there is ever the tendency to take on aspect of truth and press it so far as to cancel out another. Not only so in causing God's sovereignty to oust human responsibility, but to make the merits of Christ bar God from exercising His perfections in the present government of this world. Some have gone so far as to blankly deny that God ever uses the rod upon His children, arguing that Christ bore and took away all their sins, and therefore, God could not chasten them for their transgressions without sullying the sufficiency of His Son's atonement, thereby repudiating Psalm 89:30-32 and Hebrews 12:5-11. Here too we must distinguish between things that differ. It is important for us to see that while the penal and eternal consequences of the believer's sins have been remitted by God, because atoned for by Christ, yet the disciplinary and temporal effects thereof are not cancelled—otherwise, he would never be sick or die. God never chastens His people penally or vindictively, but in love, in righteousness, in mercy, according to the principles of His government: rewarding them for their obedience, chastening for their disobedience, and thereby and therein Christ is honoured and not dishonoured.

3. Since all God's actings unto His people proceed from His uncaused, amazing, and super-abounding *grace*, how can it be maintained that He regulates His dealings with them according to *their conduct*? Easily, for there is nothing incompatible between the two things: they are complementary and not contradictory. As all the perfections of God are not to be swallowed up in His sovereignty, neither are they all to be merged into His grace. God is holy as well as benignant, and His favours are never bestowed in disregard of His purity, divine grace never sets aside the requirements of divine righteousness. When one has been truly saved by grace, he is taught to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; and if he fails to do so, then the rod of God falls upon him. David was as truly saved by grace through faith, apart from any good works, as was the apostle Paul; but he was also required to be "holy in all manner of conversation" (1Pe 1:15) as are the New Testament saints; and when he failed to be so, severe chastening was his portion. And it was *grace*, though holy and righteous grace, which dealt thus with him, that he "should not be condemned with the world" (1Co 11:32).

The Christian needs to be viewed not only as one of God's elect, one of His high favourites; and not only as a member of the Father's family, and as such, amenable to His paternal discipline, but also as a human being, a moral agent, a subject of God's government; and therefore, he is dealt with accordingly by

the Ruler of this world. As such, God has appointed an inseparable connection between conduct and the consequences it entails; and therefore, He is pleased to manifest, by His providences, His approbation or His disapprobation of our conduct. It is not that the one who walks in the paths of righteousness thereby brings God into his debt, but that He condescends to act toward us according to the principle of gracious reciprocity. No creature can possibly merit aught good at the hands of God, for if he rendered perfect and perpetual obedience, he has merely performed his duty, and hath profited God—essentially considered—nothing whatever. Moreover, the recompense itself is a free gift, an act of pure grace, for God is under no compulsion or obligation to bestow it.

4. When pointing out in connection with “he did not many mighty works there *because* of their unbelief” (Mat 13:58), that “Unbelief is the great obstacle to Christ’s favours”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714), and that *they* closed the door upon His deeds of mercy, it may be thought by some that we are approving the horrible impiety that the creature has the power to thwart the Creator. And when we emphatically deny any such idea, objectors are likely to ask, But how can you escape such a consequence? Easily: faith is God’s own prescribed ordinance, and therefore, He is in no wise checkmated when He refuses to act contrary to His own appointed way. Obviously, He is by no means obliged to set a premium on unbelief or countenance contempt of His means. Mark 6 expresses it more strongly: “He *could* there do no mighty work,” etc. (Mar 6:5). When it is said God “cannot lie” (Ti 1:2) and “cannot be tempted with evil” (Jam 1:13), so far from signifying any limitation of His power, the perfection of His holiness is intimated. So with Christ. Among a people who were “offended in him” because they regarded Him as “the carpenter” (Mat 13:55, 57), no *moral end* had been furthered by His dazzling their eyes with prodigies of His might, and therefore, He cast not His pearls before swine.

5. Another class of readers, viz.¹ those who have imbibed the poison of “Dispensationalism,” will complain that our teaching in these articles is legalistic, confounding the old and new covenants, that God’s dealings with Jacob, David, and the nation of Israel furnish no parallel with His conduct toward us in this era. But that is a serious mistake. There is far more of essential oneness between the administration of those two economies than there was incidental divergencies, as John Calvin (1509-1564) long ago demonstrated in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*—see his chapters upon “The Similarity of the Old and New Testaments” and “The Difference of the Two Testaments.” The principal difference between the Mosaic and Christian dispensations was neither in “the way of salvation” (Act 16:17), the spiritual portion of God’s children, nor the principles of His government; but rather that spiritual things were presented to their view largely under types and shadows, whereas we have the substance itself openly set before us. Beneath all the trivial contrasts, there is a fundamental unity between them, and it betrays a very superficial mind which delights in magnifying those contrasts, while ignoring or denying their basic oneness. But, as we have shown, the New Testament teaching on our present subject is identical with that of the Old, “knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he *receive* of the Lord” (Eph 6:8) is both an echo and summary of the Law and the Prophets.

The underlying unity of the two Testaments is plainly intimated in that divine declaration, “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom 15:4). But what could we “learn” from God’s dealings with His people of old if He be now acting according to radically different principles? Nothing at all. Nay, in such a case, it would follow that the less we read the Old Testament, the better for us, for we should only be confused. The fact is that the principles of God’s government are like Himself—immutable, the same in every age. “Righteousness and judgment” (Psa 97:2) are just as truly the “habitation of his throne” today as when He cast out of heaven the apostate angels, and as when He destroyed the antediluvians—which was long before Moses! That God now deals with Christians on precisely the same basis as He did with the children of Israel, is unequivocally established by 1 Corinthians 10:6, where, after describing the privileges they had enjoyed and God’s overthrowing them in the wilderness because of their unbelief, we are told, “Now these things were *our* examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted”: that is, they are real and solemn warnings for us to take to heart, specimens of those judgments which will befall *us* if we emulate their sinful conduct.

Nay, Scripture requires us to go yet farther. So far from the higher blessings of this Christian era lessening our responsibility, they much increase the same. The greater our privileges, the greater our obligations. “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luk 12:48), as the one

¹ viz. – Latin *videlicet*: namely; that is to say; as follows.

who received five talents was required to yield more than those who received but one or two. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much *sorer* punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God"! (Heb 10:28-29). The principle of that verse clearly signifies that the more light we have been favoured with, the deeper are our obligations, and the greater the guilt incurred when those obligations are not met. "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Psa 130:4). Yes, "feared" and not trifled with, by giving free rein to our lusts. A true apprehension of divine mercy will not embolden unto sin, but will deepen our hatred of it, and make us more diligent in striving against it. Those who "[know] the grace of God in truth" (Col 1:6)—in contrast with the ones who have merely a theoretical knowledge of it—so far from being careless of their ways and indifferent to the consequences, will be most diligent in endeavouring to please and glorify Him who has been so good to them.

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

18. *The Holy Bible, Part 10*

14. *Its fulfilled prophecies.* If the Bible be a human invention, it ought not to require very much perspicuity to discover and demonstrate its imposture. The Scriptures claim to be of divine inspiration, but if that claim be an empty and unfounded one, then it should be no hard matter to prove it is so. The Bible not only treats considerably of history and moral instruction, but it contains not a little prophecy, and that not in dark and dubious language, like that of the pretended Sybilline Oracle, such as that ambiguous answer made to the inquiry of Croesus when he was about to engage the Persians in war: "Croesus, having passed the river Hilyls, shall overturn a great empire"—which would be verified whether his own kingdom *or* that of the Persians was subverted. Radically different are the predictions of Holy Writ. They are clear and definite, enter into specific and minute details, and in many instances, are too plain to be misunderstood. Thus, the dispute between the Christian and the infidel may be reduced to a short and simple issue: if Scripture prophecy be divinely inspired, then it will be accomplished; if it be spurious, it will not be.

Since the words, "prophecy" and "prediction" are frequently used in a loose and general sense in present-day parlance, it is requisite that we should carefully define our term. By a "prophecy," we mean the annunciation of some future event which could not have been foreknown by natural means or arrived at by logical deduction from present data. Such are scores of predictions recorded in the Bible hundreds of years ago, and which have been accurately verified by history. They are entirely different from weather forecasts, which are more often wrong than right, and merely announce climatic conditions a few days ahead. To bear any resemblance of the prophecies of Scripture, they would have to prognosticate the specific temperature, the direction of the wind, the precise rainfall upon a certain city or country on a given day, five hundred years hence! The reader will readily perceive that all of the scientists and astronomers in the world possess no such prevision as that. Yet the Bible abounds with forecasts far more wonderful.

It requires no prophetic spirit to declare that, life permitting, a certain male infant will develop into a child, and that into a man; but it *would* to announce from his cradle whether he will be a fool or a wise man, a failure or success; and still more so, to predict the exact span of his life, and where and how he will die. A well-informed politician may foretell how soon there will be a general election, and which party will win the same, but he is quite incapable of foreseeing the political, social, economic, and religious condition of his country one hundred years from now, while it would be completely beyond his powers to give the name and describe the character of its ruler in that day. An experienced statesman may indeed discern the speedy breakup of his state, and from the temper of its subjects deduce that it is likely to collapse under a fearful revolution, but he could not predict and describe the successive changes of empires centuries in advance—changes which depend upon countless unknown incidents. Yet the Bible does that very thing!

Sagacious conjecture is very different from Scripture prediction. Prophecy is, as one has well defined it, "the eyes of the omniscient God reading the predestinated future, and revealing the secret to His servants, the prophets." It is demonstrated to be such by the actual accomplishment of the same as testified to by the records of history. And it is highly significant that sacred history ends where profane history—that part of it, at least, which is commonly regarded as reliable—begins, so that the great changes in world affairs which the divine seers foretold are confirmed by *secular* recorders of events, thereby effectually closing the mouths of sceptics. Thus, the remarkable predictions of Daniel concerning the rise, the career, and the character of the great Gentile powers which occupied the stage during the last six centuries before the advent of Christ may be fully checked from the chronicles of heathen historians, who entirely unacquainted with the Old Testament (which then existed only in the Hebrew language), were quite unaware that they were narrating the fulfilment of the same.

The book of Daniel contains prophetic visions which describe one momentous event after another that has come before the observance of the whole world: events so unlikely, so startling, and so far-reaching, that no human wisdom could possibly have foreseen the same—least of all, so far in advance. It was therein revealed that four successive world kingdoms should arise, to be followed by a spiritual and everlasting kingdom set up by God Himself. Those four empires are viewed under the figure of wild beasts, to denote their strength, ferocity, and agility. It was therein foretold that they should come forth from "the great sea" (Dan 7:2-3), which, in Scripture, always has reference to the *Mediterranean*, thereby defining the centre of their territorial origin. By that limitation of *four*, God made it known that after the Babylonian, Medo-

Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires, there should never again be another kingdom commensurate with those. King Charlemagne (742-814), Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), the Kaiser, and Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), in their insatiable greed, coveted and strove to form one, but in vain. Equally so will prove the ambitions of Moscow.

It is an incontrovertible fact that no infidel has ever dared to meet the great body of Scripture prophecy, nor seriously attempted a reply to the many books written thereon, calling attention to their accomplishment. Either they are silently ignored, or dismissed with some such scurrilous remark that the Scripture prophecies are "a book of falsehoods," as Thomas Paine's (1737-1809) in his blasphemous *Age of Reason* (Part 2, pages 44, 47). Let the reader judge for himself from the following. Almost one hundred years before the event, the Lord announced through Isaiah that Babylon should be destroyed by the Medes and Persians: "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them...And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah...Go up, O Elam [the ancient name of Persia]: besiege, O Media...Babylon is fallen" (Isa 13:17-19; 21:2-9). Utterly unlikely as such a catastrophe then appeared, nevertheless, Herodotus and Xenophon record its literal fulfillment!

Again, Daniel, more than two hundred years before the event, foretold the overthrow of the Medo-Persian empire by the arms of Greece, under the direction of Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), depicting the government of the latter under the symbol of a he-goat with a notable horn between his eyes. That prophecy, in figurative language, is found in Daniel 8:3-7, and then its meaning is explained in plain terms: "The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king" (Dan 8:19-21). Ask the historians of those times, Diodorus and Plutarch, if that was a falsehood! In his *Antiquities* (Jdg 11:8), Josephus tells of Alexander's journey to Jerusalem for the purpose of dealing severely with the Jews; and how that when he was shown by the high priest a copy of the prophecy of Daniel announcing that a *Grecian* monarch should overthrow Persia, was so deeply impressed that, contrary to his invariable course, he showed remarkable favour to the Jews.

The same Daniel went on to announce that upon the death of Alexander, his vast empire should be divided between four of his principal generals—each of whom should have an extensive dominion (Dan 8:8, 22), which, as profane historians record, is precisely what took place. But more: he also predicted that out of one of those four branches of the Grecian empire would arise one who, at first, weak and obscure, should become "exceeding great," blatant, and impious, and that he would meet with no ordinary end (Dan 8:9, 12, 23-25). Therein was accurately described the infamous career of Antiochus Epiphanes, the king of Syria (215-164 BC). In that remarkable prophecy, it was plainly intimated that that monster should, by means of flattery and treachery, accomplish his evil designs; and because of the degeneracy of the Jews, would be permitted for a time to ravish their country, profane their temple, and put many of them to death; yet, that in the heyday of his career, he should be cut off by a sudden visitation from heaven. All of which was fulfilled to the letter!

Daniel also went on to herald the rise of yet a fourth kingdom. As he foretold that the Babylonian should be succeeded by the Medo-Persian and it by the Grecian, so in turn would this be vanquished by another yet more powerful. It is described as being "strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all" (Dan 2:40); and as "diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful" and which "shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces" (Dan 7:19, 23). Therein was given, more than five hundred years beforehand, a delineation of the Roman empire, as differing from the others in its democratic form of government, in the irresistible might of its military power, and in its world-wide dominion (compare Luk 2:1). Finally, Daniel announced that "in the days of these kings" should "the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed" (Dan 2:44; 7:13-14). And it *was* in the days of the Caesars that the Son of God became incarnate and established His spiritual kingdom, which, despite all the efforts of Satan and his emissaries to overthrow it, continues to this very hour. What proofs of divine inspiration are those!

But let us now come to a phenomenon which falls more immediately before our own observation, namely, *the Jews*. To the man of affairs, the Jews present an interesting yet perplexing problem, for they are the greatest paradox of the ages. No other nation was so highly favoured by God, yet none has ever been so severely chastised by Him. They are the only people to whom God ever gave a land, yet the only one which for so many centuries have been without one. They are the only nation to whom God ever im-

mediately gave a king, yet for two thousand years, they have been without a ruler or head. They are the outstanding miracle of history. Scattered throughout the earth, they are yet a unit; dispersed among the Gentiles, yet unassimilated by them. They are not wanted anywhere; yet because of their financial strength, needed everywhere. Taxed and plundered as no others have ever been, yet the wealthiest of all people. Persecuted and slaughtered as no other nation, yet miraculously preserved from annihilation.

The Bible alone supplies the key to their history. Not only so; the Bible described, in numerous particulars, their history long in advance. We can now single out but a few from the many scores. Two thousand years before the event, their conquest by the Romans and the terrors of the siege of Jerusalem were graphically depicted: see Deuteronomy 28:49-57—the passage is too lengthy to quote here, but let the reader be sure to consult it. The worldwide dispersion of the Jews was foretold centuries in advance: “And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other” (Deu 28:64). The restless migrating of the Jews was made known ages before their actual dispersion: “And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind” (Deu 28:65). So literally has that been fulfilled that “the *wandering Jew*” has become a proverbial expression adopted by all modern nations!

The taunts universally passed upon them were prophetically declared: “Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee” (Deu 28:37). Who has not heard the expression “as greedy as a Jew”? When one man gets the better of another by means of tricky dealings, it has become the custom throughout the English-speaking world to say “he Jew’d me.” Literally has he become a “proverb and a byword.” Their survival, despite all the efforts of men to exterminate them, was made known: “When they be in the land of their enemies, I will not...destroy them utterly” (Lev 26:44). The preservation of their national distinctness was expressly predicted: “Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations” (Num 23:9). Though scattered throughout the whole earth, they still subsist—un-assimilated by the Gentiles—as a distinct people! And so we might go on. Let the reader carefully bear in mind that all of those fore-announcements were made upwards of three thousand years ago! Such forecasts manifestly render imposture out of the question: they must have been God-breathed.

We now call attention to that which is central in prophecy, namely, the amazing description supplied of the Messiah many centuries before He came to this earth. A full portrait of Him was drawn in advance: one inspired artist after another adding fresh details, until the picture was complete. The prophets, with one consent, gave witness to the Lord Jesus Christ, so that nothing remarkable befell Him and nothing great was done by Him which they did not foretell. Those prophecies were in the hands of the Jews, and they translated into the Greek, generations before His birth, and were so well known that the apostle Paul could say to king Agrippa that he taught none other things “than those which the prophets and Moses did say *should come*: “That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead” (Act 26:22-23). Thus did the fulfilment exactly correspond to the predictions made long before, for it pleased God to supply such an exact description of the Messiah that His identity should be indubitably established when He appeared among men: and thus the Jews were condemned by their prophets for rejecting Him.

The supernatural character of our Lord’s humanity was declared when it was said that He should be the *woman’s* “seed” (Gen 3:15), unbegotten by a man: conceived and born of a “virgin” (Isa 7:14). In Genesis 9:25-28, it was made known through which of the three sons of Noah the Messiah should issue, namely, Shem: for God would “dwell” in *his* “tents.” Later, it was revealed that Christ, according to the flesh, should be of the Abrahamic stock (Gen 22:18, and compare Mat 1:1). Still further was the compass narrowed, for of the twelve sons of Abraham’s grandson, Judah was chosen (Gen 49:10). Out of all the families of Judah, He would spring from the house of Jesse (Isa 11:1). The place of His birth was specified (Mic 5:2). The very time of His advent was mentioned (Dan 9:24-26). So definite were the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ that the hope of Israel became the Messianic hope: all their expectations centred in His appearing. It is therefore the more remarkable that their sacred Scriptures contained another set of prophecies, telling of His being despised by His own nation and put to a shameful death.

Though Christ would preach good tidings to the meek, bind up the brokenhearted, and proclaim liberty to the captives of sin and Satan (Isa 61:1), and though He should open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, and make the lame leap as a hart (Isa 35:5-6), yet utterly incredible as it appeared, He would be “despised and rejected of men” (Isa 53:3). His back would be smitten, the hair plucked out of His cheeks, and His face covered with the vile spittle of those who hated Him (Isa 50:6). He would be sold for “thirty

pieces of silver" (Zec 11:13), brought as a lamb to the slaughter, taken from prison and judgment, "cut off out of the land of the living" (Isa 53:8). His death by *crucifixion* was revealed a thousand years beforehand (Psa 22:16). So too His being crucified with malefactors (Isa 53:12), His being derided upon the cross (Psa 22:7-8), His being offered vinegar to drink (Psa 69:21), as well as the soldiers gambling for His garments (Psa 22:18), were all described. It was also foretold that He should rise from the dead (Psa 16:10), and ascend into heaven (Psa 68:18).

But perhaps the most remarkable feature about the prophecies concerning Christ is their paradoxical character. He was to be the seed of David, which should proceed out of his bowels (2Sa 7:12), and at the same time, be David's "Lord" (Psa 110:1). He was to be both "the Son of man" (Dan 7:13) and "the mighty God" (Isa 9:6); "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa 53:3), yet "anointed thee with the oil of gladness above [his] fellows" (Psa 45:7). He was to be One in whom Jehovah's "soul delighted" (Isa 42:1), yet "smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isa 53:4). In one passage, it was fore-announced, "thou art fairer than the children of men" (Psa 45:2); in another, "his visage was so marred more than any man" (Isa 52:14). It was said that "Messiah shall be cut off, and shall have nothing" (Dan 9:26, margin), yet "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end" (Isa 9:7). He would "[make] his grave with the wicked" (Isa 53:9), yet would be made "higher than the kings of the earth" (Psa 89:27). The fulfilment in New Testament times of those apparently glaring contradictions evinced there was perfect harmony between them; yet is it not evident that no such seeming inconsistencies as those had ever been inserted in an imposture!

Now we submit to the skeptical reader that the fulfilment of all those prophecies demonstrated the divine origin of the Book which contains them. They were given not in the form of a vague generalization, but with a precision and minuteness which no human sagacity could possibly have supplied. Again and again have men attempted to foretell the future, but only to meet with failure; the anticipations of the most far-seeing are repeatedly mocked by the irony of events. Man stands before such an impenetrable veil that he knows not what a day may bring forth. How then shall we explain the hundreds of detailed prophecies recorded in the Scriptures which were fulfilled to the letter centuries after they were given? Only one explanation is rational, adequate, and satisfactory: they were revealed by God Himself. It is the prerogative of God alone to declare the end from the beginning, and the numerous, varied, and detailed predictions recorded in the Bible demonstrate beyond a peradventure that that book is His own inspired and infallible Word. The prophecies of Scripture are supernatural: nothing in the remotest degree resembling or even claiming to do so is to be found in any of the religions of the world. Prophecy is as truly the product of Omniscience as miracles of Omnipotence.

