

Studies in the Scriptures

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by Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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JANUARY

A Good Continuing

Our “New Year’s” message (which appeared in the December issue) was entitled “A Good Beginning.” This and the one in February are designed as sequels thereto. While a good beginning is much to be desired, it is not everything, but rather a means to an end. If the ending is to be satisfactory, then we must continue well. Alas, how very few really do so! How rare it is to find a child of God who has preserved his early freshness and fervour! Of how many does it have to be said, “Thou hast left thy first love” (Rev 2:4)? Mark closely the verb employed there: it is not “thou has *lost* thy first love,” as so frequently misquoted, but something much more serious being referred to. One may lose a thing involuntarily, but to *leave* “the love of thine espousals” (Jer 2:2) implies deliberation, and is therefore more culpable. Hence, the one guilty thereof is bidden to “remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent” (Rev 2:5), which serves to explain what is there involved. To “leave” our first love is to depart from that elevation of heart (the affections set upon things above) which formerly characterized us, to forsake the “mountain of myrrh” and “the hill of frankincense” (Song 4:6) previously trodden in fellowship with the eternal Lover of our souls.

Many solemn examples are given in Scripture of those who made a promising start, but later, belied the same. Such was the case with Samson, of whom we read first, “The LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him” (Jdg 13:24-25), but subsequently Delilah “began to afflict him, and his strength went from him...And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him” (Jdg 16:19-20). How fair was the commencement of King Saul’s public life, but how terrible its termination! “The Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied” (1Sa 10:10); “But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him” (1Sa 16:14). How frequently do we see exemplified our Lord’s description of the stony-ground hearer, who “heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while” (Mat 13:20-21). It was so under His own ministry: “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (Joh 6:66)—little wonder if such prove the case with those converted under our preaching. How soon after Pentecost were the ranks of the early church thinned by the defection and death of Ananias and Sapphira!

Not only are many such individual cases recorded in the Scripture for our warning, but a whole generation of Israel is set before us to tremblingly heed. Behold upwards of half a million of them issuing forth from the house of bondage under the leadership of Moses. Hear them fervently singing the LORD’s praises for His deliverance at the Red Sea. See them journeying unto, yea nearing, the promised inheritance. Alas, how tragic was the sequel! Only two of that vast host ever entered Canaan: of all the others God swore “that they should not enter into his rest” (Heb 3:18), and their carcasses fell in the wilderness. Does the reader object, But they were not *regenerate* souls and therefore point no warning to Christians? We answer, Such a point does not have to be determined by us; sufficient to know that they were the people of God, in covenant relation with Him, and that the Holy Spirit declares they were “*our* examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted,” and bids us, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest *he* fall” (1Co 10:6, 12). And again, “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after *the same* example of unbelief” (Heb 4:11). Woe be unto those who presumptuously disregard such a danger-signal.

Holy Scripture knows nothing of a “Once saved, always saved” *irrespective* of the subsequent life. The saving of the soul is a miracle of divine grace which produces supernatural effects. The one who has hitherto played the fool with the things of God and the eternal interests of his own soul, is given “the spirit...of a sound mind” (2Ti 1:7), and the same is manifested by his now conducting himself sanely. There is placed within him a principle of holiness, in consequence of which he hates evil and is moved to strive against sin. The love of God is shed abroad in his heart, and that constrains unto an earnest endeavour to please Him in all things, and to glorify His great name. Hence, no one who returns to his wallowing in the mire has any divine warrant to regard himself *as saved*. The saved are “his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we

should walk in them” (Eph 2:10). Therefore, none is to be regarded as *His* “workmanship” who walk not in good works, but who instead lead carnal and worldly lives. Regeneration is but the commencement of the saving operations of the Holy Spirit, and those who are the favoured subjects of them are assured, “he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [‘finish’] it” (Phi 1:6), causing them to grow in grace and become fruitful branches of the Vine.

Yet the divine work of grace in a soul is not carried forward mechanically without any concurrence on the part of its subjects. It is a fatal error to conclude that because the work of salvation and sanctification is a divine one, *we* have no responsibility in connection therewith. Scripture teaches the very opposite: we are exhorted to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling *because* it is God which worketh in us (Phi 2:12-13). Grace is bestowed not to encourage idleness, but to energize unto holy activity. The Spirit of God does not produce apathy, but stirs those He indwells unto a diligent use of means. The one who was loudest in owning, “But by the grace of God I am what I am,” hesitated not to add, “but I laboured more abundantly than they all (1Co 15:10). God treats with His people, throughout, as rational and accountable creatures. Unto those who believed on Him, the Lord Jesus said, “If ye *continue* in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed” (Joh 8:31), and not merely by lip profession. The apostles returned to their converts, “confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them *to continue* in the faith,” warning them that they “must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22). Walking that “narrow” way, which is the *only one* “which leadeth unto life” (Mat 7:14), is not the easy matter which so many vainly imagine. Rather does it call for self-denial, godly fear, circumspection, and persevering effort.

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk ye in him” (Col 2:6) must be heeded by us if we are to make a good continuance. *How* did we “receive Christ Jesus the Lord”? By ceasing to fight against Him, and throwing down the weapons of our rebellion. By determining to end a life of self-will, giving ourselves up to Him freely and wholly, consenting to be His forever. By penitently confessing our sins and trusting in His redeeming blood. By coming empty-handed to draw upon His fullness. How did we “receive” Him? As He is freely offered in the Gospel: “able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Heb 7:25). As a whole Christ: a Prophet to teach, a Priest to atone, a King to reign over us. As a *complete* Saviour: to deliver from the penalty of sin, cleanse from its pollution, free from its power; to sanctify as well as justify, purify, and ultimately glorify. “*So* walk ye in him”: continue as you began—in subjection to, in dependence upon Him. A Gospel faith must issue in Gospel practice. “Walking in Christ means living *out of self*, in conformity to Him. Only thus do we obtain evidence of having *savingly* “received” Him. The genuineness of faith is always seen in what it produces. Alas, the walk of most professing Christians gives the lie to their talk.

A good continuance is only made possible by our regular *use* of those means of grace which God has appointed for His people. If the Word be neglected, the soul will be starved. If meditation be not practised, the heavenly manna will not be digested. If prayer be omitted, or performed formally and mechanically, fresh supplies of grace will not be obtained. Unless the love of God be kept constantly before the heart, the affections will soon cool. Unless we draw daily upon Christ’s mediatorial fullness, we shall be feeble and incapable of wrestling with our foes. Unless we tread the path of obedience, Satan will quickly overcome us. There must also be a *right* use of the means, or they will profit us nothing. The Word itself does not nourish unless faith be mixed with it (Heb 4:2). They must be used in a spirit of humble dependence on God, for they avail not apart from His *blessing* upon them. Put them not in the stead of Christ. Trust not in the mere use of them as though your diligence therein ensured success. Yet they must be used patiently and perseveringly: “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal 6:9).



The Prayers of the Apostles

61. Hebrews 13:20-21, Part 3

[For the benefit of new readers, we point out that in the preceding expositions of these most important verses we dwelt upon, first, the *Object* of this prayer, namely, “the God of peace” (Heb 13:20), which views Him in His

office as Judge, pacified by satisfaction having been made to His justice, now reconciled to His people. Then we considered the particular act here predicated of Him: His restoring of our Lord Jesus from the dead. There we noted, first, the character in which Christ is portrayed: “That great shepherd of the sheep,” which contemplates Him not only as the Antitype of Abel, the patriarchal shepherds, and David, but as the Fulfilment of such Messianic prophecies as Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24; Zechariah 13:7; and also as the One to whom God has entrusted the salvation of His elect. Second, the fact that He is here said to be “*brought* again from the dead” (not “*raised*”): the reference being to His lawful discharge from the prison of the tomb as a thing due Him—because as their Surety, He had paid fully the debt of His people. Christ did not break prison by an act of arbitrary power, but was honourably discharged by the divine Judge (compare Act 16:35-39) in fulfilment of Isaiah 53:8. Third, that it was “through the blood of the everlasting covenant” God became “the God of peace,” that Christ was constituted “that great shepherd of the sheep,” and was the meritorious ground of His being freed from death’s dominion.]

“Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ” (Heb 13:21). As previously intimated, there is a very close connection between this verse and the preceding one. Here we have the *request* which the apostle preferred on behalf of the Hebrew saints; the contents of the former are to be regarded as the *plea* on which he based his request. How appropriate, powerful, and moving that plea was, will readily be seen. The appeal is made to “the God of peace”: as the One reconciled to His people, He is besought to grant this blessing (compare Rom 5:10). Moreover, since God had brought again our Lord Jesus from the dead, that was a most proper ground why He should quicken His dead elect by regeneration, recover them when they wander, and complete His work of grace in them. Especially so, since it was as “that great shepherd of the sheep” He had delivered Him from the prison of the grave, which would move Him to care for the flock. As the Redeemer was “perfected” on the third day (Luk 13:32), so His redeemed must be. Finally, the same everlasting covenant which promised the resurrection of Christ guaranteed the glorification of His people; therefore, says the apostle, “perfect them” according to that engagement.

“Make you perfect in every good work to do his will.” Substantially, that is a request for the practical sanctification and fructification of God’s people. While the everlasting covenant has been suitably denominated, “The Covenant of Redemption,” it needs to be carefully borne in mind that it was designed to secure the holiness of its beneficiaries. It is God’s “holy covenant...That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our [spiritual] enemies might serve him without [servile] fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life” (Luk 1:72-75). And while it has also been appropriately designated “the Covenant of Grace,” yet it must ever be remembered that it is said, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men [Gentiles as well as Jews], Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Ti 2:11-13). The grand purpose of the everlasting covenant, as of all the divine works, was the glory of God and the good of His people. It was designed not only as a display of the divine munificence, but also for securing and promoting the claims of divine holiness. God did not enter into that compact with Christ in order to set aside human accountability, nor did the Son fulfil its terms so as to render unnecessary a life of obedience from His redeemed.

Christ agreed not only to propitiate God, but regenerate His elect; not only to meet all the requirements of the Law in their stead, but also to write it on their hearts and enthrone it in their affections. Christ engaged not only to take away sin from before God, but to make it hateful and heinous unto His saints. Christ undertook not only to satisfy the claims of divine justice, but to sanctify His seed, sending forth His spirit into their souls to conform them unto His image and incline them to follow the example which He has left them. It has been far too little insisted upon, in recent times, by those who wrote or preached upon the Covenant of Grace, that He engaged not only for the debt of His people, but for their *duty* too: that He should make a purchase of grace for them, and full provision to give them a new heart and a new spirit, to bring them to know the Lord, to put His fear into their hearts, and make them obedient to His will. He also engaged for their *safety*: that if they forsook His Law and walked not in His judgments, He would visit their transgressions with the rod (Psa 89:30-34); that if they should backslide and stray from Him, He would assuredly recover them.

“Make you perfect...to do his will.” It was with the contents of the Covenant in his eye that the apostle offered up this petition. In the preceding articles, it was shown that Old Testament prophecy presented the promised Messiah as the Surety of a covenant of peace and as the “Shepherd” of His people: it now remains to point out that He was therein portrayed as *such* a Shepherd as would perfect His sheep in holiness and good works. “And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd”—there is “that great shepherd” (Heb 13:20) even a royal one, without a rival. But more: It was at once added, “They shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them” (Eze 37:24). And therefore, it was that after owning God as “the God of peace”

who had delivered from death's dominion our Lord "through [or 'by'] the blood of the everlasting covenant," request was made that He would work in His sheep "that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ" (Heb 13:21). For though God has covenanted the same, He declares, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the [spiritual] house of Israel" (Eze 36:37). Thus this most comprehensive prayer is not only an epitome of the contents of the whole epistle, but also provides a summary of the Messianic prophecies.

"Make you perfect in every good work to do his will." It must be unto "the God of peace" this prayer is made. Faith must first regard Him as reconciled to us before there will be any true desire to glorify Him. While there be any sensible horror of God—any servile fear produced at the mention of His name—we cannot serve Him nor do that which is well-pleasing in His sight. "Without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb 11:6), and faith is the very reverse of horror. We must first be assured that God is no longer an Enemy but our Friend, ere love's gratitude will move us to run in the way of His commandments. That assurance can only come to us by realizing that Christ has put a way our sins and satisfied every legal claim of God against us: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1). Christ has made a perfect and eternal "peace through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20), in consequence of which God has made with those who surrender to Christ's yoke and trust in His sacrifice "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure" (2Sa 23:5). That must be apprehended by faith before there can be any serving of God acceptably, and before there will be a confident seeking from Him of the grace necessary thereunto.

From yet another angle, we may perceive the appropriateness of this request being addressed to "the God of peace," that He would now perfect us in every good work to do His will, for that is most essential unto *our enjoyment* of His peace in a practical way. "Great peace have they which love thy law" (Psa 119:165), for Wisdom's "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Pro 3:17). Therefore, it is utterly vain to expect tranquility of heart if we forsake her paths for those of self-pleasing. Certainly there can be no peace of conscience while any known sin is "allowed" by us. The road to peace is the way of holiness: "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them" (Gal 6:16). Unless we genuinely resolve and strive to do those things which are pleasing in God's sight, there will be a state of turmoil and unrest within us, instead of peace. There is another and deeper meaning in that title, "the Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6), which pertains to the incarnate Son: He could say, "I do always those things that please him" (Joh 8:29), and therefore, an unruffled calm was His portion. What emphasis was there in those words, "Peace I leave with you, *my peace* I give unto you" (Joh 14:27)!

"Make you perfect in every good work to do his will." This petition sets before us, by clear implication, the human side of things. As we have repeatedly pointed out in this series: those things for which the apostle made request on behalf of the saints concern those duties which *they* were obligated to perform, but for the performing of which divine assistance is imperative. The everlasting covenant anticipated the entrance of sin and made provision not only for the putting away of it, but the bringing in of everlasting righteousness. That righteousness is the perfect obedience of Christ by which the divine Law was honoured and magnified. That perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed to all who believe, but none *do* savingly believe in Him until His Spirit has implanted a principle of righteousness in their souls (Eph 4:24), and that new nature or principle of righteousness evidences itself by the performing of good works (Eph 2:10). We have no right to speak of "The Lord *our* righteousness" unless we be personal doers of righteousness (1Jo 2:29). The everlasting covenant by no means sets aside the necessity of obedience on the part of those who partake of its benefits, but supplies the most affecting and powerful motives to move us thereunto. Saving faith worketh by love, and aims at pleasing its Object.

The more our prayers be regulated by the teaching of Holy Writ, the more will these two things mark them: the divine precepts will be turned into petitions, and the divine promises will be used as our pleas. When the Psalmist realized, "Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently," he was at once conscious of his failure and said, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" (Psa 119:4-5). But He did more than lament the hindrances of indwelling sin: He cried, "Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes...Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight" (Psa 119:33-35). So also when seeking the establishment of his house before the LORD, David pleaded the divine promise: "And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and *do as thou hast said*" (2Sa 7:25 and see also 1 Kings 8:25-26; 2 Chronicles 6:17). As we become more familiar with God's Word and discover the details of the exalted standard of conduct there set before us, we should be more definite and diligent in seeking grace to perform our several duties; and as we become better acquainted with "the Father of mercies" (2Co 1:3) and His "exceeding great and precious promises" (2Pe 1:4), we shall count more confidently upon Him for those supplies.

"Make you perfect in every good work." The original for "perfect" is not the one found in Hebrews 2:10; 10:14; 11:40, which signifies "entire" or complete, but is "*katartizo*," which Young defines as "to fit thoroughly,

adjust.” It is rendered “mend” in Matthew 4:21, and “restore” in Galatians 6:1. It was especially appropriate in connection with the Hebrews, who, after believing the Gospel, had met with such bitter and protracted opposition from the Jews at large, that they had wavered and were in real need of being warned against apostasy (see Heb 4:1; 6:11-12; 10:23). As stated at the beginning of our exposition, this prayer not only gathers up the whole of the doctrinal instruction, but also the exhortations of the previous chapters. The Hebrews had faltered and failed (Heb 12:12), and the apostle here prays for their restoration. The lexicons tell us the Greek word here translated “perfect” literally has reference to the resetting of a dislocated bone. And is it not often so with the Christian: a sad fall breaks his communion with God, and none but the hand of the divine Physician can repair the damage wrought. Thus this prayer is suited to all of us: that God would rectify every faculty of our beings to do His will and right us for His service each time we need it.

Mark how comprehensive is this prayer: “Make you perfect in *every* good work.” It includes, as Thomas Gouge (1609-1681) pointed out, “All the fruits of holiness Godwards and of righteousness manwards.” No reservation is allowed us by the extensive rule which God has set before us: we are required to love Him with all our hearts, be sanctified in our whole spirit and soul and body, and “grow up into him [Christ] in all things” (Eph 4:15). Nothing less than perfection “in every good work” is the standard at which we must aim. Absolute perfection is not attainable here, but the perfection of sincerity *is* demanded of us—honest endeavour and genuine effort to please God. The mortification of our lusts, submission unto God under trials, the performance of impartial and universal obedience, is ever our bounden duty. Of ourselves, we are quite incapable of discharging our duties, and therefore, we must pray continually for supplies of grace to enable us thereunto. Not only are we dependent upon God for the beginning of every good work, but also for the continuance and progress of the same. Emulate Paul: “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after...reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark” (Phi 3:12-14).

“Make you perfect in every good work to do his will”: may He who has already fully acquainted you with His mind now effectually incline you unto the performing of it, even a continuance of the same unto the end. It is not enough that we *know* His will, we must *do* it (Luk 6:46; Joh 13:17); and the more we do it, the better shall we understand it (Joh 7:17) and prove the excellency of the same (Rom 12:1). It is His revealed or perceptive will that is here in view and which is to be the alone rule of all our actions—namely those laws and statutes to which God requires our full obedience to what God has commanded. There are many things done by professing Christians which—though admired by them and applauded by their fellows—are nothing but “will worship” and a following of the “doctrines of men” (Col 2:20-23). The Jews added their own traditions to the divine Law and instituted fasts and feasts of their own invention. The deluded Papists, with their bodily austerities, idolatrous devotions, and impoverishing payments—are guilty of the same thing. Nor are some Protestants—with their self-devised deprivations and superstitious exercises—clear of this their evil.

“Working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight.” This confirms what was just said above: only that is acceptable unto God which conforms to the rule He has given us. The words “in his sight” show that our every action comes under His immediate notice and is weighed by Him. By comparing other Scriptures, we find that only those works are “wellpleasing” to Him which He has enjoined us, which are performed in His fear (Heb 12:28), which proceed from love (2Co 5:14), and which are done with an eye single to His glory (1Co 10:31). Nothing short of that must be our constant aim and diligent endeavour: “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto *all* pleasing, being fruitful in every good work” (Col 1:10). Nevertheless, we have to be divinely enabled thereunto. What a blow to self-sufficiency and self-glory is this “working in you”! Even after regeneration, we are wholly dependent upon God. Notwithstanding the life, light, and liberty we have received from Him, we have no strength of our own to do what He requires. Each has to acknowledge “to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Rom 7:18).

That is indeed a humbling truth, yet a fact it is that Christians are, in themselves, incapable of discharging their duty. Though the love of God has been shed abroad in their hearts (Rom 5:5)—a principle of holiness or “new nature” communicated to them—yet they are unable to perform the good they ardently desire to do. Not only are they still very ignorant of many of the requirements of God’s revealed will, but indwelling sin ever opposes and seeks to incline their hearts in a contrary direction. This it is which renders it imperative that they daily seek from God fresh supplies of grace. Though assured that God *will* “complete” His good work in us (Phi 1:6), that does not render needless our crying unto Him “that performeth all things for [us]” (Psa 57:2). Nor does the privilege of prayer release us from the obligation of obedience: rather is it a begging Him to quicken us unto the performance thereof. Prayer is not designed to discharge us from the regular and diligent use of all the means God has appointed for our practical sanctification, but is a seeking of the divine blessing on our use of them. Our duty is to ask God to work in

us “both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13), to avoid grieving His Spirit, and to use the grace He has already given us.

“Working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.” There is a double reference here: to God’s working in us, and in His acceptance of our works. It is by virtue of the Saviour’s mediation that God works: there is no communication of grace unto us from the God of peace, but by and through our Redeemer. All that God does for us is for Christ’s sake. Every gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in us is the fruit of Christ’s meritorious work, for He procured and sends the Spirit to us (Joh 15:26). Every spiritual blessing bestowed upon us is in consequence of Christ’s intercession for us. Christ is not only our life (Col 3:4) and our righteousness (Jer 23:6), but also our strength (Isa 45:24). It is “of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” (Joh 1:16). The members of His mystical Body are completely dependent upon their Head (Eph 4:15-16). “From me is thy fruit found” (Hos 14:8)—i.e. by fellowship with Him and abiding in Him (Joh 15:5). This is a most important truth to be clear upon if the Lord Jesus is to have that place in our thoughts and affections which is His due. The wisdom of God has so contrived things that each Person is exalted in the esteem of His people: the Father as the fountain of grace, the Son in His mediatorial office as the channel through which all grace flows to us, and the Spirit as the actual bestower of it.

But these words “through Jesus Christ” have also a more immediate connection with the clause, “that which is wellpleasing in his sight.” Even though our works be good and wrought in us by God, yet they are imperfect, because they are marred by the instruments by which they are done—as the purest light is dimmed by the cloudy or dusty globe through which it shines. Yet though our works be defective, they are acceptable to God when done in the name of His Son. Our best performances are faulty and fall short of that excellence which the requirements of God’s holiness demand, but their defects are covered by the merits of Christ. Our prayers are acceptable to God only because our great High Priest adds to them “much incense,” and then offers them on “the golden altar which was before the throne” (Rev 8:3). Our spiritual sacrifices are “acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1Pe 2:5). God can only be “glorified through Jesus Christ” (1Pe 4:11). We owe, then, to the Mediator not only the pardon of our sins and the sanctification of our persons, but God’s acceptance of our imperfect worship and service. As Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) aptly said in his comments on this clause, “What nothings and nobodies we are! Our goodness is none of ours.”

“To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” The glory of God was what the apostle eyed. And how are we to glorify Him? By an obedient walk, doing His will, performing those things which are wellpleasing in His sight. By adoring Him. The construction of the whole sentence permits us to regard this description of praise as being offered to *either* the “God of peace,” to whom the prayer is addressed, or to “that great shepherd of the sheep,” which is the nearest antecedent to the pronoun. Since both grammar and the analogy of Faith allow equally of Each, we include Both. Let God be praised because He is now “the God of peace,” because He brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, because He is faithful to His engagements in the everlasting covenant, because all supplies of grace are from Him, and because He accepts our poor obedience “through Jesus Christ.” Equally let us adore the Mediator: because He is “our Lord Jesus,” who loved us and gave Himself for us; because He is “that great shepherd of the sheep”—caring for and ministering to His flock; because He ratified the covenant with His precious blood, and because by His merits and intercession, our persons and services are rendered “wellpleasing” unto the Most High. “Amen”: so be it; so it shall be.

The Life and Times of Joshua

41. Inquisition

Joshua 7 presents to our notice that which is very different from what is found in the preceding chapters. It opens with the ominous word “But,” which solemnly prepares for what follows. First, the heinous sin of Achan, which, though the nation knew it not at that time, caused the LORD to burn in “the fierceness of his anger” against Israel (Jos 7:26). The evil effects of Achan’s offence and the consequences of Jehovah’s displeasure soon appeared. The spies whom Joshua sent out to reconnoiter Ai were left to the exercise of their carnal reason. The result was that when making their report, they presumptuously took it upon them to advise their leader how to act. Regarding

Ai as an easy prey, they intimated there was no need for the whole nation of Israel to journey thither, that a single battalion of *their* men would suffice. Thereby they suggested a departure from the pattern which the LORD had given His people both at the Jordan and at Jericho, and introduced disunity. Instead of seeking counsel from the LORD, Joshua adopted their foolish plan. The ark of the covenant was left behind in the camp, and three thousand only were sent against Ai. The outcome was disastrous. A spirit of cowardice possessed them, and they fled from the Canaanites, thirty-six of them being slain.

The whole congregation was thoroughly dismayed: “the hearts of the people melted, and became as water” (Jos 7:5). Quite unaware of the root cause of Israel’s ignominious setback, Joshua and the elders of the nation rent their clothes, put dust upon their heads, and fell to the earth on their faces before the slighted ark of the LORD. There they remained “until the eventide,” when the second of the daily sacrifices was presented. At that hour, Joshua addressed himself unto the LORD, pouring out his distressed heart before Him. In view of the circumstances, it is not to be wondered at that the infirmities of this honoured servant of the Lord were made manifest on this occasion. As is usually the case with us at such times, there was a strange mingling of the flesh and spirit, in the supplication of Joshua. While some of his utterances are not to be condoned, still less echoed, yet it should be borne in mind that he was not complaining at any of the LORD’s dealings with him personally, but was deeply perturbed at what had befallen God’s people. Though his opening expressions were unseemly, his closing ones evidenced that his heart beat true to Jehovah and that it was the honour of *His* name which so greatly concerned him. We shall now consider the response which his prayer met with from God.

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?” (Jos 7:10). Before considering those somewhat puzzling words, let it be attentively observed that God did not refuse His servant a hearing, even though considerably infirmity had marred it. Blessed be His name, “For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust” (Psa 103:14), and in His tender mercy, “a bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench” (Mat 12:20). Joshua had exclaimed, “O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?” (Jos 7:8-9). In those words, he had virtually confessed his own failure, used the language of godly sorrow, and had evinced a deep concern for the glory of God. Well for us if such elements be present in our lisps before the Throne of Grace. The holy but gracious One never repulses those in whom such a spirit is found. On the ground of the evening sacrifice (the slain lamb!), Jehovah met with this soul who manifested “a broken and a contrite heart” (Psa 51:17). How that should encourage failing yet penitent believers today!

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?” Care needs to be taken in the interpreting of this verse. If it be detached from its context, we are almost certain to err and jump to a wrong conclusion, regarding it as an expression of the LORD’s displeasure. But if due attention be paid unto its opening “And,” and note carefully both what precedes and what immediately follows, we should have no difficulty in arriving at its general tenor. It is not God’s way to condemn those who take their place in the dust before Him: rather is His controversy with them who refuse to do so. Nevertheless, though He pardons, He does not gloss over our faults: see Psalm 85:8; John 5:14. As the prayer of Joshua had been a mixed one, so with the divine response. God did not turn a deaf ear to it, nor did He ignore His servant’s petulance, but gently reproved him. It was both a mild rebuke and a word of instruction. “Wherefore liest thou *thus* upon thy face?” Why so distressed and dejected? There is other work for thee to do. But before performing it, he must be directed by his Master. Up to now, Joshua was in complete ignorance of Achan’s offence—the root cause of the disaster.

“Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff” (Jos 7:11). That, too, needs to be pondered, first, in the light of its setting. As we do so, it will be seen that an important and blessed practical truth receives exemplification: “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him” (Psa 25:14). If we really seek God’s honour and glory, we shall not be left long in ignorance of the best way to recognize and promote it. So it was here: the LORD now informed Joshua what it was which lay behind Israel’s defeat at Ai. In like manner, if our seeking unto Him be sincere and earnest—whether it be an individual or an assembly—God will soon reveal to us what it is that has been withholding His blessing upon our efforts. “Israel hath sinned”: there has been no failure on *My* part. I have not changed, but am just as willing and ready as ever to undertake for *My* people; but *they* have choked the channel of blessing. Thus it ever is. We speak of God’s hiding Himself, when in fact we have departed from Him. It is always man that does the turning away, thereby depriving himself of the divine strength, protection, and prosperity.

In the above words of Jehovah unto Joshua, it is most noticeable how He set forth and stressed the enormity of Achan's crime: one detail being added to another, until no less than six items are specified in the terrible indictment. First, the general charge is made, "Israel hath sinned," followed by the fearful accusation, "they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them," which greatly aggravated their sin. Observe that the charge is preferred against the whole nation, and not simply against a single individual: "Israel," "they," for in the sight of God they were a corporate and federal unit—as the local church of this Christian era is a moral unit before Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:20, 26; 5:6). This feature received additional emphasis in the reference to "the covenant," for that had been made with and solemnly entered into by the whole congregation (Exo 24). Next, we behold how the divine Law was brought to the fore: "They have taken of the accursed thing," which was a definite violation of the explicit prohibition of Deuteronomy 13:17—"there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand." Yet more: "and have also stolen," thereby adding considerably to the heinousness of the offence, for it was a direct breach of the eighth commandment in the Decalogue.

"And have also *stolen*" emphasized another reprehensible feature of the crime—it had been committed surreptitiously and with previous design. It was not that Achan had been suddenly overcome by an unexpected temptation, but that he acted with deliberation—stealthily and secretly—his deceitful and wicked heart persuading him that he would thereby escape the cognizance of the Most High. Horrible impiety is it when we entertain the idea that we can impose upon Omniscience. The more secret our wickedness be, the more does it evince the heart's depravity and industry therein, planning and scheming how to bring the sin to pass with the least danger and shame to ourselves. It was thus with David when he plotted the death of Uriah (2Sa 11:14-15). So, too, had Ananias and Sapphira arranged in private to impose a fraud upon the Holy Spirit (Act 5:2-7). How we should pray to be preserved from secret sins! They are particularly heinous because of the premeditation and dissimulation which is used in their commission. "And dissembled also," which made his case that much blacker. When Israel met with shameful defeat at Ai, and the whole nation was plunged into grief, Achan played the part of a hypocrite, pretending to be innocent of causing the same—instead of confessing his iniquity. Finally, "And they have put it even among their own stuff," instead of bringing it into "the treasury of the LORD" (Jos 6:19).

"Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you" (Jos 7:12). Weigh attentively that statement my reader, for it casts a flood of light upon the reason why the visible cause of Christ is in its present lamentable condition. What took place at Ai has been and is being duplicated in thousands of churches and assemblies the world over. Instead of enjoying the Lord's blessing, His frown is upon them; instead of overcoming the Enemy, they are humiliated before him. How many a minister of the Gospel has, to the best of his ability, faithfully preached the Word, yet to no effect—unless it be to considerably reduce the size of his congregation! How many a one, fearing that he was a "misfit," has resigned his charge and has accepted a call to another part of the Lord's vineyard, only to discover after a short time there that conditions are just as heart-breaking as those in his previous sphere! A spirit of deadness rests upon his church: the prayer meeting is cold, and thinly attended, preaching is burdensome. His most earnest appeals seem to hit the wall and return upon him. The power of the Spirit is markedly absent: souls are not converted, nor even convicted.

The above verses make known one of "the ways of the LORD," or one of the principles which regulate His governmental dealings in time. When a company who profess to be in covenant relationship with Him violate its terms and flagrantly transgress His commandments, then His blessing is withheld from them. No matter how zealous and active they may be, God prospers not their efforts. They may go out as of yore against the foe, but the LORD fights not for them. They are left to themselves, and soon, their nakedness and shame is made manifest. God will not be trifled with. To the church in Pergamos, the Son of God declared, "I have a few things against thee"; and after specifying what they were, added, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev 2:14-16). Likewise did He threaten the church in Thyatira: "And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (Rev 2:23).

Alas that the majority of the churches today know nothing of that solemn fact. Alas that they have received so little instruction upon the holiness which must obtain in the assembly if the presence of Christ is to be enjoyed there. Alas that "the accursed thing" has not only been suffered a place, but "they have put it even among their own stuff." Alas that they know not the Holy One has a controversy with them over this very thing. Alas that they are ignorant of the fact that their spiritual poverty and powerlessness, their being humiliated before the world, is due to the divine judgment upon their sins. Alas that they are completely unaware of the divine sentence, "Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you" (Jos 7:12). Paul had to rebuke the Corin-

thian assembly because they tolerated moral evil in their midst, and bade them, “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump” (1Co 5:1-7). “Except ye destroy” was the enforcing of Israel’s responsibility.

How unmistakably the defeat at Ai and God’s solemn words to Joshua make it evident that such a promise as that given in Deuteronomy 20 was *not* an absolute one. There God had given instruction, “And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people, And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you” (Deu 20:2-4). Neither in those words, nor in anything preceding or following, was there any proviso. It has the appearance of an absolute promise, without any qualification. Taken by itself, it was so; but taken in conjunction with other passages in Deuteronomy, it was *not* so—as the event at Ai, and the later experiences of Israel demonstrated. Scripture needs always to be compared with Scripture in order to arrive at the full meaning of any single verse. If we are too lazy to do the necessary searching in order to locate other qualifying or amplifying passages, then the fault is entirely our own if we be left in ignorance of the signification of any statement of Holy Writ. The whole book of Deuteronomy needs to be read through if we are to rightly understand such a passage as the one in the twentieth chapter.

Our purpose in calling attention to Deuteronomy 20:2-4, in connection with our study of Joshua 7, is to show how easy it is to wrest God’s Word, and to utter a warning and protest against the careless and dishonest manner in which it is now so often handled. Such passages as Deuteronomy 6:16-18 and 11:8-9 require to be kept steadily in mind when reading Joshua and the books which follow, for they supply the key to much that is recorded in them. And in connection with the promise in Deuteronomy 20:2-4, particularly do we need to set side by side with it such statements as, “For *if* ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him; *Then* will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you” (Deu 11:22-23), and “It shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth” (Deu 28:1); but if they obeyed *not*, His curse would certainly fall upon them (Deu 28:15). It is handling God’s Word deceitfully to stress its promises and ignore their qualifying conditions: to quote John 8:32, and omit verse 31; to cite John 10:28, and be silent upon verse 27. Hebrews 3:6, 14 are just as necessary for us as 8:10-12. God has indeed promised to show Himself strong in the behalf of those whose hearts are perfect towards Him; but nowhere has He declared that He will fight for the self-willed and disobedient.

“Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you” (Jos 7:13). This was the sequel to the “wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?” (Jos 7:10); this was the duty concerning which the LORD was now instructing His servant. It was not simply “Arise!” but “Up”—bestir thyself now unto the duty which I enjoin thee. “Sanctify the people”: this was ever the order when the nation was about to witness some outstandingly solemn or glorious transaction. Thus it was immediately before God gave the Law at Sinai (Exo 19:10). Thus it was following the murmuring at Taberah, when the LORD “came down” and talked with Moses (Num 11:18-25). Thus it was on the eve of Jehovah’s wondrous intervention for them at the Jordan (Jos 3:5). In each case, the call was for the people to be sanctified—that is, for them to be formally and reverently assembled before the LORD. Joshua was also to bid them “sanctify yourselves against tomorrow,” which signified, duly prepare yourselves for the solemn and searching ordeal, which the LORD has appointed: spare no pains in seeing to it that you are in a meet condition for the approach of the Holy One.

The Doctrine of Revelation

25. In the Soul, Part 3

For the benefit of new readers, it must be stated that in the preceding articles of this series that we dwelt upon the revelation which God has made of Himself in the material universe, in the moral nature of man, in the shaping of human history, in His incarnate Son, and in the Holy Scriptures. Then we pointed out that while the evidence

which the first three supply for the existence of God is ample to expose the irrationality of scepticism, to show that the infidel is without excuse; and that while the testimony of the last two transmit to us a clear and full communication of the divine will and make plain our path of duty; yet that none of them, nor all combined, are sufficient of themselves to bring any man—fallen and sinful as he now is—to a *saving* knowledge of, and relation to, the thrice Holy One. That while the natural man may be intellectually assured of God's existence—that Christ is His Son, that the Bible is His inspired Word, and that while he may acquire an accurate theoretical understanding of the Scriptures—he cannot either discern, receive, or relish them spiritually and experimentally: that in order thereto, he must *first* be *made spiritual*, be “born of the Spirit” (Joh 3:6), and become “a new creature” in Christ (2Co 5:17).

The absolute necessity for a supernatural work of grace upon the human heart to fit it for the taking in of a *spiritual knowledge* of spiritual things was shown from its indisposedness unto them because of its native depravity, from the might and enthralling power which sin has over it, as well as from the transcendency of divine things over the scope of human reason, and of the nature of that faith by which alone they can be apprehended. In a word, that an answerableness or correspondency between the object apprehended and the subject apprehending is indispensable. But what accord or concord is there between an infinitely holy God and a totally depraved and defiled sinner? And thus that the work of the Spirit within the sinner is as imperative as was the work of Christ for him. The Word itself does not produce its quickening, searching, convicting, and converting effects except by the blessing and concurrence of Him who of old moved holy men to write it. In short, that before any one can obtain a saving and sanctifying knowledge of God, he must make a personal, supernatural, inward discovery of Himself to the soul. As none but God can change night into day, so He alone can bring a sinner out of darkness into His own marvellous light.

“And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD” (Isa 54:13). There is a teaching of God without which all the teaching of man—even that of His most gifted and faithful servants—is ineffectual and inefficacious. The One by whom the elect are taught is the Holy Spirit, and therefore, is He denominated, “the spirit of wisdom and revelation” (Eph 1:17). Not because He reveals to the soul anything which is not found in the Word itself, but first, because it was by His own wisdom and revelation that the penmen of Scripture were enabled to write what they did; and second, because it is by His operations that what they wrote is now made effectual unto their souls. He begins by regenerating them, imparting to them a principle of spiritual life, without which they are incapacitated to see the things of God (Joh 3:3); and then He makes to their renewed mind a real and spiritual application of the same, so that they are realized in the heart, and are found to be divine realities. By the work of the Spirit, the soul obtains an actual experience of the things contained in the Scriptures, thereby receiving fulfilment of that promise, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts” (Jer 31:33).

All of God's children are taught by Him, yet not in the same degree, nor in the same order of instruction. God exercises His sovereignty here, as everywhere, being tied by no rules or regulations. That there *is variety* in the influences of the Spirit is intimated in that figurative expression, “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live” (Eze 37:9), and is more definitely stated in “there are *diversities* of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all” (1Co 12:6). Though God ever acts as He pleases, yet always with unerring wisdom, and where His people are concerned, in infinite grace; and usually His operations upon their souls follow more or less a general pattern. But in every instance, such a revelation of God is made to the soul, as none can understand or appreciate, except those who have been made the favoured subjects of the same. It is accompanied by a life and light, power and pungency, such as no preacher can possibly impart. An effectual application of the Truth is then made so that its recipient is enabled to know and feel his own personal case before God: to see himself in His light, to have an actual experience of things which hitherto were only hearsay to him.

Just here we should, perhaps, anticipate an objection. Some may be inclined to think that in the two articles preceding this one and in what follows here, we have wandered somewhat from our present subject. That we are supposed to be treating of that immediate and inward, that personal and saving revelation which God makes of Himself to the soul: whereas we appear to be bringing in that which is extraneous and irrelevant, by describing the varied experiences through which a soul passes just prior to and in his conversion. But in reality, the objection is pointless. As “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Psa 111:10; Pro 9:10), so an inward knowledge of God Himself is the beginning of spiritual life and the first entrance into vital godliness. “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (Joh 17:3). There cannot be any evangelical conviction and contrition, still less a coming to Christ and resting upon Him, until God Himself is *known*. We never move toward God in Christ until He directly shines in our hearts (2Co 4:6); and thus, the efficacious cause of faith is neither the perspicuity of our minds nor the pliability of our wills, but our effectual call by God from death unto life.

As no artist would undertake to draw a picture which would exactly resemble *every* face in each feature and particular, yet may produce an outline which will readily distinguish a man from any other creature, so we shall not essay to give such a delineation of regeneration and conversion as will precisely answer to every Christian's experience in its circumstantialities; but rather, one which should be sufficient to distinguish between a supernatural work of grace and that which pertains to empty professors. All births are not accompanied by equal travail, either in duration or intensity; yet it is often the case that those who have the easiest entrance into this world are the greatest sufferers in infancy and childhood. So some of God's children experience their acutest pangs of conviction before conversion and others afterward, but sooner or later each is made to feel and mourn the plague of his own heart. "The first actings of faith are, in most Christians, accompanied with much darkness and confusion of understanding; but yet we must say in the general that wherever faith is, there is so much light as to discover to the soul its own sins, dangers, and wants, and the all-sufficiency, suitableness, and necessity of Christ for the supply and remedy of all; and without this, Christ cannot be received"—John Flavel (1627-1691).

The selfsame light which discovers the holiness of God to a soul necessarily reveals its own vileness. Though the Spirit does not enlighten in the same measure or bring different ones to perceive things in the same order, yet sure it is that he teaches every one certain fundamental lessons; and that, in a manner and to an extent which they never understood before. "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick" (Luk 5:31); and before one will savingly betake himself to the great Physician, he is made conscious of his need of His ministrations. When a soul is quickened and illuminated by the Holy Spirit, his heart is opened to a sight and sense of sin. A work of divine grace is made perceptible first on *the conscience*, so that its subject is given to realize the exceeding sinfulness of sin. He now perceives how offensive it is unto God and how destructive unto his own soul. The malignity of sin in its very nature is seen as a thing contrary to the divine Law. He who had previously felt himself secure, now realizes he is in terrible danger. If he be one who was already a professing Christian, he now knows that he was mistaken, deluded; that what he thought to be peace, was nothing but the torpor of an unawakened conscience.

Conviction of sin is followed by a wounding of the heart, for life is accompanied not only with light but *feeling* also; otherwise, its subject would be a moral paralytic. The sinner is filled with shame, compunction, horror, and fear. He apprehends his own wickedness and pollution to be such as none other was ever guilty of. He sees himself to be utterly undone, and cries "Woe is me." He no longer laughs at what is recorded in Genesis 3, or any longer has any doubt about Adam's fall, for he perceives his sinful image in himself—conveyed to him at his very conception, a defiled nature from birth. He has been given an experiential insight into the mystery of iniquity. He now realizes that so far from having lived to the glory of God, self-gratification has been his sole occupation. "Against *thee*, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Psa 51:4) is now his anguished lament. He thinks there was never a case so desperate as his, and fears there is no hope of forgiveness. Now "the heart *knoweth* his own bitterness" (Pro 14:10).

This anguish of heart is something radically different from that sorrow for sin which is sometimes found in graceless souls, which usually consists of being ashamed because of their fellows, or a chagrin at their own folly. Even Judas repented of betraying his Master, but not with a "godly sorrow" (2Co 7:10). It is not the degree but the nature of our sorrow for sin which evidences whether or not it be produced by the grace of God. That grief for sin which issues from a gracious principle is concerned for having flouted God's authority, abused His mercies, and been indifferent whether his conduct pleased or displeased Him. Whereas the sorrow of the natural man proceeds only from self-love: his grief is that he wrecked *his own* interests and brought misery upon himself. The quickened soul is now thoroughly ashamed and abased. He no longer makes excuses, but takes sides with God and unsparingly condemns himself. The guilt of sin lies heavily upon him, as an intolerable burden. The sentence of the Law is pronounced in his conscience. He perceives that there is no soundness in him, that his case is desperate to the last degree. How can I escape my merited doom? is now his great concern.

Those who have not sat under a preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God wherein Christ is freely proffered to all who hear it, and have reached the stage described above, are now at their wit's end. The condition and case of such a one is no worse than it was formerly, but the scales have been removed from his eyes, and he sees himself in *God's* light. The soul is now brought to state of utter unrest and disquietude: not only unable to find any satisfaction in the creature, but even to obtain the slightest relief from the things of time and sense. He seeks help and peace here and there, only to find they are "cisterns, that hold no water" (Jer 2:13). He is at a total loss about deliverance, and sees no way of escape from that eternal doom to which he now realizes he is fast hastening. He once thought that a little repentance would save him, or a cry to God for mercy would suffice for pardon, but he now finds "the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it" (Isa 28:20). Neither meet his dire need.

What shall become of me? is now the question which wholly absorbs his thoughts. If, like a drowning man seeking some object that he may grasp to support him, he turns unto professing Christians and inquires in what way the Lord dealt with *their* souls and how they obtained relief—sometimes he will receive a little encouragement, but more often that which dampens his faint hope that God will yet be gracious unto him that he perish not. As he listens to what one and another relates, he realizes that it is not the path which *he* is treading, that he has not experienced the things which they did, and he is brought to the place of self-despair. He wishes that he had never been born, for he fears that, in spite of all his conviction and anguish, he may be lost forever. He feels his utter helplessness and has an experiential realization that he is “*without strength*” (Rom 5:6). Yet so far from this sense of his impotency producing apathy and inertia, he is increasingly diligent in making use of the means of grace: he now searches the Scriptures as he never did before, and cries from the depths of his soul, “Lord, save me” (Mat 14:30).

“Understandest thou what thou readest?” said Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch. “How can I,” he replied, “except some man should guide me?” (Act 8:27-33). Nevertheless, he *read* the Scriptures, and God graciously and savingly met with him therein, using Philip as His instrument to preach Jesus unto him. None but Christ can save a sinner: He alone can remove the burden of guilt, cleanse the conscience, and speak peace to the heart. As sin is loathed and hated, and self-righteousness is renounced, room is made in the soul for Christ. There is no true desire for Him until the utter vanity of this world has been felt—that its most alluring pursuits and pleasures are nothing better than the husks which the swine feed on. Sin must be made bitter as wormwood to us, before Christ can be sweet to the heart. God must wound the conscience by the lashing of His Law, ere the healing balm of Christ’s blood is longed for. Like the prodigal in the far country, the soul must be brought to the place where it cries, “I perish with hunger” (Luk 15:11-17), before the rich provisions of the Father’s house are really sought unto (Luk 15:18-24).

It is in this way, the blessed Spirit prepares the heart for the receiving of Christ. By giving him to understand his condition and case: his sins, his guilt, his pollution, his emptiness, his personal demerit, and his misery. By giving him such a sense of the same as causes him to die unto himself, to renounce himself, to abhor himself, to acknowledge that the worst that God says of him in His Word *is true*. Thereby the Holy Spirit shows him that he is exactly suited to Christ, who is “mighty to save,” and who *does* save “them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Heb 7:25). He makes him to realize that he is a fit subject for the great Physician to exercise his loving-kindness upon, to heal him of his loathsome leprosy, to pardon his innumerable sins, to supply all his need out of the exceeding riches of His glorious grace. The Holy Spirit is pleased to show the self-condemned soul that Christ has nothing in His heart against him, that He is full of compassion, of infinite power, in every way meet for him; that He came into the world with the express purpose to “seek and to save that which was lost” (Luk 19:10). Thus is Christ made desirable unto him.

But it is one thing to perceive our need for and the perfect suitability of Christ and to have longings after Him, and quite another for Him to be made accessible and present to us. There must needs to be an inward discovery of Him to the soul before He is made a reality unto it and laid hold of by him. Said the Saviour, “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life” (Joh 6:40). Note well the *order* of those two verbs: there must be a “seeing” of the Son with the eye of the soul before there can be any saving believing on Him. In other words, the same One who has removed the scales of pride and prejudice from the sinner’s eyes to behold his own abject state must show him the glorious Object on which his trust is to be reposed. The light of the Gospel now shines into his heart, and he is enabled to behold “the king in his beauty” (Isa 33:17). When He is beheld thus, it must be said, “for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee” (Mat 16:17), but that it has been supernaturally communicated by the Spirit.

Christ is now made known as “fairer than the children of men” (Psa 45:2), as wholly suited to and all-sufficient for the stricken sinner. The soul is now assured that “the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true” (1Jo 5:20). The heart is taken with Him, attracted by Him, drawn to Him, and cries, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24). A convincing and fully-persuading realization of the truth of the Gospel concerning Christ is his. The Spirit has vouchsafed no new and different revelation of Christ than what was in the written Word, but He has given a supernatural efficacy unto the Gospel to his soul, as truly as the blowing of the ram’s horns was made by God to cause the walls of Jericho to fall down. The hour has come when the hitherto-dead soul hears the voice of the Son of God, and hearing, lives (Joh 5:25). His voice has come to him with quickening energy. The saving knowledge of Christ which is thus obtained is a vastly different thing from having a good opinion or orthodox conception of Him: He is now realized to be everything which the justice of an angry God required for satisfaction, and everything which is required by the most necessitous soul.

Christ now dwells in his heart by faith; and the testimony of such a one is, “One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see” (Joh 9:25)—and neither man nor devil can make him gainsay it. Before the Holy Spirit—in

His sovereign and invincible power—dealt with my soul, I was “blind”: blind to the just claims of Christ’s holy scepter, blind so that I saw in Him no beauty that I should desire Him, blind to my own folly in spending money for that which was not bread, and by seeking contentment and satisfaction away from Him. But now I “see”: see His surpassing loveliness and superlative worth, see that He loved even *me* and gave Himself for me, see that His precious blood cleanses me from all sin, see that He is the only One worth living on and living for. Hear him singing from the heart, “Thou O Christ art all I want, more than all in Thee I find.” Hear him as he avers with the apostle, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus *my* Lord” (Phi 3:8). Behold him, as lost in wonder, love, and praise, he bows in adoration and exclaims, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (2Co 9:15).

How different is *such* a coming to Christ, closing with Him, and knowledge of Him, from that of the deluded and empty professors! Rightly did the Puritan J. Flavel declare, “Coming to Christ notes a supernatural and Almighty power, acting the soul quite above its own natural abilities in this motion. It is as possible for the ponderous mountains to start from their bases and centres, mount aloft into the air, and there fly like a wandering atom hither and thither, as for any man of himself—i.e. by a pure natural power of his own, to come to Christ. It was not a stranger thing for Peter to come to Christ walking upon the waves of the sea, than for his or any man’s soul to come to Christ in the way of faith.” It is *only* as the Spirit quickens the dead soul, makes him sensible of his desperate condition and deep need, reveals Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, and by a powerful inclining of his will, that he is brought to cast himself on Him, and that he obtains for himself a *saving experience* of the Gospel—in contradistinction from a mere hearsay knowledge of it.

Glorious Sinai

Part 1

Some of our readers are likely to be rather puzzled, if not actually surprised, by such a title as the above. Those accustomed to weigh words may regard the adjective as a strange or even incongruous one. “Forbidding Sinai,” “terrifying Sinai,” yes, but scarcely “glorious”! If such be the reader’s concept of Sinai, then it is certainly a most inadequate one, if not erroneous. That the solemn transactions of that mount were indeed awe-inspiring—yea, repellent to the natural man—is readily admitted; yet that is by no means all that they were. There was another side to them, a blessed and praise-inducing one, which also needs to be taken into consideration. Referring to the covenant and economy which was there established, the Holy Spirit declares that it “was glorious” (2Co 3:7)—yea, “glory” in the abstract (verse 9), and “was made glorious” (verse 10). True, He likewise tells us in the same passage that it was a “ministration of condemnation and death” unto the guilty, yet that in no wise altered its blessed character. True also *that* “glory” pales before another covenant and economy which exceeded it in glory (verses 9 and 10); nevertheless it *was*—in itself and in its attendants—exceedingly splendid and impressive.

At Sinai, there was vouchsafed a glorious manifestation of the majesty of Jehovah. At Sinai, there was given a glorious revelation of the divine will and moral perfections. At Sinai, there was a glorious inauguration of a most excellent economy—all of which contained a glorious typification of things to come. As another has well said, “No event in our world has been more magnificent in its circumstances of external majesty and splendour than the giving of the Law on mount Sinai.” Such a statement is fully warranted by the language of Holy Writ. Take a single specimen from the Psalms: “The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel” (Psa 68:8). When Jehovah descended to deliver the Law, He bowed the heavens, shook the earth, and made Sinai quake to its very foundations. Even more grandiloquent are the strains used by the prophet: “God came from Teman [the south], and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light” (Hab 3:3-4). One of the greatest and grandest displays of the divine majesty was given by the LORD at Sinai, and it is often referred to in the Sacred Volume.

Far too many restrict their thoughts to Exodus *Twenty* when asked to contemplate Sinai. Not only is it impossible for us to make a right approach unto or obtain a due perspective of the Decalogue without first keeping before us all that is contained in Exodus 19, but for a true understanding of both, it is also essential to bear closely in mind

the contents of the seven preceding chapters. It was no isolated event which occurred there, wholly separate, but rather one that was intimately related to foregoing ones. Yet one influential writer began his remarks on Exodus 19 and 20 by affirming, "A new dispensation is inaugurated in those chapters"; and he has been blindly followed by many, including the Scofield Bible. Far more accurate would it be to say that a new dispensation or order of things commenced at Exodus 12, for it is from the *Passover night* that the national history of Israel is to be dated! Previously, they had no corporate existence, being merely a disorganized company of slaves. But on that notable night, long to be remembered, everything was changed for them. Then for the first time, they were designated the "assembly of the congregation of Israel" (Exo 12:6).

That it *was* the Passover which marked not only the beginning of the national existence of Israel, but of the Mosaic era also, is unequivocally demonstrated by the fact that their *calendar* was then *changed* by divine orders (Exo 12:2). That new dispensation was commenced by the establishment of a new relationship between Jehovah and His people: they then became His *redeemed*—"bought with a price" (1Co 6:20), by the blood of a lamb "without blemish" (Exo 12:5-7, 13, 22). And redemption, my reader, is so far from annulling God's claims upon us as creatures, that it imposes an additional obligation to serve Him; and it supplies a further and most powerful motive for our recognition of God's claims upon us and an earnest endeavour to meet the same. "And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God *redeemed* thee: *therefore* I command thee this thing to day" (Deu 15:15). Precisely the same is the teaching of the New Testament: "That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies [the world, the flesh, and the devil] might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luk 1:74-75). "Our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Ti 2:13-14).

Redemption effects a change of masters. Israel were delivered from the tyranny of Pharaoh and the bondage of Egypt in order that they might be free to delight themselves in their God, and to worship and obey Him. That was plainly announced unto Moses at the first appearing of the LORD unto him: "When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall *serve God* upon this mountain" (Exo 3:12—see verses 1 and 2). All that transpired between Exodus 3 and 19 was but preparatory and means unto that grand end. Previously, they had seen God's judgments upon Egypt, beheld His mighty power at the Red Sea, witnessed His guiding hand in the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, experienced His mercy in providing food from heaven and water out of the rock, and now they were to receive a manifestation of His exalted sovereignty and a revelation of His ineffable holiness. "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people" (Exo 19:4-5). Having brought them into a relationship so blessed, they must now be instructed how to walk worthily of the same.

Not only has the Decalogue been insufficiently pondered in the light of its historical setting, but the whole transaction of Sinai has been far too often divorced from much that preceded it. In order to apprehend the outworking of the divine plan, it ever requires to be kept in mind that it proceeds along the principle of progressive development. Unless that fact be heeded, we shall not arrive at a correct understanding of either His plan as a whole, or of its characteristic features and special arrangements which have distinguished its manifestations at any one period, as compared with another. What took place on the mount undoubtedly marked a definite stage and advance in the gradual unfolding of the divine purpose, as well as signaled a memorable epoch in the history of His chosen people; nevertheless, it was as intimately related to what preceded as to all that followed. It was by no means an isolated action, but a progressive one. The redemption from Egypt was itself the fulfilment of a promise which Jehovah had made with Abraham; and that redemption had for its direct object the establishing with Israel of that covenant which God had made with their fathers.

An unmistakable linking up of the Mosaic economy with what had gone before appears in the symbol in which Jehovah was revealed to Moses, when he received from Him his call and commission. That symbol most definitely pointed back to the "smoking furnace" and "burning lamp" which passed in vision before the eyes of Abraham when he was informed of the future sufferings of his posterity in a land which was not theirs (Gen 15:13, 17). That "furnace" was now again made visible to Moses (Exo 3:2), yet the little thornbush—emblem of the covenant people, the tree of God's planting—stood uninjured in the midst of the flame, because the covenant God Himself was there. Any doubt as to the correctness of that interpretation should be removed by what is said in the immediate context, for there we are told, "And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them" (Exo 2:24-25)—i.e. the covenant (Psa 74:20).

What we have just pointed out opens more intelligently what follows, for when Moses demurred at the mission entrusted to him and asked, What shall I say unto Israel when I tell them, “The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you,” and they shall inquire, “What is his name?”—God answered him, “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: *this* is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations” (Exo 3:13-15). That glorious “name” is linked equally to the past and the future. He who affirmed Himself to be the incomprehensible “I AM THAT I AM” (Exo 3:14)—as a description of His distinctive name of Jehovah—did so for the express purpose of enabling Israel to recognize Him as the God of their fathers, as the One who had in the past solemnly covenanted with them, and who now, in the immediate future, was going to make good unto their children what He had promised them.

As Jehovah, the great I AM—explained in the “him which is, and which was, and which is to come” (Rev 1:4, and compare 4:8 and 16:5 for variations)—He would show unto His people that He is the God who changeth not (Mal 3:6). Having made an everlasting covenant with the patriarchs, He continued to abide in the relationship which it established, for He could no more fail to fulfil its engagements than He could cease to be. If the symbol of the burning bush was fitted to turn the thoughts of Moses unto Genesis 15, still more appropriate was the divine revelation vouchsafed unto him there: not only unto the urgencies of Israel’s case in their Egyptian bondage, but as a sure pledge of their coming deliverance—ratified by the significance of His peculiar covenant name. His people were thereby assured that however conditions had changed for the worse—a temporal darkness veiling their fair prospects—nevertheless, the God of their fathers remained without variableness or shadow of turning, being the immutable God of the present and the future, as well as of the past. It was both a pledge of a grander manifestation of His faithfulness and love, and an intimation they might expect a yet fuller revelation of His character. With such encouragement was Moses sent forth to execute in the name of God and commission given to him.

It was then in pursuance of His covenant with Abraham that God delivered his descendants from the tyranny of Pharaoh; and it is *that* which supplies the key to all the subsequent dealings of the LORD with his descendants. As Moses told them plainly at a later date, “The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would *keep the oath* which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen” (Deu 7:7-8). It was in fulfilment of that same oath He opened away through the Red Sea, and that He continued to show Himself strong in their behalf. That nothing whatever occurred at Sinai which in any way annulled or even modified the covenant with Israel’s progenitors is evidenced by the fact that whenever any serious crime was committed by the nation, those who interceded for them sought forgiveness on the ground of the promises made to Abraham: see Exodus 32:13; Deuteronomy 9:27-29; 2 Kings 13:23.

The glorious transactions of Sinai are prefaced by this statement: “In the *third* month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the *same* day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount” (Exo 19:1-2). Like all the time-marks of Scripture, this one requires to be carefully noted, for it intimates to us the significance of what follows. Three is ever the number of *manifestation*: as God Himself is made known to us in His three Persons, and hence, too, it is the number of resurrection (Christ rising on the third day, etc.), for it is then life is seen emerging from death. Jehovah was now to give unto His people a further and fuller disclosure of Himself: of His majesty, His holiness, and His will concerning them; and most appropriately was that vouchsafed upon *the mount*—the place of eminence and vision. It was a testification of His goodness unto them—as much so as were the awe-inspiring phenomena at Pentecost. As Moses subsequently reminded them, “Behold, the LORD our God hath shewed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire” (Deu 5:24).

“And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself” (Exo 19:3-4). First, mark the *double appellation* here given unto the Hebrews: the former to humble them by a reminder of their lowly origin; the latter to evoke praise for the dignity and blessing which God had conferred upon them. But there was a deeper significance thereto, and something we need to closely observe: that double appellation supplies more than a hint of the twofoldness of what follows. As the “seed” of Abraham included both an earthly and a heavenly one, and was therefore symbolized by a dual figure—“the stars of the heaven” and “the sand which is upon the sea shore” (Gen 22:17); and as the promises made to him received both a “letter” or literal, and a “spirit” or mystical fulfilment—the one in his natural descend-

ants, and the other in his spiritual children (Gal 3:7, 29!); so the transactions of Sinai require to be viewed in their bearing upon both national Israel and the “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16).

What has just been pointed out is very far from being something which *we* desire to “read into” (Exo 20): it is *demand*ed by the clear teaching of the New Testament. The fact that we are told, “For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1Co 5:7) *obliges* us to view Israel’s deliverance from Egypt as a type of the Church’s redemption from the dominion of sin and Satan; while their miraculous passage through the Red Sea obviously foreshadowed the Church being brought onto resurrection ground. Equally clear is it that the furnishing of them with the manna was a foreshadowing of Christ, “the true bread from heaven” (Joh 6:32) as the food of His people. The bringing forth of water from the smitten rock was manifestly a figure of the Holy Spirit being given to Christ’s people—the mystical meaning of that incident being expressly defined for us in the “*spiritual* drink” and “that spiritual Rock” of 1 Corinthians 10:4. What anointed eyes then can fail to see in Jehovah’s statement regarding the national Israel, “I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself” (Exo 19:4) a declaration of His amazing grace in Christ unto the spiritual Israel, who “suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might *bring us to God*” (1Pe 3:18).

Next, they were reminded of what the LORD had done for them: “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians” (Exo 19:4), righting and avenging you from their cruel oppression and persecution, accepting the challenge of the haughty Pharaoh (Exo 5:2), and humbling that mighty monarch into the dust. And how I “beareth [you] on [eagles’] wings”—a figure of the gracious tenderness which Jehovah had shown them (Deu 32:11-12): protecting them from His judgment-plagues upon Egypt, sheltering them from the angel of death, and interposing His pillar of cloud and fire between them and their pursuers. “And brought you unto myself”: not only into a state of liberty and honour, but into covenant and communion with the living God, that they might delight themselves in Him and serve Him. “Ye have *seen*” all this, He reminds them, appealing to their own observations and experience. They knew it was entirely of the LORD’s doing, and must be marvellous in their eyes. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) pointed out, “It was not they that reached toward God, but it was He that brought them to Himself.” With what *design* we are about to consider: certainly not to impose upon them a harsh and tyrannical regime, but to give them further proofs of His lovingkindness.

“Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Pro 3:17). The Satan-deceived world imagines that godliness is a thing of gloom rather than of gladness, that it is something which the saints endure rather than enjoy. On the contrary, holiness is happiness: it is neither the mirth of the fool, nor the giddy gaiety of the thoughtless, but a peace “which passeth all understanding” (Phi 4:7), and a heart-satisfaction not to be found elsewhere. So far from piety robbing us of freedom, it conducts into true liberty—delivering from the bondage of sin. Christ’s yoke is easy and His burden light (Mat 11:30). Earthly joy is at best evanescent, but the delights of holiness are eternal. Only the One Who made us can content us.



FEBRUARY

A Good Ending

In order to a good ending, it is required that we heed the injunction, “Let us not be weary in well doing” (Gal 6:9). There has ever been a pressing need for God’s people to pay attention to that word, for they meet with so many discouraging setbacks in their best efforts to mortify their lusts and develop their graces, that they are very

apt to become thoroughly discouraged, which produces a readiness to give ear unto that seductive whisper of Satan's "What's the use?" But there is a special timeliness in this exhortation for our degenerate generation, when the vast majority of professing Christians are walking arm-in-arm with the world, and the believer himself is tempted to follow their evil example. If he is not to share their doom, then he must not tread their path, for all who walk the broad road—no matter how orthodox their beliefs, or what their church connections—will most certainly find it terminates in destruction—eternal and unbearable. "Well-doing" consists of a sincere determination and endeavour to perform God's revealed will and an earnest effort to glorify Him. Unto those who continue so doing, the promise is given "for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

The "if" is not to be ignored, explained away, nor glossed over, but taken just as it stands. To continue well is not only desirable, but imperative and indispensable. There are many who appear to make an excellent start in the Christian life whose efforts are not sustained, and it has to be said of them, as of the Galatians in like case, "Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth..." (Gal 3:1). And observe well that the apostle did not say, "peace," "peace," and assure them that God would certainly recover them out of the snare of the devil. Instead, he told them plainly and faithfully, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Gal 4:11). So far was Paul from subscribing to the dangerous delusion which now prevails so widely—that if a person has once "accepted Christ as his personal Saviour," all is well with him for ever, no matter to what extent he conforms to this world and indulges the lusts of the flesh—he declared, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1Co 9:27). Alas, that such a solemn warning should now be robbed of all points where it is not criminally disregarded.

That verse has been woefully wrested by the "Dispensationalists," who make such a pretence of "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2Ti 2:15). They affirm that it merely relates to a being disqualified for and rejected from Christian "service." But the Greek word for "castaway" ("*adokimos*") is never used of anyone's being set aside from the ministry, but in every instance refers to "something" much more serious and fatal—namely to a being *abandoned by God*. It is translated "rejected" of the ground which bears "thorns and briers" (Heb 6:8), and "reprobate" in the other six passages, among which are Romans 1:28; 2 Timothy 3:8; Titus 1:16! In the context of 1 Corinthians 9:27, the apostle likens the Christian life and conflict unto the running of a race and the engaging in a wrestling contest (verses 24 and 25), both of which call for strenuous effort, strict self-discipline and self-denial (verse 25). In verse 26, he changes the figure from running to boxing, and then applies the same to himself, making his body the antagonist (verse 27). By a synecdoche (in which a part is made to comprehend the whole—the "body" represents his entire sinful nature: compare the "body of sin" (Rom 6:6), "the body of this death" (Rom 7:24), "mortify therefore your *members* which are upon the earth [namely, the lusts of]; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col 3:5), where in each case the allusion is to the totality of our inward corruptions.

Even so strong a Calvinist as Charles Hodge (1797-1878), in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, said upon 9:27, "It was not merely his sensual nature that Paul endeavoured to bring into subjection, but all the propensities and passions of his heart...He made these strenuous exertions, lest, having preached the Gospel to others, he himself should become a reprobate, one rejected. What an argument and what a reproof is this! The reckless and listless Corinthians thought they could safely indulge themselves to the very verge of sin, while this devoted apostle considered himself as engaged in a lifelong *struggle for his salvation*. This same apostle, however, who evidently acted on the principle that the righteous scarcely are saved and that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, at other times breaks out in the most joyful assurance of salvation, and says that he was persuaded that nothing in heaven, earth, or hell, could ever separate him from the love of God (Rom 8:38-39). The one state of mind is the necessary condition of the other." It is only those who heed God's solemn warnings, that recognize the perils which beset their souls, that assiduously employ the means of grace which He has provided for their preservation, who are entitled to appropriate the comfort found in the divine promises concerning the eternal security of the saints.

It was *not* that Paul *expected* to become a "castaway," but that he tells us in 1 Corinthians 9:27, what he did (and what we must do) in order to *prevent* such a catastrophe. He was not one who fondly dreamed of being "carried to heaven on flowery beds of ease," but rather was engaged in fighting the good fight of faith, seeking to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil—knowing full well that unless he did so, he would be fatally overcome by them. But it will be asked, Is not every regenerate soul "kept by the power of God" (1Pe 1:5)? Certainly he is. But how, and where? Not by preserving him in the ways of utter worldliness, self-will, and self-pleasing, but rather by leading him into the paths of righteousness, and when he wanders, restoring him thereto; by moving him to resist temptation, avoid the perils which menace, and conduct himself sanely and circumspectly. God's power does not keep us mechanically, without any concurrence on *our* part; but as 1 Peter 1:5 goes on to say, "through faith": that is, through working in us a spirit of dependence upon God and obedience to Him. Believers are kept by divine

power moving them to deny self, take heed to their ways, flee temptation, and by causing them to seek grace from above and to draw strength from Christ.

But does not Scripture expressly teach the final perseverance of all saints? Of *saints* yes, but not of graceless professors or white-washed worldlings. Of thousands of them it is written, “This man *began* to build, and was not able to finish” (Luk 14:30); and again, “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the *latter end* is worse with them than the beginning” (2Pe 2:20). The final perseverance of the saints taught in God’s Word is not their preservation in a course of self-gratification and sin, but a perseverance in faith, obedience, and holiness. “He that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Mat 10:22), and none others will be. Thus, it is imperative to heed that word, “For we are made partakers of Christ, *if* we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Heb 3:14), which is very far from signifying a “presumptuous persuasion” that heaven is sure no matter what road I tread. “Our confidence,” as the context shows, is our “profession” (Heb 3:1); and to hold it “unto the end” is to continue supplying evidence of the genuineness of our profession, to “continue in the faith grounded and settled” (Col 1:23), to heed the exhortations in Hebrews 3:12 and 13, and the warnings in Hebrews 4:1, 11.

“Conversion is a turning into the right road; the next thing is to walk in it. The daily going on in the road is as essential as the first starting, if we would reach the desired end. To strike the first blow is not all the battle; to him that overcometh is the crown promised. To start in the race is nothing; many have done that who have failed; but to hold out until you reach the winning-post is the great point of the matter. Perseverance is as essential to man’s salvation as conversion”—Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892). We must not only begin well but continue well, if we are to *end well*. Unless we can truly say, “*For to me to live is Christ*,” we are but deceiving ourselves if we imagine that “to die is *gain*” (Phi 1:21). Alas, if the vast majority of professing Christians were honest, they would be obliged to aver, “For to me to live is—pleasure—money-making—or social prestige”; and for *them* to die is eternal loss, for they must not only leave behind their idols, but enter a hopeless eternity. Face the issue squarely, my reader: is it “For me to live is to gratify *self*?” or “For me to live is *Christ*”—to seek to please and honour Him? Only if the latter be the case, will you end well.

The Prayers of the Apostles

62. 1 Peter 1:4-5

Certain schools of the “Dispensationalists” aver and insist that the last seven epistles of the New Testament (Hebrews—Jude) pertain not to those who are members of the mystical body of Christ, but are entirely “Jewish,” penned by the apostles to the Circumcision and meant for them only. Such a wild and wicked assertion is an arbitrary invention of their own, for there is not a word in the Scriptures which substantiates it, but on the contrary, much in those very epistles which clearly repudiates such a view. As well affirm that the epistles of Paul are “not for us” (British and American saints), because they are addressed to companies at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, etc. Whoever the persons entitled “the Hebrews,” that epistle belongs to those who are “partakers of the *heavenly* calling” (Heb 3:1)—something which in no wise pertained to the Jewish nation as such. Though the epistle of James be written to “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (Jam 1:1), yet it was those members of them who were begotten of God (Jam 1:18). The epistles of John are manifestly the letters of the Father to His dear children (1Jo 2:12; 5:21), who had Jesus Christ for their Advocate (1Jo 2:1). Jude is also a general one, “to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called” (Jude :1).

The first epistle of Peter is addressed to “the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1Pe 1:1), or as the American R.V. more literally renders, “to the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus,” etc.: that is, to Jews who are absent from Palestine, residing in Gentile lands—compare John 7:35. But care needs to be taken that the term “strangers” or “sojourners” is not limited to its literal force, but given to its figurative meaning, and spiritual application. It refers not strictly to the fleshly descendants of Abraham, but rather to his spiritual “seed,” who were partakers of the heavenly calling, and as such, away from their home. The patriarchs “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth...for they desire a better country [than the earthly Canaan], that is, an heavenly” (Heb 11:13-16). So too David, even when king in Jerusalem, acknowledged,

“I am a stranger in the earth” (Psa 119:19). All Christians are “strangers” in this scene, for while they “are at home in the body,” they are “absent from the Lord” (2Co 5:6). Their citizenship is in heaven (Phi 3:20). Thus it was *spiritual* “strangers” unto whom Peter wrote, those who had been begotten unto “an inheritance” reserved for them in heaven (1Pe 1:4).

Nor were all the spiritual “strangers” from the natural stock of Abraham. There is more than one indication in this very epistle that while possibly a majority of them were Jewish believers, yet by no means all of them were so. Thus, in 1 Peter 2:10, after stating that God had called them out of darkness into His marvellous light, the apostle went on to say, “Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy,” which was the case with the *Gentiles* (compare Eph 2:12-13). Peter was there quoting from Hosea 1:9-10 (the “children of Israel” in verse 10 refers to the *spiritual* Israel), which is definitely interpreted for us in Romans 9:24-25. “Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee [Hosea], I will call them my people, which were not my people” Again, in 1 Peter 4:3, Peter reminds those to whom he was writing, “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable *idolatries*”—which could only refer to Gentiles, for the Jews, since Babylonish captivity, never fell into idolatry.

In connection with the prayer in 1 Peter 1:3-5, we shall consider seven things. First, its connection—that we may perceive who are included in the “begotten *us*” (verse 3). Second, its nature: another doxology—“Blessed be.” Third, its Object: “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Fourth, its ascription: “His abundant mercy.” Fifth, its incitement: “Hath begotten us again unto a lively hope.” Sixth, its acknowledgement: “By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Seventh, its substance: “To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for [us]” (verse 4). There is much here of interest and deep importance, and therefore, it would be wrong for us to hurriedly dismiss such a passage with a few generalizations, especially since it contains so much that has not come before us in the preceding prayers. It is not that we are seeking to unduly prolong this series—though we admit we shall be sorry when the end of it is reached—but that we desire to consider this prayer as carefully as we have each of the others. May we be duly affected by its contents and truly enter into its elevated spirit.

First, *its connection*. Those on whose behalf the apostle offered this doxology are spoken of according to their literal and figurative circumstances (1Pe 1:1), and then described by their spiritual characters: “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (verse 2). That description pertains equally to *all* the regenerate in every dispensation or age. When connected with election, the “foreknowledge of God” refers not to His eternal and universal prescience, for that embraces all beings and events, past, present, and future, and therefore has for its objects the non-elect equally with the elect; consequently, there is no allusion whatever to God’s preview of our believing or any other excellence in the objects of His choice. Rather has the term, “foreknowledge” respect to the spring or source of election, namely God’s good will and approbation—see Psalm 1:6, Amos 3:2, and 2 Timothy 2:19 for *this* sense of the word “know”; and Romans 11:2 for “foreknow.” Thus, “elect according to the foreknowledge of God” signifies that, the favoured subjects thereof were fore-loved by Him, that they were the objects of His eternal favour, unalterably delighted in by Him as He foreviewed them in Christ—“accepted [or ‘graced’] in the beloved” (Eph 1:4-6).

“Through sanctification of the Spirit” (1Pe 1:2). It is via and by means of the Spirit’s gracious and effectual operations that our election by God the Father takes effect: see 2 Thessalonians 2:13. “Sanctification of the Spirit” has reference to His work of regeneration, whereby we are quickened, anointed, consecrated, and set apart unto God. The underlying idea of “sanctification” is almost always that of *separation*: by the new birth, we are distinguished from those dead in sin. “Unto obedience” signified *here*, unto the authoritative call of the Gospel (Rom 10:16, 1; 1Pe 1:22) and subsequently to its precepts. Election is never unto license, but to holiness and good works (Eph 1:4; 2:10); and the Spirit regenerates unto a heart-submission to Christ, and not to a life of self-pleasing. When the Spirit sanctifies a soul, it is that he may adorn the Gospel by a walk which is regulated thereby. It is by his obedience that a Christian makes evident his election by the Father, for previously, he was one of “the children of disobedience” (Eph 5:6); and by it, he furnishes proof of the Spirit’s supernatural work within him. “And sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1Pe 1:2), which must be distinguished from His blood-shedding (Heb 9:22). The “shedding” is Godward: the “sprinkling” is its application unto the believer, whereby he obtains forgiveness and peace of conscience (Heb 9:13-14; 10:22), and by which his service is rendered acceptable unto God (1Pe 2:5).

A careful reading of the whole epistle makes it evident that these saints were passing through severe trials: see 1 Peter 1:6-7; 2:19-21; 3:16-18; 4:12-15; 5:8-9. Jewish Christians have ever been sorely oppressed, persecuted not

so much by the profane world, as by their own brethren according to the flesh. How bitter and fierce the hatred of such appears not only from the case of Stephen, but from what the apostle suffered at their hands (2Co 11:24-26). Writing to the Hebrews, he bade them, “But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions...and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods” (Heb 10:32-34). By bearing the fact in mind, a better understanding is had of many details. It then becomes more apparent why Peter has so much to say upon affliction, and why he refers so often to the sufferings of Christ. They were in need of both a stimulating cordial and that which would nerve unto heroic endurance. He therefore dwelt upon those aspects of truth best adopted to support the soul, strengthen faith, inspire hope, produce steadfastness, and good works.

Second, *its nature*: a tribute of praise. In this prayer, the apostle is not making supplication of God, but rather is offering adoration unto Him! This is as much our privilege and duty as it is to spread our needs before Him, yea, the one should ever be accompanied by the other. It is “with thanksgiving” we are bidden to “let [our] requests be made known unto God” (Phi 4:6), and that is preceded by the exhortation, “rejoice in the Lord alway” (verse 4); and that rejoicing is to find expression in gratitude and by ascribing glory unto Him. If we be suitably affected by God’s bounties, we cannot but bless the Bestower of them. In verse 2, Peter had mentioned some of the most noteworthy and comprehensive of all the divine benefits, and this “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” is the echo—or better, the reflex—of His amazing grace toward them. This particular doxology is also to be regarded as a devout acknowledgment of the inestimable favours which God had bestowed on His elect in verse 3. As the apostle reflected upon the glorious blessings conferred on hell-deserving sinners, his heart was drawn out in fervent worship unto the benign Author of them.

Thus it should be, thus it must be, with Christians today. God has no dumb children (Luk 18:7). Not only do they “cry day and night unto him” in their distress, but they frequently praise Him for His excellency and give thanks for His benefits. As they meditate upon His abundant mercy in having begotten them unto a living hope, as they anticipate by faith the glorious inheritance which is reserved for them in heaven, and as they realize these flow from the sovereign favour of God to them through the death and resurrection of His dear Son, well may they exclaim, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Doxologies, then, are expressions of holy joy and adoring homage—see our September 1948 article for further remarks thereon. Concerning the particular term which is here used for “blessed,” Charles John (C. J.) Ellicott (1819-1905) most helpfully remarked that, “This form of Greek word is consecrated to God alone: Mark 14:61; Romans 9:5; 2 Corinthians 11:31. It is a completely different word from the ‘blessed’ or ‘happy’ of the Beatitudes and different from the ‘blessed’ of our Lord’s mother in Luke 1:28, 42. This form of it [in 1 Peter 1:3] implies that blessing is always *due* on account of something inherent in the person, while that only implies a blessing has been *received*.” So minutely discriminating and accurate is the language of Holy Writ.

Third, *its Object*. This doxology is addressed to “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” which is explained by John Calvin (1509-1564) thus: “For as formerly, by calling Himself the God of Abraham, He designed to mark the difference between Him and all fictitious gods, so after He has manifested Himself in His Son, His will is not to be known otherwise than in Him. Hence they who form their ideas of God in His naked majesty, apart from Christ, have an idol instead of the true God, as is the case with the Jews and the Turks [i.e. the Mohammedans, to which we may add ‘Unitarians’]. Whoever then seeks really to know the only true God, must regard Him as the Father of Christ.” More specifically: in Psalm 72:17, it was foretold of Christ that “men shall be blessed in him” and that “all nations shall call him blessed.” Whereupon the sacred singer broke forth in this adoring praise: “Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things” (Psa 72:18). That was the Old Testament form of doxology (compare 1Ki 1:48; 1Ch 29:10); but the New Testament doxology (Eph 1:3; 2Co 1:3) is expressed in accordance with the revelation the Deity has made in the person of Jesus Christ: “He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him” (Joh 5:23).

God the Father is not here viewed absolutely but relatively, that is, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord Himself is contemplated in His mediatorial character, that is, as the eternal Son vested with our nature. As such, the Father appointed and sent Him forth on His redeeming mission. In that capacity and office, the Lord Jesus owned and served Him as His God and Father. From the beginning, He was engaged in His Father’s business, ever doing those things which were pleasing in His sight. By God’s Word, He was regulated in all things. Jehovah was His “portion” (Psa 16:5), His “God” (Psa 22:1), His “All.” Christ was under Him (Joh 6:38; 14:28): “The head of Christ is God” (1Co 11:3). In a covenant way, too, He was and is the God and Father of Christ (Joh 20:17). Not only so while He was here on earth, but so now in heaven. This is clear from His promise after the ascension: “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of *my God*, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God” (Rev 3:12). Yet this *official* subordination of Christ unto God the Father in no wise militates against nor modifies His *essential* equality with Him (Joh 5:23; 10:30).

It is to be carefully noted that praise is here rendered not to “the God and Father of *the* Lord Jesus Christ” but of “*our* Lord Jesus Christ”: in other words, God’s relation to us is determined by His relation to our Surety. He is the God and Father of sinners only in Christ. He is adored as the covenant Head of the Saviour and of His elect in Him. This is a point of first importance: the connection which the Church sustains to God is fixed by that of the Redeemer’s to God, for She is Christ’s and Christ is God’s (1Co 3:23). The “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” is the peculiar and characteristic *Christian* designation of Deity, contemplating Him as the God of *redemption*: Romans 15:6; 2 Corinthians 11:31; Colossians 1:3. When an Israelite called upon Him as “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,” he recognized and owned Him not only as the Creator and moral Governor of the world, but also as the covenant God of his nation. So when the Christian addresses Him as “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” he acknowledges Him as the Author of eternal redemption through the incarnate Son, who voluntarily took the place of subserviency unto and dependence upon Him. In the highest meaning of the word, God is the “Father” of no man until he is united to the One whom He commissioned and sent to be the Saviour of sinners, the sole Mediator between God and men.

The language in which God is here worshipped *explains* how He is so kind and bounteous unto His people. All blessings come to the creature from God. He it is who gave them being and supplies their varied needs. Equally so, all spiritual blessings proceed from Him (Jam 1:17). The Highest is “kind unto the unthankful and the evil” (Luk 6:35). But spiritual blessings issue from Him not simply as God, nor from the Father absolutely, but from “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In what follows, the apostle makes mention of His abundant mercy, of His begetting the elect unto a living hope, and of an inheritance which infinitely transcends all earthly good. And in the bestowment of these favours, God is acknowledged in the special character in which He confers them. If it be asked, How can a holy God endow sinful men with such blessings? the answer is, as “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is because God is well-pleased with the Redeemer that He is well pleased with the redeemed. The work of Christ merited such a reward, and He shares it with His own (Joh 17:22). All comes to us from the Father through the Son.

Fourth, *its ascription*: “His abundant mercy.” As God does not elect because He foresaw any would savingly repent and believe the Gospel—for these are the effects of His invincible call, which is *the consequence* and not the cause of election—but “according to his own purpose” (2Ti 1:9); neither does He regenerate because of any merits possessed by the subjects thereof, but solely of His sovereign pleasure (Jam 1:18). His abundant mercy is here set over against our abundant demerits, and in proportion as we are sensible of the latter shall we be moved to render praise for the former. Such is our woeful case through sin that naught but divine mercy can relieve it.

“No other attribute could have helped us had mercy refused. As we are by nature, justice condemns us, holiness frowns upon us, power crushes us, truth confirms the threatenings of the law, and wrath fulfils it. It is from the mercy of God that all our hopes begin. Mercy is needed for the miserable, and yet more for the sinful. Misery and sin are fully united in the human race, and mercy here performs her noblest deeds. My brethren, God has vouchsafed His mercy unto us, and we must thankfully acknowledge that in our case, His mercy has been *abundant* mercy. We were defiled with abundant sin, and only the multitude of His loving kindnesses could have put those sins away. We were infected with an abundant evil, and only overflowing mercy can ever cure us of all our natural disease, and make us meet for heaven. We have received abundant grace up till now; we have made great drafts upon the exchequer of God, and of His fullness have all we received grace for grace. Where sin hath abounded, grace hath much more abounded...Everything in God is on a grand scale. Great power—He shakes the world. Great wisdom—He balances the clouds. His mercy is commensurate with His other attributes: it is Godlike mercy, infinite mercy! You must measure His Godhead before you can compute His mercy. Well may it be called ‘abundant’ if it be infinite. It will always be abundant, for all that can be drawn from it will be but as the drop of a bucket to the sea itself. The mercy which deals with us is not man’s mercy, but God’s mercy, and therefore boundless mercy”—Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892).

The Life and Times of Joshua

42. The Inquisition, Part 2

Continuing the LORD's response to Joshua's prayer, subsequent to the humiliating repulse at Ai. After informing him that Israel had sinned grievously, and therefore His blessing had been withheld from their efforts, the LORD bade his servant, "Up, sanctify the people" (Jos 7:13). Before we consider the immediate and historical application of those words, let us observe how they supplied yet another line to the typical picture of the Saviour which is set forth in this book. As we have passed from chapter to chapter, the readers' attention has been directed to quite a number of things in which Joshua foreshadowed the Lord Jesus. A further detail now appears in this injunction for him to sanctify "without the gate" (Heb 13:12). And what was the moral condition of His people when He did so? Precisely the same as Israel's was here: defiled, under the curse of the Law, "fierceness of his [God's] anger" being upon them (Jos 7:26 and compare Eph 2:3). To deliver them therefrom, the antitypical Joshua suffered the full penalty of their sins, and set them apart unto God in all the acceptableness of His meritorious sacrifice. Mark also *the time* when this occurred: as it was immediately following upon Joshua's "[falling] to the earth upon his face" (Jos 7:6) that he was bidden to "sanctify the people," so it was a few hours after His prostration on the ground in Gethsemane that Christ sanctified His people at the Cross!

Turning from the spiritual and mystical signification of the order Joshua received, to its literal and historical meaning, we understand by God's "sanctify the people" that he was to formally and reverently convene the nation in orderly array before the LORD. That injunction was probably the exact equivalent of one received by Israel's prophet at a later date. "Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children" (Joe 2:15-16), for it is clear from what follows here that all Israel were required to take their place before the divine tribunal. "Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you" (Jos 7:13). It is striking and interesting to note how that the LORD here *repeated* what He had just said in the previous verse, both in charging them with their being an accursed thing in Israel's midst, and that because of it, they could not stand before their enemies. Such reiteration not only evinced how heinous was their crime in the eyes of the Holy One, but also gave point unto the call for the people to "sanctify yourselves"—not "for the morrow," but *against* it. They were to duly anticipate in their consciences the divine inquisition which would then be held, when the guilty would be unerringly identified and severely punished. Thus, "Sanctify yourselves" was tantamount unto "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (Amo 4:12).

"Sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow." The same demand had been made at Sinai, and what is recorded of it casts light upon the import of it here: they were to wash their bodies and clothes, and abstain from their wives (Exo 19:14-15). Thus, "sanctify" here has the force of *purify*: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh" (Heb 9:13 and compare 2Ti 2:21). Under the law, "sanctification" or separation and consecration to the LORD was secured by a process of cleansing. By a comparison with Joel 2:15-16, and its context (verses 12, 13, 17), it is clear that, in addition to ceremonial purification, Israel were here enjoined to cleanse themselves *morally*. "Sanctify yourselves" would therefore imply and include a solemn call to self-examination, humiliation, and supplication; and that in turn would necessitate a separating of their minds from all other cares and concerns, that they might give themselves undistractedly and earnestly unto those solemn duties. Such acts of devotion can only be suitably performed as the thoughts and affections are detached from the daily business and worries of this world. As they had been required to sanctify themselves before they received the Law, so now they were ordered to do so when about to witness a most fearful enforcing of its penalty.

Possibly some will be inclined to ask, Since a single individual only had committed this offence, or at most, with the connivance of his family (Jos 7:21), what reason or propriety was there in calling upon *all* the people to employ themselves in solemn self-examination? How could those who knew they were innocent of perpetrating a serious crime, sincerely engage in such a task? Those who are truly jealous of the glory of God and who are painfully conscious of the fact that "in many things we offend all" (Jam 3:2) will have no difficulty in meeting such an objection. The name of the LORD had been grievously sullied by the enemy's triumph at Ai, and His saints could not but bitterly mourn over it. Furthermore, the whole nation had been put to shame when their soldiers had fled before the Canaanites; yea, the nation was yet in imminent danger while exposed to "the fierceness of his [God's]

anger” (Jos 7:26), and therefore, it was most fitting that there should be an humbling of the entire congregation before the LORD—as the example of Joshua and their elders (Jos 7:6) had intimated. Moreover, as Matthew Henry (1662-1714) pointed out, “The sins of *others* may be improved by *us*, as furtherances of our sanctification, as the scandal of the incestuous Corinthian occasioned a blessed reformation in the church: 2 Corinthians 7:11.” Every time a saint is overtaken in a fault, it should give point unto his fellows of that warning, “Let him that thinketh *he* standeth take heed lest he fall” (1Co 10:12).

Ere passing on, one other question needs to be noticed: if the “sanctify the people” (Jos 7:13) unto Joshua foreshadowed Christ’s sanctification of His Church, then *what* was spiritually connoted by his bidding the people, “sanctify yourselves”? There was a double sanctification: one by Joshua and one by themselves! That twofoldness of truth appears again and again in connection with God’s people. As believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, they *are* saved (Act 16:31), yet they are bidden to work out their own salvation (Phi 2:12 and compare 1Ti 4:16). They are new creatures in Christ, yet exhorted to put on the new man (Eph 4:24). They are now clean, and yet need to have their feet washed. They are complete in Christ (Col 2:10), yet are bidden to grow in grace and add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, etc. (2Pe 1:5). Every believer has been “perfected for ever” (Heb 10:14), yet confesses that he is not already perfect (Phi 3:12). The one refers to what they are in Christ, the other to what they are in themselves. Unless the Christian reader learns to draw that distinction, much in the epistles will seem almost a meaningless jumble, if not a series of contradictions. There is a tremendous difference between how the believer appears in the sight of God, and how he looks in his own eyes and those of his fellows. He stands before God in the infinite value of Christ’s righteousness, while in his actual experience, he is warring against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and is often worsted by them.

“Sanctification” is still more complex, for a *threefold* distinction is necessary in order to bring into view its leading features, namely, our federal, personal, and practical holiness. By our fall in Adam, we lost not only the favour of God, but the purity of our nature, and therefore, we need to be both reconciled to Him and sanctified in our inner man. The former is secured by the work of Christ; the latter is effected by the operation of the Holy Spirit. The former is judicial; the latter is vital. Christ is the covenant Head of His people, and since He is the Holy One, all in Him are representatively holy. He is their holiness as truly as He is their righteousness: “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1Co 1:30). He is “made unto them” sanctification in precisely the same way as God “made him to be sin for us” (2Co 5:21), namely, by legal reckoning, by imputation. But that is not all: believers are not only sanctified federally and legally, but personally and vitally in themselves. In consequence of their covenant union with Christ, the Holy Spirit is sent to quicken them into newness of life, to indwell them, to abide with them forever. This is their “sanctification of the Spirit” (2Th 2:13).

The *fruit* of the believer’s sanctification in Christ and of the Spirit’s indwelling are, in various ways and degrees, made manifest in their daily lives, which is what we term *practical* sanctification. A principle of holiness is imparted at regeneration, and the workings and effects of the same soon appear in the conduct. Sanctification of the Spirit produces a real and radical change in its favoured subject, and so transforms his behaviour “as it becometh the Gospel of Christ” (Phi 1:27). That which has been wrought within every believer is manifested without, by an obedient walk in the paths of holiness as marked out in the Word. Thereby, evidence is given that they have been created “after God...in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24). It is on the basis of their federal and vital oneness with Christ that exhortations unto practical holiness are addressed to them: “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1Jo 2:6). And it is by virtue of the Spirit’s sanctification that such exhortations are exactly suited to the new nature He has wrought in them: “Let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints” (Eph 5:3). Those whom the Spirit has made “saints” (i.e. “sanctified ones”) are to conduct themselves *as such* (Rom 6:1-2). The nation of Israel had been set apart unto the LORD, and that call, “sanctify yourselves,” was the equivalent of saying, act accordingly. To us the word is, “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1; and compare 1Pe 1:15).

“Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.” “The Lord did not point out the criminal immediately, but He left the matter in ambiguity for some time, and at last brought it to light gradually: that both magistrates and people might learn to do their duty, and to keep a vigilant eye over one another; and that the delay and process might make the transaction more solemn, and excite the more careful self-examination and sanctification of themselves by every method appointed under the law”—Thomas Scott (1747-1821). Similarly did the Saviour say unto His apostles, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” (Joh 6:70). Later He informed them that one of them would betray Him, though still without actually naming the one who would be guilty of such horrible perfidy; which resulted in each of the eleven

asking: “Lord, is it I?” (Mat 26:22). Such ought to be the first concern of each of us, once it becomes evident that the light of God’s countenance is no longer shining upon the company of saints with whom we are in fellowship: bowing before a heart-searching God and asking, Am I responsible for the withdrawal of Thy favour? Where such a spirit obtains among the members, it will not be long ere the One who is jealous of the honour of His house makes known the cause of His displeasure.

“In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which the LORD taketh shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which the LORD shall take shall come by households; and the household which the LORD shall take shall come man by man” (Jos 7:14). First, the opening words of this verse teach us that once an evil be known, there must be no delay in dealing with it—true alike whether it respects an assembly or where only a single individual be concerned. The honour of God and our own welfare alike demand prompt action when any “accursed thing” be involved. To procrastinate in such a case is like playing with fire. Delay in such a matter is a sure sign our hearts are not right with God. By all means investigate thoroughly and make sure that God *has been* publicly slighted, and then be not tardy in dealing with the offender. Next, we should note the LORD’s insistence upon what Joshua had previously disregarded, namely, the *unity* of Israel. In heeding the counsel of the spies and detaching three thousand from the body of the nation (Jos 7:3), he acted contrary to the pattern God gave him in the crossing of Jordan and taking of Jericho. “*Israel* hath sinned” (Jos 7:11), God declared, and now He required that the whole of the tribes should share in the shame of Achan’s offence—as later He gave orders, “Take all the people of war” against Ai (Jos 8:1).

“In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which the LORD taketh shall come according to the families thereof.” The culprit had not been named, and before he was identified, there must be a searching investigation. Very solemn indeed was the procedure followed. Most probably the whole congregation was assembled before the tabernacle. The word “brought” is the one generally used in connection with offering of the sacrifices (Lev 1:2, 10)—“bring,” therefore, has the force here of the people being presented for the LORD’s inspection. Doubtless it was the “princes” or heads of each tribe which came, respectively, before Joshua and Eleazar. Three times over in this verse, we have the expression, “Which the LORD shall take” (Jos 7:14). We naturally inquire, what is signified thereby? In what way or by what process did He do so? If Scripture be compared with Scripture, it seems clear that the LORD here distinguished between the innocent and the guilty by means of the Urim and Thummim in the high priest’s breastplate. When Joshua was first set apart unto his office, orders were given that “he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment [decision or verdict] of Urim before the LORD” (Num 27:21). Under certain circumstances, the will of God was made known via the Urim and Thummim, and evidently, Eleazar “asked counsel” for Joshua by them on this occasion.

Of Saul it is said that “when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets” (1Sa 28:6)—proof of His having abandoned the apostate king. Thence we gather that by means of the Urim and Thummim, prophetic guidance was at certain times obtained from God. This is further borne out of Ezra 2:63, when Nehemiah forbade the rejected children of the priests eating of the most holy things, he added, “till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim”—through which the divine mind will again be revealed. From these passages, the late Dr. Ethelbert William (E. W.) Bullinger (1837-1913) drew the following deductions: “The Urim and Thummim were probably two precious stones, which were drawn out as a lot to give Jehovah’s judgment. ‘The lot is cast into the lap [Hebrew “bosom”]; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD’ (Pro 16:33)—bosom is here put for the clothing or covering over it: compare Exodus 4:6-7; Ruth 4:16...Thus those two placed in the ‘bag’ and one drawn out would give the judicial decision, which would be ‘of the LORD.’ Hence, the breastplate itself was known as ‘the breastplate of judgment’ (Exo 28:15), because by that Jehovah’s judgment was obtained when it was needed. Hence, when the land was divided ‘by lot’ (Num 26:55), Eleazar the high priest must be present (Num 34:17; Jos 17:14).”

Both words are in the plural number, though (as is often the case in the Hebrew); probably it is what is known as “the plural of majesty”—used for the purpose of *emphasizing* the importance of a thing or the dignity of an object. It is likely that the “Urim” was a single stone or object and the “Thummim” another, though we cannot be certain. The English equivalent for those words is “light” or “lights” and “perfections”; in the Septuagint, they are rendered by “delosis” and “aletheim,” meaning “manifestation and truth.” As the high priest thrust his hand into the bag of his breastplate (note “doubled” in Exodus 28:16), possibly the bringing forth of the “Urim” indicated the LORD’s *yes*; and the “Thummim,” His *no*, or vice-versa. In the instance we are now considering, most likely the appearing of the Urim signified the bringing to light of the guilty; whereas the issuing of the Thummim announced the “perfection” or sincerity of the innocent. Thus, as the head or heads of each tribe stood before Eleazar, he would draw out the Thummim until the turn of Judah arrived, as indicated by the Urim. The same process was followed

after the guilty tribe had been identified: the heads of its leading “families” standing before the LORD’s representative, and when the particular family was identified, the same with its “households,” until the culprit himself stood unmasked before all.

“And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel” (Jos 7:15). Sol-
emn indeed was the transaction which we have endeavoured to picture above, fearful the trial of all who took part in it. A threefold reason may be suggested for the leisurely nature of this inquisition. First, it manifested the calmness and thoroughness of the Judge of all the earth: He is ever a God of order, departing not therefrom when sitting in judgment. Second, the terribleness of their ordeal would impress upon Israel the reality of the holy covenant which God had made with them, and demonstrate before them again the majesty of the divine Law—seen in arresting the waters of Jordan, overthrowing the walls of Jericho, and now equally so in taking vengeance on the transgressor. Third, in affording the guilty one further space for repentance: but alas, his heart was hardened and he refused to come forward and own that *he* was the cause of the whole trouble. The dreadful sentence that he should be “burned...with fire” does not necessarily signify he was to be roasted alive—Joshua 7:25 seems to clearly show otherwise. If it be asked, Why burn them and their possessions if they were already dead from stoning? To express still more vividly the divine detestation, and that nothing whatever of the accursed thing should remain.

The Doctrine of Revelation

26. In the Soul, Part 4

This personal and secret revelation of God in the soul is a *miracle*, as truly and as much so as when darkness enveloped the chaos of Genesis 1:3, and God by a mere fiat said, “Let there be light: and there was light.” This is clear from “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face [or ‘person’] of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). In His own ordained hour, by a sovereign and all-mighty act on His part, a supernatural, saving and sanctifying knowledge of God is communicated to the souls of each of His elect. This knowledge of God is spiritual and altogether from above, being wholly divine and heavenly. Being miraculous, this unique experience is profoundly *mysterious*. Its favoured subject contributes nothing whatever to it, not so much a desiring or soliciting the same. “There is none that seeketh after God...And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom 3:11, 17-18). It could not be otherwise, for by nature all are, spiritually speaking, “*dead* in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1). There can be no spiritual sight of spiritual objects, no spiritual hearing, still less any spiritual actions, until spiritual life is imparted to the soul.

No one can possibly have any spiritual hatred of sin, any pantings after holiness, any saving faith in Christ, until he has actually “passed from death unto life” (Joh 5:24). In every instance where God graciously gives this inward and vivifying revelation of Himself, He declares, “I am found of them that *sought me not*” (Isa 65:1)—the subsequent seeking of the souls is the reflex, the consequent, the effect, of His initial seeking of it. As we love Him because He first loved us (1Jo 4:19), so we call upon Him (Rom 10:13) because His effectual call (1Pe 2:9) preceded and capacitated ours. The “Spirit of life” (Rom 8:2) must first join Himself to the spiritually-dead soul in quickening power, before he has any spiritual life or light. In that initial operation of the Spirit, the soul is wholly passive and unconscious. Regeneration is not something which we actually “receive,” but is wrought in its subject once and for all. Was not natural life communicated to me without any act of mine? What act did I perform when a living soul was imparted to me? None: it was utterly impossible that I should. Being and life were divinely given to me without any volition whatever on my part.

The soul must be divinely renovated before it is able to discern or relish spiritual things. The natural man, totally depraved as he is, can neither perceive the reality of spiritual things, be impressed with their excellence, or have his affections drawn after them. How can the natural man savingly believe in Christ when he has no grace, no power of will upwards, no sufficiency in himself? Coming to Christ is a spiritual motion, for it is the soul going out to Him. But motion presupposes life, and as there can be no natural motion or movement without natural life, so it is spiritually. Deny that, and you deny the indispensability of the Spirit’s work of grace to bestow life, light, and sight.

Something in addition to life and light is required: the Spirit must remove from our eyes the scales of pride and enmity before we can perceive our ruined condition. Coming to Christ imports both a sense of need and a hope of relief: it is an actual closing with Him as He is freely offered to sinners in the Gospel, by a practical assent of the understanding and hearty consent of the will.

By the Spirit alone are we awakened from the sleep of carnal sloth and unconcern for our eternal welfare. By Him alone are we given to perceive the spirituality and strictness of the divine Law, and feel its condemning power in our conscience. He it is who shows us ourselves and brings us to realize that our very nature is a sewer of filth. He it is who reveals to us our desperate need of Christ, who overcomes our hostility to Him, and makes us willing to receive Him as our Prophet to teach and instruct us, our Priest to atone and make intercession for us, and our King to rule over and fight for us. It is wholly by His powerful operation that Christ is formed in us “the hope of glory” (Col 1:27). By Him alone do we obtain an experimental and intuitional knowledge of Christ. Said the Saviour, “He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and *shall shew* it unto you” (Joh 16:14-15). “Shew it” not in the mere letter of it (there is no need for Him to do *that*, for by a little diligence we can grasp the literal or grammatical meaning for ourselves), but in the spirituality, blessedness, and power thereof.

The preciousness and potency of the things of Christ are set home on the renewed mind by the grace and energy of the Spirit in such a manner that the believer is inwardly assimilated thereto. He shows them not to his reasoning faculty but to his heart, and in such a way as to impress a real image thereof, fixing the same indelibly in his affections. He it is who gives unto him soul-satisfying, heart-warming apprehensions of the Saviour’s love, so that at times he is quite lifted out of himself, his thoughts being raised above the things of time and sense, to be entirely absorbed with the “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16) One, and thus vouchsafes him an earnest and foretaste of his eternal joy. It is the Spirit’s special office to magnify Christ: to make Him real unto His redeemed, to endear Him to their souls, until He becomes their “All in all.” Every true thought entertained of Christ, every exercise of the believer’s affections upon Him, is through the effectual influence of the Spirit. All true fellowship and communion which the Christian has with the Redeemer, all practical conformity unto His holy image, is by His gracious operations. We are completely dependent upon Him for every spiritual breath we draw and spiritual motion we make.

But we have been somewhat carried away—it is not easy for love to heed the requirements of logic! The last three paragraphs should have been preceded by the statement that, though an inward revelation of God to the soul be both truly miraculous and profoundly mysterious, yet it may be identified and *known* to its participant. To the participant we say, for it is no less impossible to explain the same by mere words to one who has had no actual experience of the same, than it would be to convey any intelligible concept of colour to one born blind; or of sound, to one born totally deaf. It may be known by its attendants and by its fruits. When life and being were given me naturally, all that followed was but the effects and consequences of the same. In due time, I was brought forth into the world—a feeble and needy, but living and active creature, yet entirely dependent upon others. So at regeneration, the soul has spiritual life imparted to it and is born again; and all that follows in the experiences of that soul is but the effects and fruits thereof, making manifest the reality of it, so that by comparison of its present history with its past, and by an examination of both in the light of Holy Writ, the great change may be clearly and indubitably cognized.

God has endowed the soul with the power of reflection, so that it may be conscious of its own condition and operations. Therefore does He bid professing Christians, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (2Co 13:5). The Psalmist tells us, “I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search” (Psa 77:6). God has so wondrously constituted man that he is able to look within and form a judgment of himself and of his actions; and at regeneration, he is given “the spirit...of a sound mind” (2Ti 1:7), so that he may form an impartial and true judgment of himself. While some are too introspective, others are not sufficiently so for their own good. The regenerate soul has power not only to put forth a direct act of faith upon Christ, but also to discern that act: “I know whom I have believed” (2Ti 1:12). In this way, Christians may attain unto a *certainty* of their saving knowledge of and union with Christ. The more so since they have received the gift of the blessed Spirit, by which they “might *know* the things that are freely given to us of God” (1Co 2:12). “Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit” (1Jo 4:13), which is apparent from His operations within us.

It most highly concerns each reader of these articles to examine and *try* his knowledge of God, and make sure it be something more than a merely natural and notional one, namely, that he has been favoured with a spiritual and experiential discovery of God to his soul. “Being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them...have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so

learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught *by him*, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man” (Eph 4:18-23). There a contrast is drawn between the unregenerate Gentiles and the Ephesian saints. The latter had learned both from the precepts and example of Christ. The question for them to make sure about was, Had they really been taught inwardly and effectually by Him, so that a vital change was evident in their character and conduct? That “if so be” intimated that nothing was to be taken for granted. They must put themselves to the proof and ascertain whether the truth dwelt in and regulated them as it did the Saviour: whether in short, the teaching they had received was inoperative, or whether it had produced a radical change in their daily lives. By its fruit is the tree known.

The inward and immediate revelation of God to a soul is made manifest by its *accompaniments*. It is accompanied by a principle of life, of grace, of holiness. It is attended with light and warmth and power, producing a great and glorious change within, renovating each faculty of the soul. Therein it differs radically from the “conversions” of modern evangelism, which effects no such change. It is attended with the opening of the eyes of the understanding, enabling its subject to see God, Christ, self, sin, the world, eternity, in a light he did not previously. Such sights, under the gracious influences of the Spirit, lead to the experiences of conviction, contrition, and conversion, described in the preceding articles. The quickened soul not only now discovers the true nature of sin, but feels the guilt and burden of it, and unfeignedly sorrows for and hates it. He is brought to realize the worthlessness of all self-help and creature performances. He is enabled to take in, little by little, a knowledge of Christ from the Word, by which means he is led to an acquaintance with Him and his will is brought to a full surrender to Him. Thus there is an efficacy accompanying the Spirit’s teaching which is not found in any man’s: illuminating the understanding, searching the conscience, engaging the affections, drawing the heart unto it, sanctifying the will.

As there is both an outward and an inward “hearing” of the things of God (Act 26:26), an ineffectual “learning” of the truth (2Ti 3:7) and an effectual one (Eph 4:20-22), so there is a knowledge of God which is inefficacious (Rom 1:21), and a knowledge of Him which is saving (Joh 17:3). *How* am I to ascertain that mine is the *latter*? Answer: from its *effects*. It is not the quantity but the quality, not the degree or extent of the knowledge, but the kind of it that matters, and that is evidenced by its products. A real Christian may have a far inferior intellectual grasp of the truth than has an unregenerate theologian, and yet possess a spiritual and sanctifying knowledge thereof to which he, after all his studying, is a stranger. Concerning all the renewed, God says, “But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (1Jo 2:27). That “Anointing” is the person and operations of the Holy Spirit, and where He indwells a soul no man is needed to teach him there is a God, that the Bible is His Word, that Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour, etc. Let us now describe some of the effects of this divine anointing.

First, it is a *realizing* knowledge. Its grand Object is no longer known theoretically and inferentially, but actually and immediately, not by a process of reasoning but intuitively. God, who is spirit and invisible, is made visible and palpable to the soul. Does that strike some of our readers as being too strong a statement? It would not had they experienced the same; and it should not if they be at all familiar with Holy Writ, for of Moses it is said, “he endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). God was real to his faith, though imperceptible to his senses. At the new birth, such a discovery of God is made to the heart that its subject avers with Job, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: *but now* mine eye seeth thee” (Job 42:5). The recipient of that manifestation is awed by a sense of His majesty, His authority, His power, His holiness, His glory. Such a revelation of the Most High is overwhelming: he dare not trifle any longer with Him, for he now knows something of the being and character of the One with whom he has to do. In like manner, the Gospel becomes to him something very different from a merely external proclamation thereof by God’s servants, namely, “the ministration of the spirit” (2Co 3:8) inwardly.

In the light of God, the soul sees things as they actually are. Hitherto, if he had not a false concept of them, it was but a notional acquaintance at best. But now he views himself, the present life, the hereafter, as *God* does, perceiving that all under the sun is but “vanity and vexation of spirit” (Ecc 1:14). When truth is applied by the Holy Spirit, its authority and spirituality are discerned, its power and pungency are felt, its savour and sweetness are tasted, its excellency and uniqueness are realized. When God is inwardly revealed to a person, he becomes better acquainted with Him in five minutes *this way*, than in a lifetime of reading books and hearing sermons about Him. It is not an acquired knowledge, but an infused one, obtained by no mental efforts, but is divinely imparted. As a very different image is begotten in the mind by actually seeing a person face to face, than by looking upon his portrait, so by the secret operations of the Spirit, a spiritual subsistence of God is wrought in the soul. Let the ablest artist paint a picture of the sun, let him use the brightest pigments and most brilliant colours, yet what a wan and insipid representation does he make in comparison to the shining and splendour of the sun itself! Glorious apprehensions of God and His Christ are conveyed and begotten in the renewed soul by the spirit. He has now “seen” the Son (Joh

6:40) for himself, has “heard” His voice (Joh 5:25), “handled” Him by faith (1Jo 1:1), “*tasted* that the Lord is gracious” (1Pe 2:3).

Second, it is a convincing and *certifying* knowledge. By this inward and gracious teaching of God, there is given to the heart such personal evidence of the wonders of wisdom and the riches of His grace as set forth in the Gospel, that he is fully persuaded of the same. A firm and unshakeable assurance of the verity of what is revealed in the written Word is conveyed to the soul, for the Spirit works an inward *experience* of the same in him, so that their reality and actuality is known and acknowledged. There is an ocular demonstration made to him by the light of the Word and the power of the Spirit revealing and applying them to the one born again, so that the teachings of the Scripture and the experiences of the believer, by these means, answer to one another as do the figures in the wax and the engravings in the seal. As a Spirit-taught person reads the Bible, especially much in the Psalms or a chapter like Romans 7, he finds the workings of his heart are accurately portrayed there, and says, “That *is* exactly my case.” Such an experience supplies far stronger proof than can either reason or sense, and though faith be occupied with things not seen by the eyes of the body and which are far above the reach of reason, yet it produces a conviction and certainty which is more conclusive and invincible than any logical demonstration.

The internal witness of the Spirit is much more potent and satisfying than all arguments grounded upon human reasoning. The natural man may be intellectually convinced that the Bible is the Word of God, and yet never have had an experiential sense of the spirituality of His Law and a heart conviction that he is a guilty transgressor of it. He may entertain no doubt whatever that the Lord Jesus is the only refuge from the wrath to come, and still be a complete stranger in his soul to His so-great salvation. A *spiritual assurance* that the Scriptures are divine can no more be obtained without the inward witness of the Spirit than can a spiritual understanding of their contents. It is an essential part of His distinctive work to produce a spiritual and supernatural faith in the hearts of God’s elect, so that they receive the Word on the alone testimony of its Author. When that faith has been communicated, he can no more doubt again the integrity of the Scriptures than his own existence, for he now “know[s] the *certainty* of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed” (Luk 1:4). Such an assurance will cause him to cling to the truth and confess it, though there were not another person on earth who did so. He now values the Bible as his dearest earthly possession, and no matter how he might be tempted to do so, will steadfastly refuse to “sell” or part with the truth.

Third, it is an *affecting* knowledge. The notions possessed by the natural man, Scriptural though they be, exert no spiritual influence upon him and produce no godliness of character or conduct. They are inoperative, ineffectual, and inefficacious. He may perceive clearly that sin is hateful to God and harmful to himself—that if cherished and continued in, it will certainly damn him—yet his lusts dominate him. He may be well informed upon the excellence of holiness, and the necessity of possessing it if ever he is to enter heaven, yet self-love and self-interests turn the scale and prevent his seeking it wholeheartedly. A natural knowledge of spiritual things penetrates no deeper than the brain, neither influencing the heart nor moving the will. The empty professor may subscribe sincerely to the doctrine of man’s total depravity, but it never moves him to cry from the depths of an anguished soul, “O wretched man that I am” (Rom 7:24). The doctrinal light which the unregenerate have is like that of the moon’s: it quickens not, possesses no warmth, and produces no fruit. A merely theoretical knowledge of the Scriptures—however accurate or extensive it may be—leaves the heart dead, cold, and barren.

Radically different is that spiritual knowledge which God imparts to the renewed mind. It has a vitalizing, convincing, moving, and powerful effect upon the whole of the inner man. It conveys a real subsistence of divine things to the soul, so that the understanding discerns and knows them, the affections delight in and cleave to them, and the will is influenced and moved by the them. “Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee *to profit*” (Isa 48:17). He teaches so much of the evil of sin, as makes it the most bitter and burdensome thing in the world to us. He teaches us so much of our need for and the worth of Christ, as moves us to freely take His yoke upon us—which none do without they have been divinely tamed. Spiritual light is like that of the sun’s, which not only illuminates, but warms and fructifies—and therefore is Christ designated, “the Sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2). All the real teaching of the Spirit has a powerful tendency to draw away from self unto Christ, to a fixation in and living upon Him, to find all our springs in Him, and to prove Him to be our everlasting strength.

Glorious Sinai

Part 2

“Now *therefore*, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exo 19:5-6). Weigh attentively that “therefore,” for it is a conclusion drawn from what is said in the previous verse, and shows that God was addressing His redeemed people as already standing in such a relation of nearness to Himself as secured for them an interest in His faithfulness and love. He appeals to the proofs which He had already given of this, as amply sufficient to remove all doubt from their minds, and to warrant them expecting whatever else might be needed to promote His glory and complete their happiness. “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice”: it was not because they had been obedient that God had done such great things for them and unto them; but since He *had* done them, that they might now be sensible of their privilege and duty in henceforth rendering submission to Him, and by obeying, fulfil the high destiny to which He had called them.

There was nothing in the above declaration which in any wise conflicted with the LORD’s dealings with Abraham himself. After He had, in sovereign grace, effectually called him, and averred, “I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward” (Gen 15:1), He appeared unto him again and said, “I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Gen 17:1)—a word which was comprehensive of full subjection to Himself and of righteous behaviour on the patriarch’s part. Whatever there was new in *form* in that which was given at Sinai, there was nothing new in principle from what had been revealed long before—God has ever maintained His claims upon and required the fruits of holiness from the objects of His grace, and has dealt with them accordingly—ordering His providences in consonance with their conduct. “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; *that* [in order that] the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him” (Gen 18:19). The patriarch must walk obediently, in conformity with God’s revealed will, if he was to receive the fulfilment of the divine promises!

When Jehovah confirmed His covenant to Abraham by oath, He expressly declared, “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 22:16-18). It is true, blessedly true, that God dealt with Abraham in pure grace; but it is equally true that He dealt with him as a *responsible* creature, as subject to the divine authority. God has established an inseparable connection between holiness and happiness, between our pleasing Him and our enjoyment of His providential smile. So far is it from being the case that “the father [or prototype] of all them that believe” (Rom 4:11) was “never under law,” when the LORD renewed the covenant with Isaac, He distinctly affirmed, “And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed [the original covenant promise]; Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws (Gen 26:4-5)—such a piling up of terms renders misapprehension excuseless.

Equally clear is it from Scripture that the Hebrews themselves were under Law before they reached Sinai: “If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee” (Exo 15:26). Is it not strange to find men who claim to be “Bible teachers” ignoring such plain passages! Should the quibble be raised that the reference there unto God’s “commandments” and “statutes” was *prospective* (i.e. anticipatory of the Law which was shortly to be given them), it is removed by a reference to “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in *my law*, or no” (Exo 16:4). The meaning of that is partly explained in “To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD” (Exo 16:23). Alas for their response: “That there went out some of the people on the seventh day for *to* gather” (verse 27). Mark carefully God’s complaint, “*How* long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?” (verse 28). Thus the reference in Exodus 15:26 and 16:4 was retrospective.

It has been necessary to labour the point in order that decisive evidence should be produced to show that it is a flagrant error to assert God’s people were brought under the Law for the *first time* at Sinai. The Scriptures cited above make it abundantly clear that God introduced no change in His dealings with Abraham’s descendants when He said to them, “Now therefore, if ye will *obey* my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculi-

ar treasure unto me above all people” (Exo 19:5). Let it also be carefully noted that the LORD did not now impose His Law upon the nation by mere sovereign authority, but instead proposed it as the basis of a covenant with them, as is evident from the hypothetical “if.” A covenant is always a *mutual* contract, voluntarily entered into by two parties, and consists both of conditions or terms and promises or bestowments. The LORD was about to enter into a formal agreement with Israel, and He first made known the ground of the same: their being brought into intimate relation to Himself, then the terms thereof—their obedience to Him; then the advantage accruing to them—“ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me”; then its design—“ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exo 19:6).

Because the LORD had identified Himself so closely with Israel, it was but meet that they should now identify themselves with Him. Brought into near relationship and favoured communion with the Holy One, it was equitable that henceforth they should conduct themselves accordingly. As God’s “peculiar treasure” (Exo 19:5), they owed it to Him to comport themselves *as* His separated people. If *He* was willing to enter into a covenant engagement with them, then surely *they* should respond thereto. Upon their so doing, He would make them “a kingdom of priests” (verse 6), vouchsafing communications of His will, and admitting them into His presence as accepted worshippers. They would hereby become “an holy nation” (verse 6), distinguished from all others as devoted to Jehovah’s honour and service, and exemplifying the same unto the world around them. Moses accordingly summoned the responsible heads of the tribes and made known to them this gracious overture, and we are told, “And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do” (verse 8). Convinced of the benignity and propriety of such a proposal, they readily and unitedly signified their consent thereto.

Moses at once reported unto the LORD of Israel’s willingness. And He, be it noted, no more regarded their promise of obedience as a carnal and presumptuous boast than He did Joshua’s when he affirmed, “But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Jos 24:15). So far from being displeased, “And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever” (Exo 19:9)—that is, all room for thinking he might have imposed upon them, would be removed. When he first informed them of the LORD’s appearing to him at the back side of the desert, and that He had looked upon their affliction, “the people believed” (Exo 4:29-31); but a little later, upon Pharaoh’s increased severity, they murmured against Moses and Aaron; and when he announced that the LORD would redeem them with a stretched out arm and bring them into the land which He swore to give unto their fathers, “they hearkened not unto Moses” (Exo 6:9). But now they should *know* that the Law he would deliver unto them was indeed the LORD’s, since they had heard with their own ears that which He spake unto them.

That “thick cloud” intimated they were not to pry into “secret things”; and since dreadful thunderings and lightnings issued from it continually, to command an awe-inspiring adoration of that which *was* “revealed” (Deu 29:29). The Voice speaking out of that cloud was, as said above, also designed to put honour upon Moses, to firmly establish him in the confidence of Israel as Jehovah’s vicegerent, that henceforth they should believe his testimony and receive the commandments of God without question. “In like manner, the Holy Spirit descended visibly upon Christ at His baptism, and all that were present heard God speaking to Him (Mat 3:17), that afterward without the repetition of such visible tokens, they might believe Him. So likewise the Spirit descended in cloven tongues upon the apostles (Act 2:3) that they might be believed. Observe, when these had declared themselves willing to obey the voice of God, then God promised they should hear His voice; for if any man be resolved to do His will, he shall know: John 7:17”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714). Our readiness to hear and heed the LORD’s ministers is often rewarded by His speaking to us, in power, direct from His Word.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai” (Exo 19:10-11). Here again there is a double emphasis placed upon that to which we called attention in connection with the opening verse of this chapter: it was not only in the “third month,” but on the third day of it that this glorious transaction took place—three being the number of *manifestation*, for it was here at Sinai that the person and perfections of Jehovah were so illustriously displayed (compare Deu 5:24). The demand for them to be sanctified was a call to turn aside from their ordinary activities, and devote the intervening time to self-examination, meditation, and prayer, that their hearts and minds might be prepared for a drawing nigh unto the Holy One. The washing of their clothes was to teach them the LORD will only draw nigh unto those who are morally clean (see James 4:8)—it is sin which separates from God (Isa 59:2).

“And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it” (Exo 19:12). All of these instructions were duly carried out by Moses and the people. “And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick

cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly” (Exo 19:16-18). Everything was designed to fill them with reverence and godly fear as they assembled to meet with their mighty Redeemer and King. The visible tokens of His presence, His tremendous appearance before them, the terrifying phenomena, were the insignia of the dignity and honour of such an august Being. The manifestation of Jehovah’s glory and the splendour of His majesty demonstrated the loftiness and holiness of the One with whom they were here covenanting.

Turning now to Exodus 20, *the first thing* which requires to be attended to is that the One who promulgated the Law on this memorable occasion was none other than God the Son! This is made clear from Psalm 68. First, we are told there, “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place” (verse 17): “When the Law was given, for Christ was there then...which Sinai is called the holy place from the presence of God there and the Law given from it”—John Gill (1697-1771). Then, in the next verse, we are enabled to definitely identify which of the Persons of the Godhead is there specifically in view: “*Thou* [the One just mentioned, ‘the Lord’] hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.” That very passage is quoted in Ephesians 4:7-13 and is expressly appropriated unto Christ Himself. There was a vast assembly of the angels congregated at Sinai, and Christ, the great “Angel” or “Messenger” (same word) of the covenant (see Exo 23:20; Isa 63:9; Mal 3:1) was at the head of and in the midst of them.

In the above passage, Christ is pictured as a mighty Prince and Conqueror, with a retinue of the celestial beings as His attendants, coming forth to take possession of His throne in Israel’s midst. How that added to the lustre of glorious Sinai on this unprecedented occasion is at once evident. Most blessed, too, was what it foreshadowed: “The glorious ascending of God from Sinai, after the giving of the Law, was a representation of His ascending up far above all heavens that He might fill all things; and as He then ‘led captivity captive’ in the destruction of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who had long held His people in captivity and cruel bondage, so dealt the Lord Christ in the destruction and captivity of Satan and all his forces (Col 2:15)” —John Owen (1616-1683). Christ, attended by the celestial hosts at Sinai, was designed to adumbrate the blessed fact that the holy angels are “all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14). As Thomas Manton (1620-1677) remarked on Psalm 68:17, “The Psalmist speaketh of Christ as the Mediator and King of His Church: no kingdom hath such defence, and such potent and numerous armies to fight their battles as the Church hath.”

Though no direct mention of this striking feature be made in Exodus, yet there are quite a few passages in Holy Writ which refer to the same. Thus, “The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints [holy ones]” (Deu 33:2). “Who have received the law by the disposition of *angels*” (Act 7:53). “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator” (Gal 3:19). “For if the word spoken by *angels* [i.e. the Law] was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation”? (Heb 2:2-3), which is now proclaimed by the Gospel. Christ *was* the One in their midst and the Speaker of what was said on Sinai, as is further proved by Acts 7:37-38: “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me [Moses]; him shall ye hear. *This is he*, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him [Moses] in the mount *Sina* [or *Sinai*], and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.”

In the second place, let us attend closely to the particular aspects in which the divine Lawgiver presented Himself unto Israel on this occasion. This comes out clearly in His opening words to them. The “God spake all these words, saying,” of Exodus 20:1 is simply an introductory remark of the inspired historian; it is the next verse which records His initial declaration, namely, “I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” That personal announcement prefacing the Ten Commandments calls for our study and admiration. There God announced Himself in a threefold character. First, “I am Jehovah,” the self-existent and self-sufficient One, the Fountain of all being, and therefore having the incontestable right to command them, and all creatures. It was the great “I am” who addressed them, the eternal and immutable One—a representation infinitely elevated above all the concepts of idolatry and ancient philosophy. Second, He was *their* God in covenant with them, and that, with their own free consent. Jehovah had promised unto Abraham, “And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, *to be a God unto thee*, and to thy seed after thee” (Gen 17:7; and see Exo 3:6; Heb 8:10). “He had laid Himself under obligation to

them by promise, and therefore, He might justly lay His obligations upon them by precept”—M. Henry (1662-1714).

Third, God here presented Himself to them as their gracious *Redeemer*: “Which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt,” thereby pledging His faithfulness, love, and sufficiency to further deliver them from evil and bring them into His designed good. “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars [subdued] unto thee” (Deut 33:29). It also placed them under additional obligation to Him, for they were now bound by personal gratitude to serve and render obedience to Him. Redemption always confers a right unto the redeemer. In coming forth to them in such a character to declare the Law which was henceforth to bind their conscience and regulate their conduct both toward the LORD and one another, there was embodied the all-important and salutary principle that redemption carries in its bosom a conformity to the divine will, and that only when the soul is so conformed is the work of deliverance from bondage complete. Such, too, is the plain teaching of the New Testament: see 1 Corinthians 6:20.

Finally, “I am the LORD your God” (Exo 6:7) was addressed *singly* to each one in the camp of Israel. It was not “your” collectively, but “thy” individually, as though spoken directly to each one separately. Not only did that divine declaration point immediately to each one present at Sinai when the Law was delivered and the Covenant established, but it also looked forward to all succeeding generations, so that God said to each of Abraham’s posterity entering this world, “I am the LORD *thy* God” as truly as He did to those assembled at Horeb. Moreover, no sooner did one out of the nations join himself to the commonwealth of Israel, than the same was said to *him*, so that in this respect, a door of hope was opened unto the Gentiles.



MARCH

A Good Ending

The former article under this title was designed chiefly for those who have come under the baneful influence of a popular type of “Eternal Security” teaching, wherein the responsibility of the saints is utterly ignored. We therefore emphasized the Scriptural fact that to begin well and to continue well are absolutely indispensable if the believer is to end well. In this one, we propose to define more closely what is signified by a good ending, and then point out some of the duties which must be attended to by the Christian in order for him to experience the same. There is a sense in which everyone who continues to tread that narrow way which leadeth unto Life has a good ending; for whatever falls he had therein, he rose up again (Pro 24:16) and held on his way (Job 17:9), neither making shipwreck of the faith (1Ti 1:19) nor turning the grace of God into lasciviousness (Jude :4). Upon their removal from the world, such have ceased from all sin and sorrow, and that is indeed a good ending. But there is another sense in which many real Christians *do not* have a good ending to their earthly career: their growth in grace is arrested, their testimony for the Lord does not honour Him as it once did, they can no longer be described as burning and shining lights; rather are they more or less under a cloud ere they pass away from this scene—rusting, instead of wearing out.

It is often said that the young Christian is the one who most of all needs to tread warily in order to escape the snares of Satan, that it is the babes in Christ who are in the greatest danger of bringing reproach upon His holy name. But neither Scripture nor observation confirms this view. Was it in their earlier years or their later that Noah, Isaac, Moses, and David conducted themselves so carnally? On the other hand, how signally was the LORD hon-

oured by Joseph, Samuel, Josiah, and Daniel in the days of their youth! The fact is that each stage of the spiritual life has its own peculiar temptations and perils; and there is just as urgent a need for the most mature saint to walk cautiously, as there is for the one who has only just commenced his spiritual pilgrimage. While it be true that the longer a believer follows on to know the Lord, the stronger he should become in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2Ti 2:1), yet the more on his guard must he be against becoming puffed up with his attainments. It is also true that old age is accompanied by infirmities of both mind and body; yet for the Christian, it should also be marked by an increasing dependence upon the Lord and a proving of the sufficiency of His grace.

There is abundant reason for the Christian to go “from strength to strength” (Psa 84:7) and “from glory to glory” (2Co 3:18). He has the infallible Word of God in his hands, so that he may be “perfect [complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2Ti 3:17). He has access to the Throne of Grace where he may ever “obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). He is divinely assured, “They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa 40:31). He has the mediatorial fullness of Christ to draw upon (Joh 1:16). He has the comforting promises of the living God to rest in: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isa 41:10). “And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you” (Isa 46:4). “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phi 4:19). Then ought we not to exclaim, “I will trust, and not be afraid” (Isa 12:2) and “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil” (Psa 23:4).

While it be the case that the Holy Spirit has recorded—for our warning—the sad follies and falls committed by some saints in their old age, He has also described—for our encouragement and emulation—the good ending of others. “For before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Heb 11:5). Joshua’s career finished as brightly as it commenced. “So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning” (Job 42:12). To the close of his long life, Daniel glorified the LORD: he “prospered in the reign of Darius [as well as Nebuchadnezzar’s], and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian” (Dan 6:28). How many a spiritual Gaddite has proved by experience, “a troop [of lusts and temptations] shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last” (Gen 49:19). “Mark the perfect [sincere] man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace” (Psa 37:37): probably most of us have personally witnessed such cases. Then why should not the writer and the reader receive fulfilment of that promise, “It shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light” (Zec 14:7). But in order thereto we must maintain fellowship with Him who is “light” (1Jo 1:5). “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Joh 8:12).

“But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phi 3:13-14). Those words were penned by Paul as he neared the end of his course, and they should be translated into prayer by all elderly saints. As we advance in years, there is a strong tendency to live too much in the past. As there is a sinful forgetfulness, so there is a hindering remembrance. It is indeed incumbent upon us to take notice, with thankfulness, of those portions of the wilderness through which the Lord has already led us, and to raise our Ebenezers for the same (1Sa 7:12). It is equally our duty to “[leave] the principles of the doctrine of Christ” and “go on unto perfection” (Heb 6:1). We should assuredly cherish in our hearts the previous deliverances and mercies which God has vouchsafed us; and yet there is a sense in which we should forget them. Keep them in mind in order to promote thanksgiving and deepen confidence in God; but do not suffer the recollection of them to produce slackness in diligently seeking further blessings from Him. Be not content with the measure of grace, knowledge, and growth already granted, but continue to “covet earnestly the best gifts” (1Co 12:31).

So far as remembrance of the past humbles and makes us walk more softly, such an exercise of the mind is helpful; but if it dispirits and enervates, it is harmful. Like all of our faculties, the memory can be cultivated or neglected, put to both a good and a bad use. We should frequently review the past in order to learn the lessons it may teach us, and to profit from our mistakes; but we must not become so cast down over the failures of yesterday that we are disqualified for the discharge of today’s duties. It is far from honouring the Lord if we suffer the sins of our youth to fill us with dejection and despair: if they have been repented of and confessed, we should leave them under the blood of Christ. Nor is it at all a healthy sign for the soul to be always harping upon and resting in the blissful experience of conversion; rather should he see to it that he is *now* in a right attitude toward the Lord, and rejoicing in Him. Losses and bereavements must not be dwelt upon by us so as to produce perpetual gloominess; seek to cheer other distressed souls with the comfort wherewith you have been comforted of God (2Co 1:4). The racer retards his progress by glancing back at the ground already covered: his task is to keep his eyes steadily on the winning post.

In John 15, when speaking of the branches of the true vine, Christ made mention of “fruit,” “more fruit” (verse 2), and “much fruit” (verses 5, 8): such proportions ought to characterize, respectively, the babes, young men, and fathers in Christ. A lengthy acquaintance with the Lord, and deepening experience in His goodness and mercy, should issue in increasing fruitfulness. That fruit is described, in part, in Galatians 5:22-23. As we grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, will there not be increasing love for, joy in, and peace from Him? Has not God promised, “They shall still bring forth fruit in old age” (Psa 92:14)? But, says the aged pilgrim, I feel so helpless and useless. Ah, patient submission to God’s will, contentment with His appointments, and gratitude for His provisions, are also a part of spiritual “fruit.” Nor need you be inactive though confined to your bed. You now have leisure, denied to those earning their bread, and mothers of young families, to engage in the holy work of *intercession*—for God’s servants and people. Seek to be an example of cheerfulness. Remember, “The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness” (Pro 16:31), otherwise, it is a disgrace to Christ and a stumbling-block to the young.

The Prayers of the Apostles

63. 1 Peter 1:3-4

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope” (1Pe 1:3). The Deity is here viewed as the covenant Head of the Mediator, and of God’s elect in Him, being accorded His distinctive *Christian* title (Eph 1:3, etc.). This title sets Him forth as *the God of redemption*. “Abundant mercy” is ascribed to Him. This is one of His ineffable perfections, yet the *exercise* of it—as of all His other attributes—is determined by His own imperial will (Rom 9:15). Much is said in Scripture concerning this divine excellency. We read of His “tender mercy” (Luk 1:78), that “great is thy mercy” (Psa 86:13), that He is “plenteous in mercy” (Psa 86:5), of His “manifold mercies” (Neh 9:27), yea, of “the multitude of thy mercy” (Psa 5:7). Blessed be His name, “His mercy endureth for ever” (Psa 107:1). Well, then, may each believer join with the Psalmist in saying, “I will sing aloud of thy mercy” (Psa 59:16). To this attribute especially should erring saints look: “According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions” (Psa 51:1).

It requires to be pointed out that there is both a general and a special mercy. That distinction is a necessary and important one, yea, a vital one, for many poor souls are counting upon the former instead of looking by faith to the latter. “The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works” (Psa 145:9), and therefore, the discerning eye perceives, “The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy” (Psa 119:64); yet that is something very different from God’s benignity unto His elect. By way of eminency, Christ is denominated “to perform *the mercy* promised to our fathers” (Luk 1:72). “For thy mercy is great above the heavens” (Psa 108:4 and compare Eph 4:10), for *there* His “mercy seat” is found, upon which sits the exalted Saviour administering the fruits of His redemptive work. It is thither that the convicted and sin-burdened soul must look for saving mercy. To conclude that God is too merciful to damn any one eternally is a delusion with which Satan fatally deceives multitudes. Pardoning mercy is obtainable only through faith in the atoning blood of the Saviour: reject Him, and divine condemnation is inescapable.

Very expressly is the mercy here celebrated by Peter a particular and discriminating one. It is that of “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and it flows to its favoured objects “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”: between *those* two clauses is the statement, “Which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope.” Thus it is covenant mercy, redemptive mercy, regenerating mercy. Rightly is it styled “abundant mercy.” It is so if we consider the Bestower: it issues from the self-sufficient Jehovah, who is infinitely and immutably blessed in Himself, and who had therefore incurred no personal loss had He abandoned the whole human race to destruction—it was of His mere good pleasure that He did not. It is seen to be “abundant mercy” when we view the character of its objects, namely, depraved rebels, whose minds were enmity against God. So, too, when we contemplate the nature of its blessings: not the common and temporal ones—such as health and strength, sustenance, and preservation—bestowed upon the wicked, but spiritual, celestial, and everlasting benefits, such as had never entered the mind of man to conceive.

Still more so is it seen to be “abundant mercy” when we contemplate *the means* through which those blessings are conveyed: the “resurrection of Jesus Christ,” which necessarily presupposes His incarnation and crucifixion.

What other language could be appropriate to express the Father's sending forth of His well-beloved to take upon Him the form of a servant, assume unto Himself flesh and blood, and be born in a manger, for the sake of those whose multitudinous iniquities deserved eternal punishment? That Blessed One came here to be the Surety of His people, to pay their debts, to suffer in their stead, to die the just for the unjust. Therefore, God "spared not his own Son," but called upon the sword of justice to smite Him. He "delivered him up" to the curse that He might "freely give us all things" (Rom 8:32). Thus it is a *righteous* mercy, for as the Psalmist declares, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psa 85:10). It was at the Cross the seemingly conflicting attributes of mercy and justice, love and wrath, and holiness and peace, are all united, as the various colours of the light when separated by a prism are seen beautifully blended together in the rainbow—the token and emblem of the covenant (Gen 9:12-14; Rev 4:3).

But we must next consider, fifth, *the incitement* of this doxology: "Which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope." It was the realization that God had quickened those who were dead in sins which moved Peter to bless Him so fervently. The expression "hath begotten us" has reference to their regeneration: later in the chapter, the apostle describes them as being "born again" (verse 23), and in the next, addresses them as "newborn babes" (1Pe 2:2). A new and a spiritual life, divine in its origin, was imparted to them, wrought in their souls by the power of the Holy Spirit (Joh 3:6). That new life was given for the purpose of forming a new character and the transforming of the conduct. God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, thereby communicating a holy disposition—termed "the Spirit of adoption" (Rom 8:15)—inclining them to love Him. It is styled a "begetting," not only because it is then that the spiritual life begins and that a holy "seed" is implanted (1Jo 3:9), but also because an image or likeness of the Begetter Himself is conveyed. As fallen Adam "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image" (Gen 5:3), so at the new birth, the Christian is "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col 3:10).

In the "begotten us *again*," there is a twofold allusion: a comparison and a contrast. First, as God is the efficient cause of our being, so also of our wellbeing: our natural life comes from Him, and so too does our spiritual life. Second, to distinguish our new birth from the old one. At our first begetting and birth, we were conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity (Psa 51:5); but at our regeneration, we are "created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph 4:24). By the new birth, we are delivered from the reigning power of sin, for we are then made "partakers of the divine nature" (2Pe 1:4). Henceforth there is a perpetual conflict within the believer: not only "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit," but "the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal 5:17). It is not sufficiently recognized and realized that the new nature or principle of grace makes war upon the old nature or principle of evil. This spiritual begetting is attributed to God's "abundant *mercy*," for it was induced by nothing in or from us. We had not so much as a desire after Him: in every instance He declares, "I am found of them that sought me not" (Isa 65:1 and compare Rom 3:11). As believers love Him because He first loved them (1Jo 4:19), so they did not become seekers after Christ until He first sought and effectually called them (Luk 15:4; Joh 10:16).

This begetting is "according to [the] *abundant* mercy" of God. Mercy was most eminently displayed here, for regeneration is the fundamental blessing of all grace and glory, being the first open manifestation which the elect receive of God's love unto them. "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Ti 3:4-5). As Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) so aptly expressed it, "God's love is like a river or spring which runs underground, and hath done so from eternity. When breaks it forth first? When a man is effectually called, then that river, which hath been from everlasting underground, and through Christ on the Cross, breaks out in a man's own heart too." It is then we are experientially made God's children, received into His favour, and conformed unto His image. Therein is a remarkable display of His benignity. At the new birth, the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and that is the introduction into, as well as the sure pledge of, every other spiritual blessing for time and eternity. As the predestinating love of God ensures our effectual call or regeneration, so that guarantees our justification and glorification (Rom 8:29-30).

Let us now retrace our steps, going over again the ground we have covered, but in the inverse order. Not until a soul has been begotten of God can he have any spiritual apprehension or appreciation of the divine mercy. Before that miracle of grace takes place, he is possessed more or less of a pharisaical spirit. To sincerely bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for His abundant mercy is the heartfelt acknowledgment of one who has turned away with loathing from the filthy rags of his own righteousness, and has no confidence in the flesh. Equally true is it that no unregenerate person ever has his conscience sprinkled with the peace-producing blood of Christ, for until spiritual life be imparted, evangelical repentance and saving faith are morally impossible, and therefore, there can be no realization of our desperate need of a Saviour or any actual trusting in Him. Still more evident is it that so long as a person remains dead in sin, with his mind enmity against God, there can be no acceptable obedience unto

Him, for He will neither be imposed upon nor bribed by rebels. And certain it is that none who are of the world and in love with its painted baubles will conduct themselves as “strangers” in this scene.

“Begotten us again unto a lively hope.” This is the immediate effect and fruit of the new birth, and is one of the characteristic marks which distinguishes the regenerate from the unregenerate. Hope always respects something future (Rom 8:24-25), being an eager expectation of something desirable, an anticipation of a promised good—real or imaginary. The heart of the natural man is largely buoyed up and his spirits maintained by contemplations of some improvement in his lot that will increase his happiness in this world. But in the majority of instances, the things dreamed of never materialize, and even when they do, the result is always disappointing, for no real satisfaction of soul is to be found in anything under the sun. If such disillusioned souls have come under the influence of “religion,” then they will seek to persuade themselves of and look forward to something far better for them in the hereafter. But such expectations will prove equally vain, for they are but the fleshly imaginings of carnal men. The false hope of the hypocrite (Job 8:13), the presumptuous hope of those who neither revere God’s holiness nor fear His wrath (but who count upon His mercy), and the dead hope of the graceless professor, will but mock their subjects.

In contradistinction from the delusive expectations cherished by the unregenerate, God’s elect are begotten again unto a real and substantial hope—that is, *subjectively* so, for their objection hope is described in the next verse. In the majority of instances, the Greek adjective is translated “living,” though in Acts 7:38 (as well as in our text), it is rendered “lively.” We shall therefore give it both meanings. The Christian’s hope is a “sure and stedfast” one (Heb 6:19), because it rests upon the Word and oath of Him that cannot lie. It is the gift of divine grace (2Th 2:16), the fruit of the Spirit, inseparably connected with faith and love (1Co 13:13). It is a living hope because it is exerted by a quickened soul, being an exercise of the new nature or principle of grace received at regeneration, and because it has “eternal life” for its object (Ti 1:1-2); whereas before we were begotten of God, there was “a certain fearful looking for of judgment” (Heb 10:27), through fear of death “being ‘all [our] lifetime subject to bondage’” (Heb 2:15). It is also termed “a living hope,” because it is imperishable, one which looks and lasts beyond the grave. Should death overtake its possessor, so far from frustration, hope then enters into its fruition.

This inward hope of the believer is not only a living but a “lively” one, for it is—like faith and love—an active principle in his soul, animating unto patience, steadfastness, and perseverance in the path of duty. Therein it differs radically from the dead hope of religious formalists and empty professors, for theirs never stirs to spiritual activity or produces anything to distinguish them from respectable worldlings who make no profession at all. It is the possession and exercise of this lively hope which affords demonstration that we have been “begotten...again.” By divine begetting, a spiritual life is communicated, and that life manifests itself by desires after spiritual things, by seeking satisfaction in spiritual objects, and by energizing to the performance of spiritual duties. The genuineness and reality of that “lively hope” is, in turn, evidenced by its producing a readiness unto the denying of self and enduring afflictions, acting as “an anchor of the soul” (Heb 6:19) amid the storms of life. It further evidences itself by purging its possessor: “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1Jo 3:3). It is also a “lively hope” in that it cheers and enlivens its subjects, for as he views the blissful goal, courage is imparted and inspiration afforded for him to endure unto the end of his trials.

We come now to consider, sixth, *the acknowledgment* of this prayer, namely, “the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” From the position occupied by these words, it is plain that they are related to and govern each of the preceding clauses, as well as the verse that follows. Equally obvious, it is that the resurrection of Christ implies His previous birth and death, though each possesses its own distinctive value and virtue. The connection between the resurrection of Christ and the exercise of the abundant mercy of God the Father, of His bringing us from death unto life, of His putting into our hearts a living hope, and of His bringing us into a glorious inheritance, is a very real and intimate one, and calls for our devout attention. The Saviour’s rising again from the dead was the climacteric proof of the divinity of His mission and ratification of His Gospel. It was the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies concerning Him, and thus evinced Him to be the promised Messiah. It was the accomplishment of His own predictions, and thus certified Him to be a true prophet. It determined the contest between Him and the Jews: they condemned Him to death as an impostor, but by restoring the temple of His body in three days, He demonstrated them to be liars. It witnessed to the Father’s acceptance of His redemptive work.

There is, however, a much closer connection between the resurrection of Christ from the dead and the hope of eternal life which is set before His people. His emerging in triumph from the tomb furnished indubitable proof of the efficacy of His propitiatory sacrifice: that it had not only put away the sins of those for whom it was offered, but had brought in an everlasting righteousness, and therefore, had secured for them the award of a fulfilled Law. He who was delivered up to death for our offences was raised again for our justification (Rom 4:25). As John Brown

(1722-1787) pointed out: “When God ‘brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant’ (Heb 13:20), He manifested Himself to be ‘the God of peace,’ the pacified Divinity. He ‘raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God’ (1Pe 1:21). Had Jesus not risen, our faith had been in vain: we should have been still in our sins (1Co 15:17), and without hope. But now that He is risen:

*‘Our Surety, freed, declares us free,
For whose offences He was seized;
In His release our own we see,
And joy to view Jehovah pleased.’*

“But even this is not all. Our Lord’s resurrection is to be viewed not only in connection with His death, but with the following glory. Raised from the dead, He has received all power in heaven and on earth, that He might give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given Him. How *this* is calculated to encourage hope may be readily apprehended. Because He lives, we shall live also. Having the keys of death and the unseen world, He can and will raise us from the dead, and give us eternal life. He sits at the right hand of God. Our life is hid with Him in God, and when He who is our life shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory. We are not yet in possession of the inheritance; but He, our Head and Representative, *is*. We see not yet all things put under us; but we see Him, the Captain of our salvation, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour. The resurrection of Christ—when considered in reference to the death which preceded, and the glory which followed it—is the grand means of producing and strengthening the hope of eternal life.” “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to [the spiritual] Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Act 5:31)—i.e. to administer redemption.

Yet more specifically. The resurrection of Christ is not only the meritorious cause of the believer’s justification, but of his regeneration, too, with all that that ensures. This is a point of deep importance, though, like many a similar one, little understood today. The soul must be brought from its death in sin before the body can be raised in glory, and while the Holy Spirit is the One who quickens God’s elect; yet it must be remembered that He proceeds from the risen Christ as the reward of His finished work (Act 2:33). In James 1:18, the new birth is traced back to the sovereign will of the Father. In Ephesians 1:19, it is predicated of the working of His mighty power. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13, it is attributed unto the gracious operation of the Spirit. Here in our text, while issuing from the abundant mercy of the Father, it is ascribed to the virtue of Christ’s triumph over death. It is to be observed that Christ’s own resurrection is termed a “begetting” of Him (Psa 2:7, compared with Act 13:33), while our resurrection is designated a “regeneration” (Mat 19:28). Christ is expressly called “the first begotten of the dead” (Rev 1:5); and He is so, because resurrection was a “begetting” of a new beginning—both for Him and for His people.

The Life and Times of Joshua

43. Judgment

“So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes” (Jos 7:16). Here we behold his willingness and readiness in obeying the command he had received (verse 14). However painful the task, there was no delay. In Jos 3:1, we saw God’s servant rising early to engage in a pleasant duty; here, there was equal alacrity when a distressing one was to be performed. Though a sore trial to flesh and blood, yet Joshua’s heart was in this work, for he yearned to have the LORD’s honour vindicated, and for the nation to be restored to His favour. Therein we have a further adumbration of the antitypical Joshua, of whom we read that after announcing, “Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners,” at once added, “Rise, let us be going” (Mat 26:45-46). Yet here, as everywhere, the Saviour had the pre-eminence. There was no “rising early in the morning,” for there was no retiring to rest for Him that night! Through all the hours of darkness, He was hounded from pillar to post: from Gethsemane to appear before Annas, then sent from him to Caiaphas, from him to Pilate, from him to Herod, from him back to Pilate, from him to the Cross: all the while on foot, His body a mass of bleeding wounds, without His eyes closing in slumber! Nevertheless, He *advanced* unto those who thirsted for His blood (Joh 18:4), ready to be led as a lamb to the slaughter.

“So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of *Judah* was taken.” This must have come as a most painful shock to that tribe as a whole, as well as to Joshua himself. Wondrous things had been foretold of Judah. It was to be the royal and ruling tribe (Gen 49:10). The LORD had laid honour on it by supernaturally endowing one of its men for special skilled work in connection with the furnishing of the tabernacle (Exo 31:2-5). Of it sprang the illustrious Caleb (Num 13:6). Judah was the tribe which took the lead when the nation was on march across the wilderness (Num 10:14). His was to be the largest portion of Canaan (Deu 34:2). And here their name was disgraced! Nor was this the first time, as a reference to Genesis 38:2, 15, and 16 will show—Achan being a direct descendant of the Zarah or Zerah of Genesis 38:30, in Joshua 7:18. “This was an allay to their dignity and might serve as a check to their pride. Many there were who were its glories, but here was one that was its reproach. Let not the best families think it strange if there be those found in them and descended from them that prove their grief and shame. Since Judah was to have the largest lot in Canaan, the more inexcusable is one of that tribe if, not content to wait for his own share, he break in upon God’s property”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714).

Achan remained obdurate even now that it was made known that the guilty one belonged to the tribe of Judah. As he had not confessed his offence when Israel was repulsed at Ai and the hearts of the people melted and became as water (verse 5), so now he maintained silence, yea, continued doing so when his own “family” was singled out (verse 17) and when his particular “household” was identified (verse 18). But in a few more moments, he was to receive proof of that divine declaration, “Be sure your sin will find you out” (Num 32:23). He was also on the point of learning “he that covereth his sins shall not prosper” (Pro 28:13). To “cover sin” is a keeping of it within our own bosom, a refusing to bring it out into the light by a frank confession of the same unto God. *Pride* restrains many therefrom: they have such a high esteem of themselves that even though guilty, they are too self-opinionated to own their sins. With others, *unbelief* is what hinders: they who have no faith to be assured that God will cover repented sins, vainly attempt to do so themselves even while remaining impenitent. *Fear and shame* are what cause the majority to hide their sins. Sin is such a hideous monster that they will not own it as theirs. But whatever be the cause, they “shall not prosper.”

“And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarhites: and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man; and Zabdi was taken: And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken” (Jos 7:17-18). It should be borne in mind that all of the innocent were under a cloud of suspicion until the culprit himself was definitely recognized. Moreover, it was expedient for the benefit of future generations that no stigma should rest upon the guiltless. “The tribe, family, parentage of the offender were specified with exactness, that the infamy might not rest on the reputation of any other of the same name”—Thomas Scott (1747-1821). Achan “was taken” means that he was now identified by the “Urim,” singled out by the unerring judgment given through the high priest. It was now made manifest before the whole congregation that the divine justice had seized him. When the secret sins of men are brought to light, God should be owned in it, and the perpetrator should acknowledge with the brethren of Joseph: “God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants” (Gen 44:16). “For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known” (Luk 12:2).

“And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me” (Jos 7:19). Here again we must look beyond Joshua unto the One spoken of in Acts 17:31. “Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.” God Himself will judge, yet not immediately, but mediately through Christ. So here: Achan was bidden to give glory to the LORD God, but Joshua at once added, “Tell *me* now what thou hast done; hide it not from *me*”! The expression “my son” was not here a term of tenderness or kindness (as it usually is with us), but a form of address used by one of eminence or authority unto an inferior, as Saul termed David “my son” (1Sa 24:16) and Joab designated Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, “my son” (2Sa 18:22); conversely, a superior was owned as “father” (2Ki 5:13; 6:21). Nevertheless, it is striking to note how mildly Joshua addressed Achan: “This is an example to all not to insult over those who are in misery, though they have brought themselves into it by their own wickedness, but to treat even offenders with the spirit of meekness, not knowing what ourselves should have been and done if God had put us into the hands of our own counsels”—M. Henry.

“And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him.” Very striking and blessed is that: the honour of Jehovah was what was uppermost in His servant’s heart and mind—as it ever was with the anti-typical Joshua (Joh 8:50; 12:23). But how could Achan’s confession give glory to God? In many ways. It testified to the divine omniscience in detecting and exposing his profane and stealthy conduct, picking him out from that vast multitude as the guilty one. It acknowledged God’s holiness in ab-

horring his wickedness, thereby setting to his seal that He is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab 1:13) It witnessed to His justice, that God was righteous in being so displeased with him. It owned His veracity that “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Eze 18:4). What is the glory of God but the sum of His perfections? It is by those perfections that He is made known to us both in the written and personal Word. And therefore, to glorify Him is for us to recognize, acknowledge, and be suitably affected by the divine attributes; as conversely we are guilty of slighting Him when denying—either in word or act—His perfections. When we trample upon His Law, we repudiate His authority. When we defy Him, we disclaim His power. When we think to conceal sin from Him, we disown His omniscience.

“My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him.” It is all too little realized by any of us that this is one of the ways appointed by God in which we glorify Him. In connection with the confessing of sin, we are too apt to confine our thoughts unto the clearing of our conscience and being restored to fellowship. In other words, we are too much wrapped up in ourselves and too little occupied with the excellencies of the One we approach. A truly contrite soul will eye the dominion of God, acknowledging His right to rule over us and our duty to live in entire subjection to Him, and will bemoan his insubordination. He will eye God’s righteousness and own that His “law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom 7:12), and therefore, that he is without excuse in breaking it. He will eye His long suffering, which has granted him space to repent instead of cutting him off in the commission of sin. He will eye the abundant mercy of God, which has opened a way for his pardon without compromising His holiness, laying hold of the promise: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jo 1:9). Failure to confess sin is not only to deprive ourselves of comfort, but is to withhold from God that which is His due.

Acceptable confession is very much more than an exercise of our lips: unless it issues from groanings within, our words are worthless and ineffectual. And there will be no inward groaning until we realize the sinfulness of our sins and are duly affected thereby. We shall never confess sin with a true sense of its infinite evil until we consider its contrariety to the nature and will of God, and perceive how it reflects dishonour upon the divine perfection, particularly as it is a contempt of His authority and a direct opposition to His purity. Nor shall we ever confess our sins with brokenness of heart and confusion of face, until we are sensible of the vile ingratitude of them, as they are committed by those who are under the strongest obligations to the contrary. There will be no confession of sin with self-abhorrence until we recognize that it is aggravated by the light and privileges, the goodness and mercy, and the exhortations and warnings, against which we have transgressed, for they greatly heighten our iniquities (Ezr 9:10-15). To affect our minds and consciences with the heinousness of sin, so as to be kept humble and filled with self-abasement, we need to meditate frequently upon what it cost Christ to make atonement for the same. The sincerity and fervour of our confession evince the depth of our hatred of sin.

“And Joshua said unto Achan...tell me *now* what thou hast done; hide it not from me.” That “now” was a word of reproof and reproach because the offender had remained silent so long. Achan had delayed until it was impossible any longer to conceal his guilt—his confession being wrung from him by the preceding process. The earlier confession be made, the more God is honoured, and the sooner will peace be restored to the conscience; but, better late than never. It is the fool who procrastinates; the apostate who defiantly refuses to do so. Fearfully solemn is that warning: “Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness” (Jer 13:16). Note that to “make confession” and “hide it not” are equivalent terms, and that not to confess is tantamount to a denial (Joh 1:20). Joshua’s “Tell me now *what* thou hast done; hide it not from me” (Jos 7:19) makes known unto us what confession of sin is to consist of—namely, a frank and full acknowledgment of the offence, without any attempt at concealment or self-extenuation, however humiliating it may be. By so doing, we bear witness that God’s prohibition was a righteous one and His punishment (or chastisement) is just.

“And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done” (Jos 7:20), which was no more a proof of his genuine contrition than was King Saul’s acknowledgement, “I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD” (1Sa 15:24), or the remorseful avowal of Judas, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood” (Mat 27:4). In what follows, we are shown that confession of sin must be in detail. “When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it” (Jos 7:21). The temptation entered through the eye, and that excited the concupiscence of his corrupt heart: as the prophet said in a different connection, “Mine eye affecteth mine heart” (Lam 3:51). How needful it is that we emulate the holy example of Job, who declared: “I made a covenant with mine eyes” (Job 31:1). How earnestly should we cry unto God daily, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way” (Psa 119:37)—make me to view a thing as

Thou dost, and to esteem or disesteem them according to the teaching of Thy Word. Had Achan regarded those objects with the eyes of faith, he had looked upon them as “accursed things,” for so had God pronounced them!

“I saw...then I coveted them.” Having viewed them with the eyes of unbelief, he lusted after them. What a solemn warning for each of us to heed! Covetousness has in it a far greater degree of malignity and is more highly provoking to God than is commonly thought. Colossians 3:5 declares that covetousness “is idolatry,” for it is a bestowing upon the creature that respect and love which is due alone unto the Creator. When we mortify not our inordinate desire, we cherish a viper within our own bosom, for it gnaws at the very roots of contentment and gratitude (Heb 13:5). When our desire exceeds the present portion God has allotted us, we are no longer satisfied with the same and are unable to enjoy and give thanks for it. “I coveted them, and took them”: thus he followed precisely the same order as did Eve (Gen 3:6 and compare Jam 1:14-15). “And, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent” (verse 21). There we behold both the “deceitfulness of sin” (Heb 3:13) and the anxiety it brings. “No sooner had he got possession of his plunder than it became his burden!...so differently do the objects of temptation appear at a distance to what they do when apprehended and when the infatuation ceases”—Thomas Scott (1747-1821). They who yield to a spirit of covetousness “pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1Ti 6:8-10).

“So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent” (Jos 7:22). The members of the congregation were as desirous and zealous to have Jehovah’s honour vindicated as was their leader. “And, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD” (verses 22-23). This was done in order that conclusive evidence of Achan’s guilt should be laid before the eyes of the whole nation, and thereby was brought to light the hidden things of darkness. By that procedure, a solemn warning was given the people (and us) of the utter futility of any attempt to conceal anything from the eyes of Him which are “in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Pro 15:3). “And laid them out before the LORD” (verse 23): that is, either at the feet of His representative, the high priest, or more probably immediately before the ark of the covenant. The accursed things were not poured out “unto the LORD” for His acceptance, but *before* Him for His destruction—they were never brought into His treasury for use in His service, but totally destroyed, as the sequel shows.

“And Joshua, *and all Israel* with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor” (Jos 7:24). Here was unity of action. The whole nation was required to dissociate itself from the trespass and take part in punishing the culprit. For any not to concur therein would be to condone the sin—just as when any church members refuse to take part in a similar action. Achan and all pertaining to him were taken outside the camp—compare “taken away from among you” (1Co 5:2)! Note how what followed gave force to, and shows an additional reason for, the “sanctify yourselves” of Joshua 7:13. For those who are themselves erring creatures to sit in judgment upon one of their fellows calls for unsparing self-judgment. Ere a church is in a meet condition to enforce a holy discipline, it is required that its officers and members humble themselves before God and clear their own consciences, by confessing every known sin, and pleading the cleansing blood of Christ. Only then can they act in godly fear and trembling. Only then will “he that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone” (Joh 8:7) no longer prevent them performing a necessary but painful duty.

“And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones” (Jos 7:25). “By this severity against Achan, the honour of Joshua’s government—now in the infancy of it—was maintained; and Israel, at their entrance upon the promised Canaan, were minded at their peril, the provisos, and limitations of the grant by which they held it”—M. Henry. It is worthy of note that at the opening of the tabernacle worship, we behold an instance of the severity of divine judgment upon the two sons of Aaron (Lev 10:1-2), so here upon their entry into Canaan, and similarly at the dawn of Christianity in connection with the death of Ananias and Sapphira (Act 5), we have examples of the same thing: designed no doubt to increase godly fear, promote dutiful circumspection, and prevent general wickedness. Such solemn demonstrations before the eyes of the people would render it the less easy for them to forget that their God was “a consuming fire” (Deu 4:24), unto those who provoked Him.

“The severity of the punishment must be estimated by the relation of Achan’s crime to the whole plan of the conquest of Canaan. If the destruction of Canaan was indeed the execution of divine vengeance, it must be kept entirely clear of all human motives, lest men should say that Jehovah had given His people license to deal with the Canaanites as seemed best for themselves. The punishment of Saul (1Sa 15:21-23) and the repeated statement in Esther 9:10, 15-16 (notwithstanding the king’s permission in 8:11), ‘but on the spoil laid they not their hand,’ are illustrations of the same principle”—Charles John (C. J.) Ellicott (1819-1905). In addition, it is to be borne in mind that Achan deliberately transgressed the plain commandment of Deuteronomy 13:17, that he acted in contempt of

the awful curse which Joshua had just previously denounced (Jos 6:17-19), that he defied Jehovah at a time when His presence was so conspicuously manifest among His people, that his crime was not only one of theft but sacrilege (converting to his own use what was devoted to the LORD), and that his offence resulted in the people of God being put to shame in the sight of the heathen.

Our remaining space permits us to do no more than briefly point out that the above incident shadows forth most of the principal features of the Last Assize. (1) It is then there will be a full and final display of God's perfections and the divine glory will shine forth conspicuously. (2) As "all Israel" here, so all mankind there, will stand before the antitypical Joshua. (3) As the tribe of Judah was marked off from the others, so will the goats then be separated from the sheep. (4) The hidden things of darkness shall then be brought to light. (5) As the innocent were cleared before the guilty were charged, so the righteous will be vindicated before the unrighteous are condemned. (6) As Achan made no attempt to deny his guilt or demur at his punishment, so the damned will concur with the justice of their sentence. (7) As all Israel united in the stoning of Achan's family, so "the saints shall judge the world" (1Co 6:2). (8) As the guilty were "burned with fire" (Rev 18:8) *after* their death, so everlasting fire will be the portion of the lost. (9) As there was a permanent "memorial" unto the grace of God (Jos 4:9), so unto His holiness (Jos 7:26): the redeemed will for ever exemplify God's love, the reprobate His wrath.

The Doctrine of Revelation

27. In the Soul

Fourth, it is a *humbling* knowledge. This is another unmistakable effect of an immediate and supernatural revelation of God to a person. That spiritual illumination and inward teaching lays the soul low before God. Therein it differs radically from self-acquired learning and the intellectual teaching we absorb from men, for that only serves to feed our conceit: such knowledge "puffeth up" (1Co 8:1). Truth itself when unapplied by the Spirit is only unsanctified knowledge, adding to our store of information, but producing no lowliness of heart. But when the Lord teaches a soul, the bladder of self-sufficiency is punctured, and there is a "casting down imaginations [or 'reasonings'] and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God" (2Co 10:5). He now renounces his own wisdom and becomes as a "little child." The soul is brought to realize not that he is lacking in instruction, but that he is incapable of making a good *use* of what he already knows. He is now sensible that he needs to be divinely taught how to effectually translate his knowledge into practice. The letter of God's precepts may be fixed in his mind, but how to perform them he knows not, and therefore does he cry, "Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes" (Psa 119:33), "Teach me *to do* thy will" (Psa 143:10).

Of only too many Laodicean "Christians" must it be said, "Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee" (Isa 47:10) to turn away from the only One who can effectually anoint blind eyes. But the wisdom which is from above is a self-emptying one, making its possessor cry, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luk 11:1), and when he *does*, it is in a very different manner from the polished periods and eloquent language of what are termed pulpit "invocations." The natural man will ask for relief when in temporal distress, though he has no sense of need for *spiritual* mercies. But one taught of God is painfully conscious of the fact that he "know[s] not what [he] should pray for as [he] ought" and has "groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom 8:26), and that makes him implore the help of the Holy Spirit. Such a one prays, "Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments," "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies," "Quicken me in thy righteousness," "Teach me good judgment," "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me" (Psa 119:73, 36, 40, 66, 133). Thus the soul is taught how perfectly suited is God's Word to His deep need.

Fifth, it is a *transforming* knowledge. When God savingly reveals Himself to a person, a real and radical change is effected in him, so that the one alienated from Him is now reconciled to Him. The light of divine grace is a prevailing and overcoming one, producing an altered disposition toward God, so that the one who shrank from Him pants after Him. Not only is He now feared, but adored. Divine teaching not only slays enmity against God, but conveys to the soul an answerableness to His holiness. It is affirmed of all such "but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Rom 6:17)—i.e. the mould of teaching into which ye have been cast. At regeneration, the heart is made tender and the will tractable. The characters of the renewed are formed

by the Truth, for a corresponding impression is made thereon. Their hearts and lives are modeled according to the tenour of the Gospel. Truth is received not only in the light of it, but in the love of it as well. The inward inclinations are changed and framed according to what the Word enjoins, the faculties being fitted to respond thereto. He delights in the Law of God after the inward man, and chooses the things that please God (Isa 56:4).

The sanctifying discovery of God to the soul not only slays its enmity unto Him, subdues the lusts of the flesh, removes carnal prejudices against His holy requirements, but stirs up the affections after them. No longer is there a murmuring against the exalted standard which God sets before us, but rather a reaching forth and striving to measure up to it. The Spirit's effectual application of the Word is always accompanied by a drawing out of the heart unto God, so that its subject is sensibly affected by His majesty and authority, His love and grace, His forbearance and goodness. So great was the change wrought in those who had been converted under his ministry, the apostle could say of one company, "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered [instrumentally] by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God" (2Co 3:3). And why? Because, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, they were "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (verse 18): changed from pride to humility, from self-love to self-loathing, from self-seeking to Christ-pleasing.

Sixth, it is an *operative* knowledge. There are multitudes in Christendom today who "profess that they know God; but in works [not 'words'] they deny him" (Ti 1:16). Much truth has entered their ears and eyes, but it results only in idle notions, useless speculations, and frothy talk. Whereas those who by grace are made partakers of the divine nature have a disposition and impulse unto the performance of duty, and therefore, they not only long after communion with God, but diligently endeavour to please and glorify Him in their daily lives. At the new birth, God puts His Law into their souls and writes it upon their hearts (Jer 31:33), and that moves its favoured recipient to exclaim, "O how love I thy law!" (Psa 119:97), and to manifest that love by diligently seeking to comply with the divine precepts. The Spirit is given to the elect that He may "cause [them] to walk in [God's] statutes" (Eze 36:26-27). A saving knowledge of God constrains the soul unto obedience to Him: not perfectly so in this life, yet a *real* responding to His requirements. No sooner did the light of God shine supernaturally into the heart of Saul of Tarsus than he cried, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Act 9:6). "But now being made free from [the guilt and dominion of] sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Rom 6:22).

When the Holy Spirit effectually applies the truth into a person, he responds thereto: the soul is quickened and solemnized, God is revered, the affections are elevated, the will is given an inclination to deny self, renounce the world, resist the devil. Thus it was with the Thessalonian saints: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually *worketh also in you that believe*" (1Th 2:13). It effectually prevails over sloth, the fear of man, worldly interests, everything which stands in opposition to it. "[None] teacheth like him?" (Job 36:22). Divine teaching is both efficacious and intensely practical. As God's creative words were mighty and effectual (Gen 1), so are His teaching words (Joh 6:63; 15:3). "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1Jo 2:3). Keeping His commandments is the evidence and proof of a saving knowledge of God. Though the obedience of a Christian be far from flawless, yet is it real, spontaneous, sincere, impartial. Where no such obedience exists, then "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments [by prayerful and genuine endeavour], is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1Jo 2:4).

Seventh, it is a *satisfying* knowledge. The language of every truly regenerated and converted soul is, I ask for no better Saviour than Christ, I desire no other peace than God's—which passeth all understanding; I need no superior Director through the mazes of this world than the infallible Scriptures. Though his station in life be the humblest and meanest, the one who has been divinely quickened would not change places with those in highest office. The one in whose heart the supernatural light of God has shone—making him wise unto salvation—counts all other knowledge as comparatively worthless. Though he be a financial pauper, yet the one who has had the scales of prejudice and unbelief removed from his eyes, and Christ "revealed" unto him, knows himself to be infinitely richer than the godless millionaire. The one who has had the divine Law effectually applied to his conscience, his sins set before him in the light of God's holiness, and has found cleansing and healing in the atoning blood of the Lamb, "had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of...God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psa 84:10). Joint heirs with Christ envy not the great of this world; those who are clothed with His righteousness look not with grudging eye upon those appareled in silks and flashing with diamonds.

Yes, this knowledge is a heart-satisfying one. It cannot be otherwise, for it is engaged with an all-sufficient Object. Nothing outside of Christ can suit the soul. Satisfaction is not to be found in ourselves, for we are mutable and

dependent creatures. Nor in any of the things of time and sense, for they all perish with the using. Christ alone is the Fountain of life and happiness. He is all-sufficient for us, “for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell” (Col 1:19), and therefore, can He amply supply our every want. He is “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16), the perfection of beauty. He excels all on earth, outshines all in heaven. The infinite mind of God Himself finds contentment in the Lord Jesus, declaring Him to be “mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth” (Isa 42:1). Every genuinely saved person readily set to his seal that Christ is true when He avers, “Whosoever drinketh of this water [the failing wells of earth] shall thirst again [as Solomon found, though he drank deeply from them all]: But whosoever drinketh of 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 4:13-14). A divine discovery of the fullness, suitability, and excellence of Christ, meets every need and satisfies every longing of the soul.

Let every reader, as he values his soul and its eternal interests, carefully and honestly test himself by what has been set before him in this and the four preceding articles. As the sin of Adam could not hurt us unless he had been our head by way of generation, so the righteousness of Christ cannot enrich us unless He be our Head by regeneration. There must be union with Him before we partake of His benefits. The bands of union are life, and the Spirit on His part, faith and love on ours. There is no coming and cleaving to Christ in a saving way until the soul has “learned of the Father” (Joh 6:45). We have described some of the characteristics and effects of that “learning.” Speculative knowledge produces no spiritual fruit: no humility, no poverty of spirit, no broken-heartedness, no godly sorrow. Divine teaching is a heart-searching, sin-discovering, conscience-convicting, soul-humbling, Christ-magnifying one. When Isaiah beheld the Holy One, he exclaimed, “Woe is me! for I am undone” (Isa 6:5). Have *you* ever been brought to the place where you have made such a confession? When Daniel had a vision of the LORD with “his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire,” he tells us, “my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength” (Dan 10:6, 8). Has anything resembling that been duplicated in your experience?

Try yourself we beseech you by what has been pointed out. Assume not that all is well with thee. Examine yourself, and your knowledge of divine things. You may not know the very day of your regeneration, nor how it was brought about, but the *evidences* of it are apparent. Which do you really love the more: the pleasures of sin or the beauty of holiness? Which do you genuinely value most: God or the creature? Which are you actually serving: self or Christ? A sanctifying knowledge of God results in the heart being divorced from the things formerly cherished and idolized, and to now cleave to objects disliked and shunned. When the Spirit shines into the heart and reflects His own light from the Word into it, the soul is for evermore out of conceit with itself. When the LORD fully discovered Himself unto Job, he cried, “Behold, I am vile” (Job 40:4). Have *you* ever been made conscious of the same thing before Him? Do you now perceive that, in yourself, you are a corrupt and polluted creature? Has the blessed Spirit made Christ real and precious to you? If so, there has been a radical change in your heart and life. When Christ was revealed to Paul, he had a contempt for all things else, ardent desires after Him, supreme delight in Him, and was willing to suffer the loss of all things for His sake (Phi 3:8-9). A saving knowledge of Christ gives us to prove the sufficiency of His grace, sustaining the soul amid trials (2Co 12:9).

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phi 1:6). That which we have sought to describe is only *commenced* at regeneration and conversion: henceforth we are to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 3:18). Our native spiritual blindness is only partly cured in this life, so that we yet “see through a glass, darkly” (1Co 13:12). Believers are still completely dependent upon the Lord that He should open “their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures” (Luk 24:45). They need to beg Him to make good unto them that promise, “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Pro 4:18). As the work of God is carried on in the soul, the Spirit shows him more and more what a hell-deserving wretch he is in himself, causes him to groan frequently over his corruptions and failures, makes him more deeply sensible of his need and suitableness unto Christ, brings him more and more in love with the Saviour, and stirs him unto an increased diligence in endeavouring to serve and honour Him. However far a saint may advance in an experiential acquaintance with Him, it is his privilege and duty to pray that he may be “increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10).

It is very necessary that the young Christian should clearly recognize that God’s work of grace in the soul is not completed in this life. There are some of His people who look within themselves for a faith that is not hampered with unbelief, for a love that is ever warm and constant, for pantings after holiness that vary not in fervour and regularity, for an obedience which is wellnigh perfect, and because they are unable to find that this is *their* case, conclude themselves to be unregenerate. They fail to realize that the evil principle of “the flesh” is left in them, and remains unchanged unto the end. It is indeed their bounden duty to mortify its lustings and to make no provision for the same (Rom 13:12, 14); nevertheless, they will frequently have occasion to complain, “Iniquities prevail against

me” (Psa 65:3), and daily will they need to avail themselves of that “fountain opened to [the LORD’s people] for sin and for uncleanness” (Zec 13:1). If they do not, if they trifle with temptations, consort with the ungodly, allow unconfessed sins to accumulate on the conscience, they will soon relapse into a sickly state of soul, lose their relish for the things of God, have their graces languish, and then they will be *unable* to discern in their hearts and lives the seven marks named above. A backslider will not find the fruits of righteousness in his soul.

It also requires to be pointed out just here that there is a radical difference between the manner of the Spirit’s working in regeneration and His operations subsequently. In the former, He wrought upon us as we were “dead in sins” (Eph 2:5), and consequently, entirely passive therein. But after He has quickened us into newness of life, we concur with Him. That is to say, we are required to use the means of grace, especially the reading of God’s Word, meditating on its contents, and praying for grace to conform thereto. The blessed Spirit will set no premium on slothfulness. We are to work, and He graciously assists: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities” (Rom 8:26). As we are “led by the Spirit” to walk in the paths of righteousness, conscience testifies in our favour, and “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom 8:14, 16). But if we become careless and excuse ourselves therein, then the Spirit is grieved and obstructed, His comforts are withheld, and we taste the bitterness of our folly. The chastening rod falls on us till we repent of our waywardness and turn again unto the Lord. When matters are righted with God, the Spirit stirs us afresh to the use of means and again takes of the soul-satisfying things of Christ and shows them unto us.

Finally, let it again be emphasized that all the inward teachings of God are perfectly agreeable to the written Word. The revelations made by the Spirit to the souls of God’s elect, and which constitute their own actual “experience,” and the revelation which He has made in the sacred Scriptures, never conflict (Isa 59:21). When God speaks to the heart of man—whether it be in a way of conviction, consolation, or instruction in duty—He always honours the Bible by making express use of its words. Thus the written Word is the sole standard by which we must try all the teaching we have received: all must be weighed in the balances of the Sanctuary. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to *this* word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa 8:20). Without that divine safeguard, we lay ourselves open to gross fanaticism and fatal deception. Whatever spiritual knowledge you think you have received, if it accords not wholly with God’s Word, it is not of divine revelation, but is either of human imagination or Satanic insinuation. “The Word contains the revelation of Christ; the Holy Spirit from the Word reveals Christ. In a spiritual apprehension of Him, eternal life is begotten in the soul, which, while it is full of Christ, yet we do not see and believe on Him to life eternal until the Lord the Spirit be our Teacher and Instructor”—Samuel E. Pierce (b. 1827).

In conclusion, let us draw a few inferences from all that has been before us. (1) Herein we behold the sovereignty of God, who divideth the light from the darkness as He pleases. Divine grace is discriminating (Rom 9:18). That particularity in which Christ dealt with souls still obtains: “It is given *unto you* to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given” (Mat 13:11). (2) Hence we see the deep importance of distinguishing between that knowledge of the things of God which is naturally acquired and that which is divinely taught the soul, and the need for ascertaining whether *my* knowledge be producing spiritual fruit in my life. It is a safe criterion to apply, that whatever originates with self always aims at and terminates on self; whereas that which is from the Spirit draws out the heart and will unto Christ. (3) That those upon whom the Sun of righteousness has arisen cannot be sufficiently thankful or praise Him enough. How grateful we should be if we “*know* the joyful sound” (Psa 89:15) and have found peace and joy in Christ! Well may we with wonderment exclaim, “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto *us*, and not unto the world?” (Joh 14:22). (4) Why so few who hear the Gospel are truly saved under it. How different were the effects produced by the same Seed on the several soils (Luk 8:5-8): the heart must be ploughed and harrowed before it is made an “honest and good” one (verse 15). (5) Why so many keen-brained and well-educated people are left in spiritual ignorance, while simple and illiterate souls are made wise unto salvation. (6) How that the preacher is wholly dependent upon the Holy Spirit. The ablest minister of the Word can no more of himself win souls to Christ than experienced fishermen could catch a single fish until He gave success (Luk 5:5). Neither the gifted Paul nor the eloquent Apollos was “anything”: it is *God* “that giveth the increase” (1Co 3:7). Often the most carefully prepared and earnestly delivered sermons produce no fruit, while a plain and ordinary one is blest of God. (7) How highly should the Christian prize the illumination of the Spirit and be looking continually to Him for instruction. He needs not a plainer Bible, but a clearer vision. I know no more of God to any good purpose than as I have been and am being taught *of Him!*

Glorious Sinai

Part 3

It is deeply important that Christians today should obtain a clear and correct concept of the nature and meaning of the august transaction which took place at Sinai. Unless they do so, they will lack the principal key which opens much of the Old Testament and which explains the providential dealings of God with the nation of Israel—not simply in judgment, but in long-sufferance and mercy also. Not only so, but they will be without that which is essential to a right apprehension of its typical import, and therefore, are sure to err when attempting to trace out the antitypical fulfilment and application of the same unto themselves. We have already pointed out that the LORD God was not treating at Sinai with a people who were strangers to Him, but with those to whom He was intimately related; that it was not to aliens He there revealed His glory, but to the favoured seed of Abraham; that nothing occurred on that mount which to the least degree militated against His dealings with their fathers, but rather was the fulfilment of His promises to them. It is impossible to understand aright the contents of Exodus 19 and 20, unless they be viewed in their historical setting.

The promulgating of the Law from Sinai was not given independently, as though it laid the foundation of an entirely new relationship between Jehovah and Israel, for, as shown previously, the patriarchs themselves were under law (Gen 26:5). Nor should the proclamation of the Law be regarded as an isolated event: rather ought it to be contemplated as complementary of and the necessary sequel to the LORD's deliverance of Israel from their Egyptian bondage, His opening of the Red Sea for them and the destruction therein of their enemies, and His gracious provision of food from heaven and water from the smitten rock; while the Law itself needs also to be viewed in the light of what immediately *followed* its publication, namely, the erection of the tabernacle, the appointment of the priesthood, the assigning of sacrifices for the putting away of Israel's sins, and the LORD's taking up His abode in the midst of His people. Moreover, as we have shown in the preceding article, though God had dealt with the Hebrews in amazing grace, yet they too were under law before they came to Sinai: Exodus 15:26; 16:4, 27-28).

Nevertheless, it is obvious that a *further advance* was made at Sinai. As the eternal purpose of God is gradually unfolded before the eyes of men, its manifestation is seen to be according to the principle of orderly and progressive development, as in nature there is first the blade, then the ear, and later the full corn in the ear. It was thus on this memorable occasion. This appears in the very first words of Jehovah unto Israel upon the mount. After reminding them of what He had wrought on their behalf, and that He had borne them on eagles' wings and brought them unto Himself, He proposed unto them the terms of a covenant, promising that if they would abide by the same, they should be unto Him "a peculiar treasure...above all people," and that they should be unto Him "a *kingdom* of priests, and an holy *nation*" (Exo 19:4-6). Formerly, He had dealt first in sovereign grace with individuals, such as Abel and Enoch; then with households like Noah's (Gen 7:1) and Abraham's; but now He would organize and rule over Israel *nationally*. Moreover, an advance was made over all previous calls and appointments by the obligations which rested upon the heirs of promise being now cast into categorical and imperative form, which included the whole round of their moral and religious duty.

It was not that Israel might, by their obedience to the divine Law and their keeping of the covenant, win for themselves a new and more blessed relation to God, but rather that because they had been taken into the place of privileged nearness unto Him, they should walk worthily of the same and be filled with such fruits of righteousness as would alone evince their being the people of God or fulfil the calling which they had received from Him. Special nearness to God involves as its necessary corollary and consequence the knowledge and reflecting of His character, entering into His mind and will, striving to be holy as He is holy. That was the grand end unto which all was directed, the purpose for which they stood before the LORD as a separate people, and were here gathered at Sinai to hear the Law from His own mouth. If the Law had been aught else than a revelation of God's requirements from His people toward Himself and toward each other in the vital interests of righteousness and truth, it had neither been in accord with His own unchanging character, made known to them that homage and subjection which are His due, nor have set before Israel that holy standard which it was their calling to constantly endeavour to realize in their behaviour.

The particular character in which Jehovah announced Himself at Sinai is in full accord with all that has been said above: "I am the LORD ['Jehovah'] thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exo 20:2). First, "I am the LORD ['Jehovah']" which is the essential title of Deity, and signifies the eternal and unchanging One: "Him which is, and which was, and which is to come" (Rev 1:4). This Name

is common to each Person in the glorious Trinity: Father (Psa 110:1), Son (Jer 23:5), and Holy Spirit (2Sa 23:2) who are one God; though it was Jehovah in the Person of the Son who promulgated the Law from Sinai (Psa 68:17-18; Act 2:37-38). Second, “I am the LORD [‘Jehovah’] thy God,” the latter greatly softening the former. The Jews deemed the title “Jehovah” so ineffably awful and sacred as never to utter it. The terror and majesty of His infinite greatness is indeed sufficient to amaze and affright all mankind, but when He adds, “I am God,” yea “even thy [own] God.” (Psa 50:7), that renders Him delightful and desirable unto the renewed heart. “Thy God” signifies thy *covenant* God (Exo 3:6; Heb 8:10). It was both a statement of fact, and a gracious assurance unto Israel. He had promised Abraham to be a “God” unto him and to his seed (Gen 17:7), and here He meets with his seed and declares Himself to be the same promising One.

“I am the LORD” affirmed His high sovereignty over His people; “thy God,” His condescending grace unto them. Such is His covenant name unto all generations (Exo 3:15-16). Christians also are to both acknowledge His scepter over them and rejoice in His benign relation unto them—we must not render asunder those two things. If we do not—in a practical way as well as with our lips—own Him as *our* “LORD,” then we do but deceive ourselves if we regard Him as our “God” in covenant with us. As one rightly said, “We must not reject the awful part for the amiable part.” Third, “which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage”: therein the LORD their God presented Himself before them as their benevolent and mighty Redeemer, assuring them of His love; as well as reminding them of the additional obligation this laid upon them to glorify Him in their bodies and in their spirits which were *His* by ransom-price. Nor must this be severed from the former. They who have not surrendered themselves unto Christ as their Lord, and yet persuade themselves He is their Redeemer and Saviour, are deluded: note carefully the *order* in Luke 1:46-47; Act 5:31; 2Pe 2:20, 3:18! We must take upon us His yoke before He bestows upon us His rest (Mat 11:29).

God is alike the Ruler and Redeemer of His people, as He is their lover and Lord. While rejoicing in His tender pity and abundant mercy, we must also revere Him for His sovereign dominion and ineffable holiness; otherwise, we at once identify ourselves as belonging to the same class as the Jews of Christ’s day, who welcomed Him as a Healer of the Sick, but declared, “We will not have this [One] to *reign over us*” (Luk 19:14). Jehovah had not delivered the Hebrews from the land of Egypt in order for them to remain the slaves of sin and Satan, but rather that they should be made free to serve Him—walking according to His precepts is the only true *liberty* (Psa 119:45). In the call to obedience in Exodus 19:5, the whole of the divine Law was implied, so far as was concerned the ground of Israel’s obligation and the germ of its requirements; and what was actually promulgated in Exodus 20 was simply the utterances of that Voice which they had promised to heed. The Law was a revelation unto Israel of the righteousness which God required from them as His chosen people in the land of their inheritance. There, they were to be a witness *unto Him* before the surrounding nations, showing forth the glory of His government by exemplifying the same in their character and conduct.

But while the Law was an enforcing of Jehovah’s authority over His people, let us observe in the next place that it also issued from His *love* unto them. Proceeding from the LORD in His character as Israel’s Redeemer, it is only to be expected that it bears a benign aspect and aims at happy results. It was on that very ground Moses extolled the condition of Israel above all other people: “For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?” (Deu 4:7-8). Very far indeed was he from entertaining the God-dishonouring idea that the Law was a tyrannical enactment, a cruel bondage imposed upon them, from which they might well hope to soon be delivered. The same sentiment was echoed by the sweet singer of Israel. Among the signal acts of mercy and lovingkindness, for which he praises the LORD in Psalm 103:7, is the fact that “he made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel”; or as explained in another Psalm, “He sheweth...his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation” (Psa 147:19-20).

The Law of Sinai issued from love, enjoined naught but love, and is fulfilled by love. How could it be otherwise? Like everything else which God has given to His people, the Decalogue was alike a manifestation of His holiness, a provision of His mercy, and an expression of His love—which ever seeks the good of its objects. Before bestowing his parting blessing upon the tribes of Israel, Moses reminded them, “the LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, he *loved* the people” (Deu 33:2-3): the juxtaposition of those two statements demonstrates that Law was a proof of God’s special love for them—as the giving up of a people unto lawlessness (their own evil lusts) is the surest sign of His hatred of them (Rom 1:21-28). It was designated “a fiery law” (Deu 33:2), because it was given to them out of the fire (Deu 4:33)—emblem of divine holiness, as the Spirit

descended on the day of Pentecost in “cloven tongues like as of fire” (Act 2:3). Observe, Moses said, “a fiery law *for* them,” not “unto,” and still less “against”—“in favour to them”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714).

As the Law issued from divine love, so it requires naught but love from the recipients of it. This is clear from the Saviour’s words, for He summarized its claims thus: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mat 22:37-39). Furthermore, its requirements are met by love: “Love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom 13:10). That is, as love delights in the happiness of others, it effectually prevents from injuring its objects, and consequently leads to the doing of what Law requires—for it enjoins nothing which is not to the best interests of our fellows. It is love which influences and prompts unto a compliance with God’s commandments (1Jo 5:2). Then what must be the spirit of those who speak evil of God’s Law, and regard it as a harsh imposition on their liberty? Very different indeed was the mind of the apostle: “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom 7:22). God’s writing of His laws upon the hearts of His redeemed (Heb 8:10) is a sure evidence of His love toward them. “We must regard God’s Law as one of the gifts of His grace”—M. Henry.

There can be no adequate apprehension of the revelation of Law, nor of its real nature and place in the divine economy, without perceiving its relation to the grand principle of love—alike in those who receive it as in Him who gave it. Viewed apart from that, it is but a body without a soul, a call to obedience without the least likelihood of an acceptable response. The Law aims at a conformity of moral purpose and character between a redeeming God and a redeemed people; and not one of its precepts could reach the desired end, unless the love which had been exhibited as the governing principle in the One should find in the other a corresponding love which should be stirred and guided into proper action. To make this unmistakably plain, Moses, as soon as he rehearsed the Decalogue, declared, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart,” etc. (Deu 6:4-5).

We do not now propose to enlarge upon that divine declaration: “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom 7:12), by giving an exposition of the Ten Words (having done so on a previous occasion), but will next take notice of what is recorded in Exodus 20 immediately after their publication. “And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die” (Exo 20:18-19). That was a plain acknowledgement that they felt themselves to be utterly unfit to deal with the LORD directly on the ground of the Decalogue. They realized that some provision was required to be made for them, that a *mediator* was needed—Moses must treat with God on their behalf. Very far indeed was such language from evincing a proud and self-sufficient people. It not only repudiates the view of those who insist that their agreement to Jehovah’s proposal (Exo 19:5; 24:7) betrayed their carnality and presumption, but it manifested their spirituality and humility.

“And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not” (Exo 20:20). In those words, Moses explained unto them the design of the glorious, yet terror-provoking, attendants of the divine majesty, which they had just witnessed. Negatively, he assured them that those convulsions of nature did not portend that Jehovah was about to destroy them as He had the Egyptians, and therefore that He had no thought of slaying them; and thus, the Law had not been given for the purpose of condemning and cursing them. Positively, he informed them that God’s intention was to put them to the test, to ascertain whether they would acknowledge Him as their King and be subject to His government, and thereby give proof that they meant what they said when they declared, “All that the LORD hath spoken we will do” (Exo 19:8). Further, those awe-inspiring phenomena were designed to fill them not with a slavish fear which gendereth to bondage, but rather to produce a godly reverence for the LORD in their hearts, while those displays of His mighty power were to act as a deterrent upon them from displeasing One who was not to be trifled with—as *we* are enjoined to “stand in awe, and sin not” (Psa 4:4).



APRIL

Identification of the Godly

“That every one which *seeth* the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life” (Joh 6:40). There is a seeing *of* the Son which is necessary for a saving faith *in* Him. That sight of Him is far more than an intellectual perception, being an experiential revelation of Him in the soul. The majority of professing Christians have nothing better than a natural notion and image of Christ in their brains; but those who behold Him to their everlasting well-being are granted a spiritual and supernatural sight of Him. That raises the vitally important question, How may I be certain that the *latter* is my case? By the *effects produced*. The sinner is brought to realize his desperate and dire need of Christ, and made sensible that He alone can meet his desperate case.

Christ can only be effectually seen in His own light (Psa 36:9; 2Co 4:6). As the sun cannot be seen except by its own light, neither can the Son of righteousness be beheld, unless He arises upon us with healing in His wings. He whose eyes were formerly blinded by sin, is now given a spiritual and inward sight of Him who is fairer than the children of men. By that sight, Christ is beheld as an all-sufficient Saviour for the vilest of sinners; and the heart is drawn out irresistibly to Him. He is now seen as a perfectly suited Physician to heal, Prophet to instruct, Priest to cleanse, and King to subdue His enemies.

1. *A spiritual sight of the Son begets faith in Him.* It cannot be otherwise, for such a view of Christ compels confidence in Him. When the Lord Jesus performed His first miracle at Cana and “manifested forth his glory,” we read that His disciples “believed on him” (Joh 2:11). A revelation of Christ puts unbelief quite out of countenance. While unbelief prevails, it says, “Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails...I will not believe” (Joh 20:25); but when Christ appears, faith exclaims, “My Lord and my God” (Joh 20:28). When a man’s eyes are opened to see the King in His beauty, his heart at once closes with Him. “They that *know* thy name *will* put their trust in thee” (Psa 9:10).

2. *A spiritual sight of the Son works repentance and sorrow for sin.* It is written, “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son” (Zec 12:10), which is fulfilled in the experience of every one whose eyes have been opened by divine grace. “Was it possible for you, O believer, to look upon this glorious Son of righteousness without a watering eye and a mourning penitential heart? Did not the heart, that was harder than a flint, become softer than wax, melting beneath the warm fire of the love of God manifested in Christ?”—Ralph Erskine (1685-1752). When Job saw the LORD, he abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes (Job 42:5-6).

3. *A spiritual sight of the Son inspires hope.* The unregenerate, even the hypocrite, has a “hope” (Job 8:13), but when a person is supernaturally illumined by the Spirit, he perceives that his hope rests on a rotten foundation, and he is obliged to forsake his refuge of lies. Now he is horrified over his enmity against God and terrified at the imminent prospect of suffering His wrath for ever. His awful sins stare him in the face, and his expectation of escaping the just punishment of them expires. But a revelation of Christ to the soul changes his despair into a lively hope, and his fervent longing now is “to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phi 1:23).

4. *A spiritual sight of the Son engenders love to Him,* not only for His bounty, but chiefly for His beauty. This it is, and this alone, which breaks the power of natural enmity against God. Naught but a revelation of Christ will win the heart to Him. “Whom having not seen [by sense], ye love” (1Pe 1:8). Was it not so with Saul of Tarsus? Filled with prejudice and hatred against Christ and His followers, a sight of Him made him immediately drop the arms of his rebellion and cry, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Act 9:6). It is impossible to have a discovery of Christ made to the soul and yet not love Him, His people, and His precepts. I may indeed mourn the feebleness and fickleness of my love, yet I certainly would not do so if I still hated Him!

5. *A spiritual sight of the Son causes a yearning for knowledge.* Not of profitless speculations on prophecy, nor for a better grasp of theology, but for a deeper and fuller apprehension of Christ Himself: in His wondrous person,

His glorious offices, His peerless perfections, and His perfect work; and that, not merely information of the same, but a personal acquaintance with them. When Christ has made Himself known to one, his longing is “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple” (Psa 27:4). No matter to what extent he may grow in grace, yet he will still desire and purpose with Paul “that I may know him” (Phi 3:10), counting all else but loss, “for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phi 3:8), longing for the immediate vision of Him in glory.

6. *A spiritual sight of the Son brings liberty.* “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2Co 3:17). The reference there, as the next verse goes on to show, is to the Comforter *as* a Spirit of revelation, discovering to the believer the glory of the Lord and conforming him thereto. Such is the actual experience of God’s children. A supernatural beholding of the glory of God in the face of Christ looses our chains, frees us from our legal bondage, and delivers from fears of the wrath to come. Liberty is then ours to freely unbosom ourselves to the Lord as we never did before, to tell out to Him the burden of our hearts, to pray and plead before Him in childlike reality. This it is which liberates the captive and opens the doors of the prison to him who previously was bound (Isa 61:1). “I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears” (Psa 34:4).

7. *A spiritual sight of the Son instills joy.* Therein is the spiritual fulfilment and personal application of that promise, “The wilderness and the solitary place [the Christless soul] shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing.” And what is it, dear reader, which occasions such a glorious transformation from desolation and barrenness into jubilation and fertility? This: “They shall *see* the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God” (Isa 35:1-2). The experience of their father Abraham is reproduced in all his believing children: “Abraham rejoiced to see my day” said Christ, “and he saw it, and was glad” (Joh 8:56). Thus it was, too, with the apostles: “Then were the disciples *glad*, when they *saw* the Lord” (Joh 20:20). A discovery of Christ unto the soul cannot but produce gladness.

8. *A spiritual sight of the Son engenders longings.* Longings to be delivered from the raging of indwelling sin, from the surgings of pride, the risings of self-will, the chilling blasts of unbelief—from everything which hinders his enjoyment of the Lord. The experience of such a soul is expressed in those words, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God” (Psa 42:1). Panteth for more of His grace to triumph over trials and hinderances; for more of His holiness, to be more fully conformed to His image; for more of His strength to overcome temptations; for more of His spirit to be brought into closer and more constant communion with Him. Yea, a discovery of Christ to the soul creates longings to depart from this scene and to be with Him for ever.

9. *A spiritual sight of the Son causes contempt of the world* and all that is within it. Once Christ is made a living reality to the heart, that person realizes that everything under the sun is “vanity and vexation of spirit” (Ecc 1:14; 2:17). He now finds that the most alluring wells of this world are “broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer 2:13), and can minister no satisfaction unto him. He has been thoroughly spoiled for them. An internal revelation of Christ completely eclipses the beauty and glory of those objects which charm the ungodly. His language now is, “What have I to do any more with idols?” (Hos 14:8). Moses esteemed the very “reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt” (Heb 11:26). Even though he suffer a relapse and his love for Christ so cools that for a time he returns to the dainties which the unregenerate feed on, he finds them to be no better than “husks” which the swine eat.

10. *A spiritual sight of the Son evokes zeal.* There are indeed many who “have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge” (Rom 10:2), for it issues from the feverish energy of the flesh rather than being prompted by the Holy Spirit, and is directed by impulse, carnal reason, or tradition, instead of by means of God’s Word. But an inward revelation of Christ conveys such an experiential knowledge of Him as regularizes our energies and leads the soul to do and suffer for Him. Love for Him will not allow its possessor to be ideal, but constrains him to further His cause and help His followers. He has a true zeal for the honour and the glory of Christ as moves him to deny self, separate from the world, and run in the way of His commandments. Though he be ridiculed and persecuted, these things move him not, and he counts not his life dear unto himself.

If such effects as the above have been produced in you, my readers, then it can be said, “*Blessed are your eyes, for they see*” (Mat 13:16).

The Prayers of the Apostles

64. 1 Peter 1:4-5

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1Pe 1:3). It is to be recalled that this epistle is addressed unto those who are “strangers scattered” abroad (1Pe 1:1). Most fitting then was this reference to the divine begetting of God’s elect, for it is thereby they are made such, both in heart and in conduct. The Lord Jesus was a Stranger here (Psa 69:8), for He was the Son of God from heaven; and so too are His people, for they have His Spirit within them. How that enhances this miracle of grace! Divine begetting is not only a doctrinal fact, but the actual communication to the soul of the very life of God (Joh 1:13). Formerly the Christian was both “in” and “of” the world, but now his “conversation [citizenship] is in heaven” (Phi 3:20), and “I am a stranger in the earth” (Psa 119:19) is henceforth his confession. To the soul renewed by God, this world becomes a barren wilderness: his heritage, his Home, is on high; and therefore, he now views the things of time and sense in a very different light from what he did before.

The chief interests of a born-again soul lie not in this mundane sphere. His affections will be set upon things above, and in proportion as they *are* so, his heart is detached from this world. Their strangership is an essential mark which distinguishes the saints from the ungodly. They who heartily embrace the promises of God are suitably affected by them (Heb 11:13). One of the certain effects of divine grace in the soul is to separate its possessor, both in spirit and in practice, from the world. His delight in heavenly things manifests itself in a weanedness from the things of earth—as the woman at the well left her bucket when she obtained from Christ the living water (Joh 4:28). Such a spirit constitutes him an alien among the worshippers of mammon. He is morally a foreigner in a strange land, surrounded by those who know him not (1Jo 3:1); neither understanding his joys or sorrows, nor appreciating the principles and motives which actuate him, for their pursuits and pleasures are radically different from his. Nay, he finds himself in the midst of enemies who hate him (Joh 15:19), and there is none with whom he can have communion, save the very few who have “obtained like precious faith” (2Pe 1:1).

But though there be nothing in this wilderness-world for the Christian, he has been “begotten...again unto a lively hope” (1Pe 1:3). Previously, he viewed death with horror, but now he perceives it will provide a blessed release from all sin and sorrow, and open the door into Paradise. The principle of grace received at the new birth not only inclines its possessor to love God and act faith on His Word, but also to “look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen” (2Co 4:18), inclining his aspirations away from the present unto the glorious future. As Thomas Manton (1620-1677) said, “The new nature was made for another world: it came from thence, and it carrieth the soul thither.” *Hope* is an assured expectation of future good. While faith is in exercise a vista of unclouded bliss, it is set before the heart, and hope enters into the enjoyment of the same. It is a living hope in a dying scene, which both supports and invigorates. While in healthy activity, hope not only sustains amid the trials of this life but lifts us above them. O for hearts to be more engaged in joyous anticipations of the future: they will quicken unto duty and stimulate unto perseverance. According to the intelligence and strength of hope will be our deliverance from the fear of death.

A further word must now be said upon the relation which “the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” bears to the Father’s begetting us unto this living hope. His God-honouring work and triumphant emergence from the grave was the *meritorious cause* not only of the justification of His people, but of their regeneration also. Mystically, they were delivered from their death in law when their Surety arose: “But 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, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together” (Eph 2:4-6). Those words refer to the corporate union of the Church with the Head and her judicial participation in His victory, and not to an individual experience. Nevertheless, since all the elect rose federally when their Representative arose, they must in due time be regenerated; since they have been made alive legally, they must in due course be quickened spiritually. Had not Christ risen, none had been quickened (1Co 15:17); but because He lives, they shall live also. The life that is in the Head must be communicated unto the members of His body.

The resurrection of Christ is the *virtual* cause of our regeneration. The Holy Spirit had not been given unless Christ had slain the last enemy and gone to the Father: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us...that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal 3:13-14). Regeneration issues as truly from the virtue of Christ’s resurrection as does our justification. He purchased for His people the

blessed Spirit to raise them up to grace and glory: “According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly *through* Jesus Christ our Saviour” (Ti 3:5-6)—i.e. because of His merits and mediation. The Holy Spirit is here to testify of Him to God’s elect, to raise up faith in them to Him that they “may abound in hope” (Rom 15:12-13). Our spiritual deliverance from the grave of sin’s guilt and pollution is as much owing to the efficacy of Christ’s triumph over death as will be our physical vivication at His return. He is “the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29).

The resurrection of Christ is also in the *exemplary pattern* of our regeneration. The same power put forth in raising Christ’s body is employed in the recovering of our souls (Eph 1:19). The Lord Jesus is designated “the first begotten of the dead” (Rev 1:5), because His emerging from the grave was not only the pledge, but the likeness of both the regeneration of the souls of His people and the raising of their bodies. The similitude is obvious. Begetting is the beginning of a new life. When Christ was born into this world, it was “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom 8:3)—clothed with infirmity because of imputed iniquity; but when He rose in power and glory, it was in a body fitted for heaven: at regeneration, we receive a nature which makes us meet for heaven. As God’s raising of Christ testified to His being pacified by His sacrifice (Heb 13:20), so by begetting us again, He assures us of our personal interest therein. As Christ’s resurrection was the grand proof of His divine Sonship (Rom 1:4), so the new birth is the first open manifestation of our adoption. As Christ’s resurrection was the first step into His glory and exaltation, so regeneration is the first stage of our entrance into all spiritual privileges.

Seventh, *its substance*: “To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for [us]” (1Pe 1:4). Regeneration is in order to glorification. We are begotten spiritually unto two things: a living hope in the present, a glorious heritage in the future. It is by God’s begetting that we obtain our title to the latter. Inheritances go by birth: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:5). If not sons, there can be no heirship, and we must be born of God in order to become (vitaly) the children of God. But “if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17). Not only does begetting confer title, but it also guarantees the inheritance. Already, the Christian has received the Spirit “which is the earnest of our inheritance” (Eph 1:14). As Christ’s part was to purchase, so the Spirit’s part is to make it known unto the heirs: “The things which God hath prepared for them that love him,” He “hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit” (1Co 2:9-10). It is the Spirit’s province to vouchsafe the regenerate sweet foretastes of what is in store for them, to bring something of heaven’s joy into their souls on earth.

Not only does divine begetting give title to and ensure the inheritance, but it also imparts a *meetness* for the same. At the new birth, a nature is imparted which is suited to the celestial sphere, which qualifies the soul to dwell for ever with the Holy One (as is evident from his present communion with Him), and at the close of his earthly pilgrimage, indwelling sin (which now hinders his communion) dies with the body. It is all too little realized by the saints that at regeneration, they are at once fitted for heaven. Many of them—to the serious diminution of their peace and joy—suppose that they must still pass through a process of severe discipline and refining ere they are ready to enter the courts above. That is but another relic of Romanism. The case of the dying thief, who was taken immediately from his spiritual birthplace into Paradise, should teach them better. But it does not. So legalistic remains the heart even of a Christian that it is very difficult to convince him that the very hour he was born again, he was made as suitable for heaven as ever he would be, though he remained on earth another century; that no growth in grace or passing through fiery trials is essential to prepare the soul for the Father’s House.

Nowhere does Scripture say that believers are “ripened,” “meetened,” or “gradually fitted” for heaven. The Holy Spirit expressly declares that God the Father hath “according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again...to an inheritance” (1Pe 1:3-4). What could be plainer? Nor does our text by any means stand alone. Christians have already been made “partakers of the divine nature” (2Pe 1:4), and what more can be needed to fit them for the divine presence? Scripture emphatically declares, “If a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (Gal 4:7). The inheritance is the child’s birthright or patrimony. To speak of “heirs” not being eligible for an estate is a contradiction in terms. Our fitness for the inheritance lies alone in our being the children of God. If it be true that “except a man be born again, he cannot see [or enter] the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:3, 5), then conversely, it necessarily follows that once he *has been* born again, he is qualified for an entrance into and enjoyment of God’s kingdom. All room for argument thereon is excluded by “giving thanks unto the Father, which *hath* made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col 1:12)—see our article thereon in the June 1947 issue.

By regeneration, we are made vitaly one with Christ and thereby become “joint-heirs” (Rom 8:17) with Him. The portion of the Bride is her participation in that of the Bridegroom: “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them” (Joh 17:22) declares the Redeemer of His redeemed. This too needs stressing today when so much error is parading itself as the Truth. In their fanciful attempts to “rightly [divide] the word of truth” (2Ti 2:15), men

have wrongly divided the family of God. Dispensationalists hold that not only is there a distinction of earthly privileges, but that the same distinctions will be perpetuated in the world to come, that the New Testament believers will look down from a superior elevation upon Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that saints who lived and died previously to Pentecost will not participate in the glory of the Church or enter into the inheritance “reserved in heaven for [us]” (1Pe 1:4). To affirm that those of this Christian era are to occupy a higher position and enjoy grander privileges than will those of previous ages is a serious and inexcusable mistake, for it clashes with the most fundamental teachings of Scriptures concerning the purpose of the Father, the redemption of Christ, and the work of the Spirit, and repudiates the essential features of God’s “so great salvation” (Heb 2:3).

All of God’s elect are the common-sharers of the riches of His wondrous grace, vessels he afore prepared “unto glory” (Rom 9:23), whom He predestinated to be “conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom 8:29). Christ acted as the Surety of the entire election of grace, and what His meritorious work secured for one of them, it necessarily secured for all. The saints of all ages are fellowheirs: each of them was predestinated by the same Father (Joh 10:16), each of them was regenerated by the same Spirit (2Co 4:13), each of them looked unto and trusted in the same Saviour. Scripture knows of no salvation which does not issue in joint-heirship with Christ. Those to whom God gives His Son—namely, the whole company of His elect from Abel to the end of earth’s history—He also “freely [gives them] *all things*” (Rom 8:32). That both Abraham and David were justified by faith is plain from Romans 4, and there is no higher destiny or more glorious prospect than that to which justification gives full title. The work of the Holy Spirit is identical in every member of God’s family: begetting them to, qualifying them for, a celestial heritage. All those who were effectually called by Him during the Old Testament era received the promise of “eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15). Heaven-born children must have a heavenly portion.

A few words now upon that heavenly portion. It is one that is agreeable to the new life received at regeneration: a state of perfect holiness and happiness suited to spiritual beings united to material bodies. Many and varied are the descriptions given in Scripture of the nature of our inheritance. “Salvation” (Heb 9:28; 1Pe 1:5) in its fullness and perfection, bestowed upon the redeemed at Christ’s return. The “Father’s house [with its] many mansions,” which the Saviour is now preparing for “his own” (Joh 14:1-2). “The inheritance of the saints in light” (Col 1:12), the purchased possession of the “the children of light” (1Th 5:5). “A city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,” unto which Abraham’s faith and hope looked (Heb 11:10), and which is depicted in Revelation 21:10-27. “A kingdom which cannot be moved” (Heb 12:28), even “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 1:11). God’s “eternal glory” unto which He has called us (1Pe 5:10), particularly as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ: “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory” (Joh 17:24). “The paradise of God” (Rev 2:7), of which Eden was but a shadow, and in which there is provided “fulness of joy...pleasures for evermore” (Psa 16:11).

“The celestial blessedness here, and in many other passages of Scripture receives the appellation of ‘an inheritance’ for two reasons—to mark its gratuitous nature, and to mark its secure tenure. An inheritance is something that is not obtained by the individual’s own exertions, but by the free gift or bequest of another. The earthly inheritance of the external people of God was not given them because they were greater or better than the other nations. It was because ‘the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them’ (Deu 10:15 and compare Psa 44:3). And the heavenly inheritance of the spiritual people of God is entirely the gift of sovereign kindness: ‘the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord’ (Rom 6:23). Again; no right is more indefeasible than the right of inheritance. If the right of the giver or bequeather be good, all is secure. The heavenly happiness, whether viewed as the gift of the divine Father or the bequest of the divine Son, is ‘sure to all the seed’ (Rom 4:16). If the title of the claimants be but as valid as the right of the original proprietor, their tenure must be as secure as the Throne of God and of His Son”—John Brown of Haddington (1722-1787).

The *excellence* of this “inheritance” or everlasting portion of the redeemed is described by three words. First, “incorruptible,” and thus, it is like its Author: “The incorruptible God” (Rom 1:23). All corruption is a change from better to worse, but heaven is without change or end. Hence, “incorruptible” has the force of enduring, imperishable. Nor will it corrupt its heirs, as many a worldly one has done. Second, it is “undefiled”; and thus, it is like its Purchaser, who passed through this depraved world uncontaminated (Heb 7:26), as a sunbeam is unsullied, though it shines on a filthy object. All defilement is by sin, but no germ of it can ever enter heaven. Hence, “undefiled” has the force of beneficent, incapable of injuring its possessors. Third, it “fadeth not away”; and thus, it is like the One who conducts us thither: “the *eternal* Spirit” (Heb 9:14)—the Holy Spirit, “pure river of [the] water of life” (Rev 22:1). “Undefiled” tells of its perennial and perpetual freshness: its splendour will never be marred, nor its beauty diminished. “Reserved in heaven” (1Pe 1:4) tells of the location and security of our inheritance: see Colossians 1:5; 2 Timothy 4:18.

Putting together the four descriptive terms, we are shown, first, the *nature* of our inheritance—indestructible. The substance of every earthly grandeur wears away; the mightiest empires eventually dissipate by reason of inherent corruption. Second, its *purity*: no serpent shall ever enter this paradise to defile it. Third, its changeless *beauty*: no rust shall tarnish or moth mar it, nor shall endless ages produce a wrinkle. Fourth, its *security*. It is guarded by Christ for His redeemed: no thief shall ever break into it. More specifically: it seems to us there is here a designed series of contrasts. First, from the inheritance of Adam: how soon was Eden corrupted! Second, from the inheritance which the Most High “divided to the nations” (Deu 32:8), which one and all have defiled by greed and bloodshed. Third, from the inheritance of Israel: how sadly the land of milk and honey wilted under the droughts and famines, which the LORD sent on it for their sins. Fourth, from that of the fallen angels, in heaven itself, who “kept not their first estate” (Jude :6), having no High Priest to intercede for them.

The apostle’s reference to the heavenly heritage of believers was a most appropriate one. He was writing to those who were—both naturally and spiritually—away from their homeland, aliens in a strange country. Many of them were converted Jews, and, as such, fiercely opposed and most cruelly treated. When a Jew became a Christian, he forfeited much: excommunicated from the synagogue, he became an outcast from his own people. Nevertheless, there was rich compensation for him. He had been divinely begotten unto an inheritance infinitely superior, both in quality and duration, to the land of Palestine: thus his gains far more than made up for his losses. The Holy Spirit, then, from the outset of the epistle, drew out the hearts of those suffering saints unto God by setting before them His abundant mercy and the exceeding riches of His grace. According as they were occupied with the same would their minds be lifted above this scene and their hearts filled with praise unto God. While few of *us* are experiencing any trials comparable with *theirs*, yet our lot is cast in a very dark day, and it behoves us to look away from the things seen and more and more fix our attention upon the blissful future awaiting us. Since God has designed such for us, how we should glorify Him!

The Life and Times of Joshua

44. Strategy

Lack of space prevented our adding a word at the close of our last on the concluding verse of Joshua 7, so to it we now turn: “And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor [‘Trouble’], unto this day.” Three things are to be noted: the memorial to solemnly remind Israel of Achan’s sin, the LORD’s reconciliation, and the name given to the place of execution and appeasement. As the twelve stones taken out of Jordan were permanently pitched in Gilgal (Jos 4:20-23) to perpetuate the memory of the miracle which the LORD had so graciously wrought there, so a great heap of stones was raised to mark the spot where the vengeance of the Holy One fell upon the one who had so grievously offended Him. That heap of stones was designed to serve as a terrible warning against the crime of sacrilege, to rebuke those who imagine themselves secure in secret sins, and to furnish a witness of what an awful thing it is to be a troubler of God’s people.

There is an instructive emphasis in the “So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger” (Jos 7:26), teaching us that the assemblies of His people must exercise a strict and holy discipline (for the honour of His name) if they are to escape His governmental judgments and chastenings. Cast into its positive form, that statement would read: when Israel had put away “the accursed thing” and dealt faithfully with the disturber of their peace, they were restored again to God’s favour. Two further references are made in the Scriptures to this place, and very significant and blessed they are. Unto backsliding Israel, the LORD declared His purpose to recover and restore her, saying, “I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a *door of hope*” (Hos 2:15): our putting away of the offensive thing—by repentance and reformation—affords ground for hoping that God will renew His favours unto us. “And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor [where things are put right with God] a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have *sought me*” (Isa 65:10)—a promise which should be spiritualized and pleaded by each wayward but contrite saint.

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land” (Jos

8:1). In the preceding verse, we are told, “So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger”; and while there can be little or no doubt that Joshua would—after the matter of Achan had been dealt with—*infer the same*, yet he had not been given any token from Him that such was the case; but now he received from God a word of cheer, a word of instruction, and a word of promise for faith to lay hold of. “When we have faithfully put away sin, that accursed thing which separates between our God, then, and not till then, we may expect to hear from God for our comfort; and God’s directing us how to go on in our Christian walk, and warfare is a good evidence of His being reconciled to us”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714): that is, fellowship with Him is now restored. Note well that commentator’s “and not till then”: no purveyors of “smooth things” (Isa 30:10) were the faithful and practical Puritans, nor did they entertain their hearers and readers with matters of no spiritual profit.

The LORD’s word “arise” intimates that, following the stoning of Achan and his family, Joshua again took his place on his face, or at least on his knees, before the LORD, seeking consolation and counsel from Him. Israel’s progress in their conquest and occupation of Canaan had been rudely interrupted, and though the hindering cause had been put away, yet Joshua dare not attempt any further advance until His Master gave fresh indication of His will. This teaches us that, after a sin has been unsparingly judged by us—be it the case of an individual Christian, or that of an assembly—there must be a humble and definite waiting upon God for guidance as to what He would have us do next. His “fear not, neither be thou dismayed” (Jos 8:1) shows that the offence of Achan and its disastrous consequences had been a sore and unexpected blow to Joshua, making him almost ready to faint. “Corruptions within the church weaken the hands and dampen the spirits of her guides and helpers, more than opposition from without; treacherous Israelites are to be dreaded more than malicious Canaanites”—M. Henry.

That word, “fear not, neither be thou dismayed,” was designed not only for Joshua personally, but for the whole of the congregation. Israel had failed lamentably at their first assault upon Ai, had been deeply humiliated, and in consequence, “the hearts of the people melted, and became as water” (Jos 7:5); and though they had obeyed the divine command of Joshua 7:15 in utterly destroying the culprit and all that he had, yet they were in real need of an intimation that they had been restored to God’s favour, and could count upon His leading them again to victory. Equally requisite is it that the penitent and humbled Christian should lay hold of this or some similar reassuring word. When iniquities have prevailed against him (Psa 65:3) and the enemy has humiliated him, he is prone to be “swallowed up with overmuch sorrow” (2Co 2:7) and suffer Satan to keep him in the slough of despond, which is not only needless and foolish, but dishonouring to God. If he has sincerely and contritely forsaken his sins, then he should confidently reckon upon God’s mercy (Pro 28:13) and appropriate His promise, “he is faithful and just [to Christ’s atoning sacrifice] to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jo 1:9).

The word of comfort or reassurance was followed by one of instruction: “Take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai” (Jos 8:1). Therein Joshua and the people under him received definite directions from the LORD what they must next do. Joshua was now to turn from the Throne of Grace and make for the field of battle, as the believer has to leave the place of secret prayer and go forth to conflict in the world. Linking the two words together, the LORD was bidding His servant not to be dismayed by the previous repulse at Ai, but to be strong and courageous. In like manner, He calls upon the restored backslider to renew the contest with his enemies. If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again. Quit not the fight because you have been worsted, nor even if you were wounded. Though you were blameable for the failure, having confessed the same to God, resume the struggle. *That* is a part of what is included in “perseverance in grace” or “the final perseverance of the saints.” “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise” (Mic 7:8). In its application to us individually, the “take all the people of war with thee” (Jos 8:1) means, See to it that all your powers and graces are exerted in a concerted effort.

“See, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land.” That was spoken from the divine purpose: it was not “I will,” but “I have given.” It was God who “callesth those things which be not as though they were,” as when He told the aged patriarch with barren wife, “I *have* made thee a father of many nations” (Rom 4:17). And as that word to Abraham was addressed unto his *faith*, so was this one here to Joshua. “See, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai” signified, Regard it as an accomplished fact, behold the victory with the eye of your spirit as one already achieved. It is thus that the soldiers of Christ are to wage their spiritual warfare, fully persuaded of the happy outcome. As the beloved, yet often hard-pressed, apostle expressed it: “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air” (1Co 9:26)—having no doubt whatever of reaching the goal, nor of vanquishing his enemy. It is “the good fight of *faith*” (1Ti 6:12), to which we are called; but if we be regulated by our reason or feelings, it soon becomes a fight of unbelief. This “see” (by faith) of Joshua 8:1 was similar to that of Exodus 14:13 and Joshua 6:2 (compare our remarks thereon in the March 1948 article).

Ere passing on to the next verse, let it be pointed out that the one we have just been pondering contains a timely message for the pastor, especially if he be discouraged and disheartened by the absence of any apparent success or

fruit for his labours. First, he should search himself before God and test both his message and method by the Word, to see if he has in any way grieved the Holy Spirit and thereby prevented His blessing upon his ministry. Should such prove to be the case, his sin must be unsparingly judged and abandoned. If after diligent self-examination, no hindering cause is revealed, then let him take these words of the LORD as spoken immediately to himself: “Fear not, neither be thou dismayed” (Jos 8:1)—it is fear which causes dejection and dismay! Then let him say, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee” (Psa 56:3); or better, “I will trust, and not be afraid” (Isa 12:2). “Take all the people of war with thee” (Jos 8:1): earnestly solicit the prayerful co-operation of the saints; and whether you have that or no, be sure to take unto thee “the whole armour of God” (Eph 6:11-13). Further, eye by faith such promises as Isaiah 55:11; Matthew 28:20—for only thus will your fears be quietened.

“And thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it” (Jos 8:2). No mercy was to be shown the enemy, no truce made with him, but all the inhabitants were to be “utterly destroyed” as in the former instance (Jos 6:21). This teaches us that the Christian must adopt an uncompromising attitude toward every form of evil, even abstaining from the very appearance of it (1Th 5:22). On this occasion, divine permission was given Israel to appropriate the spoil and the cattle unto themselves. “The cattle upon a thousand hills” are the LORD’s (Psa 50:10), and He disposes of them as He pleases. In connection with Jericho, Israel were forbidden to take anything unto themselves, the whole being “consecrated unto the LORD” (Jos 6:19); thereby intimating that He has a special claim upon “the firstfruits” (Exo 23:19; Pro 3:9), for that initial restriction was not again enforced. The grant here thereby exhibiting the folly of covetous Achan—we never lose by waiting *God’s* time, and only bring trouble upon ourselves if we attempt to anticipate it.

The method by which Ai was to be taken was quite different from the one used against the first stronghold of the Canaanites, which shows us, among other things, that God does not work uniformly. Thomas Scott (1747-1821) pointed out that “Jericho had been taken by a miracle...in order to teach the people to depend on God, and give Him the glory of all their successes. But they seemed to have inferred that they might despise their enemies and indulge themselves. They were, therefore, in the next instance, instructed that diligence, self-denial, and the exercise of all their powers—both of body and mind—were required in order to secure success.” While fully agreeing with those remarks, yet they do not, we think, fully explain the case. Though God be absolute sovereign, so that He ever acts freely, yet His ways with men are not capricious, but generally accord with their own behaviour. Because of their rash conduct in the first attack on Ai, Israel had missed God’s best, and must now be content with His second best, is how we prefer to express it. The root cause of their failure was the flagrant offence of Achan, but more immediately, it was due to the conceit of the spies and the folly of Joshua in acceding to their carnal suggestion.

“So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai: and Joshua chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valour, and sent them away by night. And he commanded them, saying, Behold, ye shall lie in wait against the city, even behind the city: go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready” (Jos 8:3-4). To how much trouble had Israel now put themselves in order to overthrow Ai! Ah, my reader, it requires no little pains in order to return to the path of blessing once we have departed from the same! In various ways, God makes us feel the folly of leaning unto our own understanding or acting in self-will, and shows us something of what we bring upon ourselves by missing His best. Observe, too, how precisely the LORD corrected Israel’s failures, making them reverse their former policy. When the spies returned from the reconnoitering of Ai, they said unto Joshua, “Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai” (Jos 7:3). That was in direct variance with the pattern which God gave to Israel in Joshua 6:3, and to which He now required them to return—“take *all* the people of war with thee” (Jos 8:1). The closing words of the spies, “for they are but few” (Jos 7:3), showed they regarded Ai with contempt, as an easy prey, and the proposal that a single battalion of *their* fighting men would suffice was manifestly the language of conceit.

The LORD countered their pride by appointing a much more humbling method for capturing Ai than the one used in the overthrow of Jericho. There, Israel’s army had marched openly around the walls of that fortress; here, where a smaller and weaker city was involved, the humiliating strategy of a secret ambush was assigned in order for an attack from the rear. In the latter case, Joshua had failed to spread before the LORD the suggestion of the spies and seek counsel of Him, and disastrous was the consequence. The result was that he had to spend many hours “on his face” before the ark ere an explanation of Israel’s repulse was vouchsafed him; and later, he had to bow again before the LORD ere instructions were given for the new plan of campaign (Jos 8:1). The servant of God must not follow his own devices, but rather act according to the Word of his Master—for only then is he justified in counting upon His blessing. It is blessed to observe that however humbling the means which God now required to be used, both Joshua and those under him complied with the instructions God gave them. Having received an an-

swer of peace from the LORD and an intimation of His will for them, they acted promptly in carrying out of the same.

“So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai” (Jos 8:3). That was not only an act of obedience, but, we doubt not, should also be regarded as one of faith—in response to Jehovah’s “See, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai” (Jos 8:1). Should any one be disposed to ask, “But since the LORD had made such an announcement, why was it necessary for Joshua and the whole of his army to go to so much trouble?” he would betray his ignorance both of God’s sovereignty and of man’s accountability. God’s predestination of the end does not render needless our use of means: rather does the former include the latter, and is realized by the same. When the LORD informed Hezekiah through one of His prophets that He would “add unto [his] days fifteen years” (Isa 38:5), that certainly did not imply that the king might henceforth dispense with food, drink, and sleep; and more than God’s assurance to Paul that there should be “no loss of life” of the ship’s contingent rendered it the less imperative to abstain from recklessness and to use means for their preservation (Act 27:22-24, 31). God’s gracious assurances unto His people are not designed to promote indolence, but instead, to stimulate and to encourage diligence, knowing that our “labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1Co 15:58).

While it be true that unless God gives the victory, no efforts of ours can possibly achieve it; nevertheless, it is our bounden duty to make every effort. Though the fall of Ai was certain, yet Israel were called upon to discharge their responsibility. God’s promises to us are not given to induce slothfulness, but to be a spur unto obedience to His precepts. Faith is no substitute for diligent and zealous work, but is to act as the director of the same. Hope is not to absolve us from the discharge of our obligations, but is to inspire unto the performing of the same. It is because victory *is sure* in the end that the soldiers of Christ are called upon to fight: that assurance is to be their incentive, from which they are to draw their energy. The genuine exercise of faith has a powerful influence both upon the Christian’s efforts to mortify the old man and to vivify the new. This is clear from Romans 6:11, and what follows: we must obey the reckoning of faith, account ourselves legally one with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection before we can expect any success in subduing our lusts or developing our graces (Rom 6:13). Faith is indeed the victory “that overcometh the world” (1Jo 5:4-5); yet as the previous verse clearly shows, it is a faith which is operative in the keeping of God’s commandments.

Thus, while Israel were called upon to exercise faith in the divine assurance of success, yet they were also required to adhere strictly to the strategy which God appointed. Very definite were the orders Joshua gave unto the thirty thousand men who were to fall upon the city from the rear: “Behold, ye shall lie in wait against the city, even behind the city: go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready” (Jos 8:4)—they were told where to go, what to do, and how to comport themselves. Equally explicit are the instructions of the Christian in connection with the waging of his spiritual warfare; and the measure of his success will very largely be determined by how closely he sticks to them. Thus, after bidding believers, “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (which can only be by the exercise of faith upon Him), the apostle bade them, “Put on the whole armour of God, that *ye may be able to stand* against the wiles of the devil” (Eph 6:10-11)—which plainly imports that unless they heeded his injunction, they would fall before the enemy’s artifices. This is the more noticeable, because after enforcing his exhortation (Eph 6:12), he repeats, “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand” (Eph 6:13). God has provided the armour, but *we* have to “take unto” us and “put on” the same—and not merely a part of it, but “the whole.”

The Doctrine of Revelation

28. In Glory

We have now arrived at the grand climax of our present subject, and well may we beg the LORD to enlarge our hearts that we may take in a soul-rapturing view thereof. Having traced out—most imperfectly—the revelation which God has made of Himself in the created universe, in the moral nature of man, in His shaping of human history, in His incarnate Son, in the sacred Scriptures, and in the saving discovery which He makes of Himself in the souls of His elect at their regeneration and conversion, we shall now endeavour to contemplate something of that manifestation which the Triune God will make in and through Christ unto His saints in *heaven*. That experiential

knowledge of and communion with God which the believer has here on earth is indeed a real, affectionate, and blessed one, so that at times, he is lifted out of himself and made to rejoice with joy unspeakable; yet it is but an earnest and a foretaste of what he shall enjoy hereafter. At death, he enters into a life which amply compensates for all the trials and tribulations he experiences in this world. Said one who had endured persecution in every form: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom 8:18).

The profession of the Gospel subjects the believer to peculiar hardships, for it requires him to deny self, take up his cross daily, and serve under the banner of One who is despised and rejected of men generally. To follow the example which Christ has left us involves having fellowship with His sufferings and enduring His reproach; and the more fully we be conformed to His holy image, the more shall we be hated, ridiculed, and opposed by the world—especially by its graceless professors. In certain periods of history, and in some countries today, particularly fierce and sore persecution was experienced by the saints; but everywhere and in all generations they have found, in different ways and degrees, that "all that will *live* godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2Ti 3:12). Yet that is only one side of the present experience of Christians: they also enjoy a "peace which passeth all understanding" (Phi 4:7), and have blessed fellowship with Christ as He walks and talks with them along the way. Moreover, "the hope which is laid up for [them] in heaven, whereof [they have] heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel" (Col 1:5) causes them, like Moses of old, to "[esteem] the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward," and "by faith...he endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb 11:26-27).

Such is the experience of God's people, and ought to be so increasingly by all of them: looking off from the things seen and temporal unto those which are unseen and eternal. With the eye of faith fixed steadfastly upon the Captain of their salvation, they should run with patience the race set before them. Though a very small part of this world be their portion, they are to "[look] for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb 11:10). Though called upon to suffer temporal losses for Christ's sake, they are to remember that in heaven, they "have in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (Heb 10:34). If they be the objects of scorn and infamy, they can rejoice that their names are written on high, and will yet be honoured by Christ—not only before the Father and the holy angels, but before an assembled universe, He will not be ashamed to call them brethren. If their affections be really set upon things above, then "having food and raiment [they will] be therewith content" (1Ti 6:8). If they have the assurance, they are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17), it will be a small matter when worms of the earth cast out their names as evil and shun their company. If believing anticipations of the glorious future be theirs, then "the joy of the LORD [will be their] strength" (Neh 8:10).

If the would-be disciple of Christ is enjoined to sit down first and count *the cost* (Luk 14:28), let him also make an inventory of the *compensations*. How rich those compensations are, how great "the recompence of the reward" (Heb 11:26) is, may be estimated by many considerations:

1. *From the contrast presented by our present sufferings.* "For our *light* affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal *weight* of glory" (2Co 4:17). The sufferings of God's people in this world are, considered in themselves, often very heavy and grievous, and in many cases, long protracted. If, therefore, they be "light" when set over against their future bliss, how great that bliss must be! The paucity of human language to express it is seen in the piling up of one term upon another: it is a "weight," it is an "exceeding" weight, even "a far more exceeding" weight—yea, it is an "eternal weight of glory."

2. *From the divine promises.* "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you...for great is your reward in heaven" (Mat 5:11-12): who can gauge what *He* terms "great"! "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Mat 13:43). "Enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Mat 25:21).

3. *From our relationship to God.* The saints are designated His children and heirs, and it is not possible for Almighty God to invest created beings with higher honour than that. This sonship is not that which pertains to them as creatures, and which in a lower sense other creatures share; but rather, it is a peculiar privilege and dignity which belongs to them as new creatures in Christ Jesus. As such, they are nearer and dearer unto God than the unfallen angels. Therefore, the riches of the saints are to be estimated by the riches of God Himself!

4. *From the declared purpose of God.* "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might *shew* the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6-7). If, then, God has designed to make a lavish display of the fullness of His favour unto His people, how surpassingly glorious will such a demonstration of it be! As another has said, "When the Monarch of the universe declares His purpose of showing how much He loves His people, the utmost stretch of imagination will struggle in vain to form even a slight conception of their glory."

5. *From the saints being God's inheritance.* All creatures are God's property, but the saints are His in a peculiar sense. They are expressly denominated "God's heritage" (1Pe 5:3), which imports that all other things compared with them are trifling in His view. On them He sets His heart, loving them with an everlasting love, valuing them above the angels. That affords another standard by which we may measure their future felicity. Well might the apostle pray that the eyes of our understanding should be enlightened, that we might know, "what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph 1:18). According as God has glory in the saints, they themselves will be glorious.

6. *From the love which Christ bears them.* Of that love, they have the fullest proof in His infinite condescension to become incarnate for their sakes in the unparalleled humiliation into which He entered in His producing for them a perfect robe of righteousness, and in His making a full atonement for all their sins. That involved not only a life of poverty and shame, of enduring the contradiction of sinners against Himself, but of suffering the wrath of God in their stead. Such love defies description and is beyond human comprehension. If He so loved us when we were enemies, what will He not bestow on us as His friends and brethren!

7. *From the reward God has bestowed upon Christ.* This also affords us a criterion by which we may gauge what awaits the saints. The stupendous achievements of Christ have been duly recognized by the Father and richly recompensed. That reward is one which is proportioned to the dignity of His person, one which is answerable to the revenue of honour and praise which His infinitely meritorious work brought to God, and which is commensurate with the unparalleled sufferings He endured and the sacrifice He made. When God gives, He does so—as in all His other actions—in accord with who and what He *is*. He has highly exalted the Redeemer, and "given him [the] name which is above every name" (Phi 2:9). In John 17:22, we find the Lord Jesus making mention to the Father of "the glory which thou [hast] gavest me." Oh, what a transcendent and supernal glory that will be! And that glory He *shares* with His beloved people: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them"! That which pertains to the heavenly Bridegroom is also the portion of His Bride. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev 3:21). The Head and His members form one body, and therefore, "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall [we] also appear with him in glory" (Col 3:4).

While the Scriptures make no attempt to gratify a carnal curiosity concerning the nature and occupations of that life into which the regenerate enter when they pass out of this world, yet sufficient *is* told them to feed hope and gladden their hearts. While it is stated that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," let it not be overlooked that the same passage goes on to say, "But God *hath revealed them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1Co 2:9-10). Yes, He has, to no inconsiderable extent, graciously revealed the same in the Word of Truth; and while we are to beware of lusting to be wise above what is written (Psa 131:1; 2Ti 3:7), we should spare no pains to be made wise up to what *is* written. If the unregenerate go to such trouble and expense in manufacturing telescopes and erecting observatories in order to examine the stellar planets, and take such delight in each fresh discovery they make, yet never expect to personally *possess* those distant stars, how intense should be *our* interest in those glories of heaven which will soon be ours for ever!

Not only has God been pleased to reveal to His people something of the blissful future awaiting them, but even while still in this vale of tears, He favours them at times with real *foretastes* of the same. Though at present, we are able to form only the most imperfect and indistinct ideas of the saints' felicity in heaven; nevertheless, in those moments of high elevation of soul, when the believer is abstracted from external things and absorbed with contemplating the perfections of God, he joins heartily with the Psalmist in exclaiming, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Psa 73:25). Not only at conversion, when the soul rejoices in the knowledge of sins forgiven and of his being accepted in the Beloved, but afterwards, in seasons of intimate fellowship with the Lord, the conscious motions of sin are suppressed, and he is sensible only of the exercise of holy desires, love, and joy. Such an experience is a real "earnest" of that which he will enjoy to a far greater degree when he is delivered from the body of this death (indwelling corruptions) and is "present with the Lord" (2Co 5:8), no longer viewing Him through a mirror, but beholding Him "face to face" (1Co 13:12).

It is at the second coming of Christ or at death that the believer in Him enters into the glorified state; and therefore, before examining what Holy Writ has to say upon the latter, we propose to enter into some detail on what it teaches concerning his dissolution. Since the vast majority of the redeemed enter heaven through the portals of death—for they have been doing so for almost six thousand years, and the New Testament seems to intimate there will be very few indeed of them upon earth at the Redeemer's return—it is appropriate that we should do so. Moreover, there is a real need for us to, for in certain quarters scarcely anything has been given out—either orally or in

writing—for the instruction and comfort of God’s people upon the dying of the saint. Not only does nature shrink from the experience and unbelief paint it in black, but the devil is not inactive in seeking to strike terror into their hearts. Not a few have been deprived of the blessed teaching of the Word thereon, because they have been erroneously led to believe that for a Christian to think much about death, or seek to prepare himself for it, is dishonouring to Christ and utterly inconsistent with “looking for that blessed hope” (Ti 2:13) and living in the daily expectation of His “glorious appearing.”

That there is no real inconsistency between the two things is clear from many considerations. Whether the Saviour will return before “the millennium” or not until the close of earth’s history, whether His coming be “imminent,” or whether certain events must first take place, this is sure, that the apostle Paul was among the number of those who waited “for [God’s] Son from heaven” (1Th 1:10); nevertheless, that did not deter him from communicating a most comforting and assuring description of what takes place at the death of a Christian (2Co 5:1-8). Let us also point out that when exhorting the New Testament saints to “run with patience the race that is set before [them]” (Heb 12:1), the first motive which the Holy Spirit supplies for the same is to remind them that they are “compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12:1)—the reference being to those whose testimony is described in the previous chapter, of whom it is said, “these all *died in faith*” (Heb 11:13), and where the triumphant deaths of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph are most blessedly depicted (Heb 11:20-22). We propose, then, to dwell upon the death of a child of God, the accompaniments or attendants of the same, and the glorious sequel thereto.

One of the distinguishing features of the Holy Scriptures and one of the many proofs of their divine inspiration is their blessed illumination of the grave and the revelation they vouchsafe concerning the hereafter. The light of nature and the best of pagan philosophy could provide no certainty about the next life. The famous Aristotle, when contemplating death, is said to have expressed himself thus: “*Anxius vixi, dubius morio, nescio quo vado*,” which signifies, “I have lived in anxiety, I am dying in doubtfulness, and know not where I am going.” How delightful the contrast of a Christian who can affirm, “Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phi 1:23). How profoundly thankful should we be unto God for His holy Word! It not only reveals to us the way of salvation, makes clear the believer’s path of duty, but it irradiates the valley of shadows and lifts a corner of the veil, affording to us a view of Immanuel’s land. If God’s people made a more prayerful and believing study of and meditated upon what that Word teaches about their departure from this world and their Homegoing, death would not only be divested of its terrors, but would be welcomed by them.

That there is a radical difference between the death of a believer and of an unbeliever is clear from many passages. “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death” (Pro 14:32), upon which Thomas Boston (1676-1732) well said: “This text looks like the cloud between the Israelites and the Egyptians: having a dark side towards the latter and a bright side towards the former. It represents death like Pharaoh’s jailer, bringing the chief butler and the chief baker out of prison: the one restored to his office, and the other to be led to his execution. It shows the difference between the godly and ungodly in their death: who, as they act a very different part in life, so in death have a very different exit...The righteous are not driven away as chaff before the wind, but led away as a bride to the marriage chamber, carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom. The righteous man dies not in a sinful state, but in a holy state. He goes not away in sin, but out of it. In his life, he was putting off the old man, changing his prison garments; and now the remaining rags of them are removed, and he is adorned with robes of glory. He has hope in his death: the well-founded expectation of better things than he ever had in this world.”

Proverbs 14:32 is but one of many passages in the earlier Scriptures which evince that the Old Testament saints were far from being in the dark regarding death or what lay beyond it. They knew that in God’s presence is “fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psa 16:11). Said David, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psa 17:15). And again, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD *for ever*” (Psa 23:6). It is true that life and immortality have been brought more fully “to light through the Gospel” (2Ti 1:10); nevertheless, it is clear that, from the dawn of human history, the light of divine revelation had, for the saints, illuminated the tomb. “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory” (Psa 73:24), which, as a summary, goes as far as anything taught in the New Testament. “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:2). And therefore, it is said of all those who died in faith that, having seen the promises of God afar off, they “were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb 11:13).

Before proceeding further, let us face the question, *Why* does a child of God die? Since physical death be one of the consequences of sin, and since the Lord Jesus was paid the whole of its wages, and therefore, put it away for

His people, why should any of them have to enter the grave? A number of reputable writers whom we have consulted deem that a great and insoluble mystery, while others evade it by saying that such presents no greater problem than sin's remaining in us after regeneration. But neither of those things should present any difficulty: both are designed for God's glory and their good. As Proverbs 14:32 shows, there is a vast difference between the death of the righteous and that of the wicked. Death is not sent to the former as a *penal* infliction, but comes to him as a friend—to free him from all further sorrow and suffering, to induct the heir of glory into his inheritance. Why should a Christian die? sufficient for the disciple to be as his Master, and “made conformable unto his death” (Phi 3:10). What a fearful hardship had the saints from Pentecost onwards been obliged to remain on earth till the end of time! Surely it is an act of divine *love* to remove them from the vale of tears. But could not God have translated them to heaven without seeing death, like He did Enoch and Elijah? Yes, but they were exceptions; and in such case, Christ would not have the glory of raising their bodies from the dust and fashioning them like unto the body of His glory!

Glorious Sinai

Part 5

Near the close of our last, we saw that, upon Jehovah's awe-inspiring appearance on the mount and His proclamation of the Ten Commandments, the children of Israel said unto Moses, “Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die” (Exo 20:19)—which was tantamount to an acknowledgement that they felt themselves unfit for dealing with the LORD directly on the ground of the Decalogue, that a mediator was needed, that Moses should treat with God on their behalf. We must now carefully consider the divine response to that request: “And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold. An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee” (Exo 20:21-24).

In the last-quoted verse, there is something which is very rarely, if ever, referred to by those who write upon “The Law,” yet it should surely arrest the attention and impress the most casual reader. Here upon Sinai itself divine instructions were given for the making of an ALTAR upon which Israel were to ‘sacrifice’! Furthermore, this was accompanied by the most gracious promise of the LORD's coming unto and (not cursing, but) *blessing* them! Let us consider this “altar” first in the light of Israel's request in verse 19. The LORD was here informing them that the mere provision of a mediator did not fully meet the exigencies of the situation. It met the need from *their* side, but not from *God's*. The Lawgiver was holy and the righteous demands of His Law must be fulfilled. The transgression of His Law could not be dealt with simply through a mediator as such: satisfaction must be made, *sin must be expiated*, God propitiated—only thus could the demands of divine justice be met. Accordingly, this is the very thing which was set before Israel in the immediate sequel. The “altar,” divinely appointed at this time, told of the provision of God's grace and mercy unto them.

It must be remembered that for upwards of two centuries, the descendants of Abraham had resided in Egypt, and by comparing Scripture with Scripture, it is clear that, after the death of Joseph, the majority of them learned the ways of the heathen and became idolaters. Thus Joshua reminded them in his day that their forebears had served other gods, not only “on the other side of the flood” (i.e. in Chaldea, from which the LORD called Abraham), but also “in Egypt” (Jos 24:14). Likewise we are informed by one of their prophets that while there, the LORD expostulated with them, saying, “Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I wrought for my name's sake” (Eze 20:7-9). That casts a flood of light upon the early chapters of Exodus and shows that the Holy One was employing Pharaoh as His rod upon the disobedient Israelites.

After chastening them sorely, the LORD visited the Hebrews and delivered them from the house of bondage. Before so doing, He most impressibly showed all who had eyes to see that they too deserved the same fate as befell the Egyptians—only a substitutionary lamb saving them therefrom. By that pascal sacrifice, they were redeemed for Jehovah and brought unto Himself. That was the first intimation which they had yet received of the LORD's particular requirements; and even now in Exodus 20, no part of the ceremonial law had yet been made known. But the "altar" there erected was God's gracious provision for fully meeting His governmental claims, and which made it possible for a people full of infirmity and sin to approach Him without fear of death. Thus from the very outset of the divine dealings with Israel nationally, provision was made to maintain God's holiness and meet their failures. True, it was their transgression of the divine Law which made this altar necessary, yet it was God's grace which supplied the same. *That* requires to be taken into most careful consideration if the grand transaction of Sinai is to be correctly apprehended. Jehovah did not there propose to deal with Israel on the alone ground of His righteousness, but on that of His rich *mercy* also. Let "dispensationalists" duly note.

It is deeply important that we understand the relation between the two principal objects set before us in Exodus 20: God's giving of the Law, and God's furnishing instruction concerning the altar which must be made unto Him. In the Decalogue, there was presented a holy standard which made known the just requirements of God, defining the conduct of the individual both unto Himself and unto his neighbour. That Standard was a perfect one in all its parts, requiring both internal and external purity. As such, it brought to light the sinfulness of man, for as a fallen creature, he was incapable of measuring up to its exalted demands. And therefore, as such, it was (and still is) admirably fitted to convince the fallen creature of his need of a Saviour. That it served this dual purpose at Sinai, we have seen: Israel were made conscious of their unfitness to deal immediately with Jehovah on the basis of the Law, asking for a mediator. But something more was required, and that need was met by the LORD's provision of the altar. Thus, it is quite clear from Exodus 20 itself that the Ten Commandments were never given to Israel as a means of salvation, or that they were to procure the divine favour by their obedience to them! Such an idea is completely ruled out.

"An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen" (Exo 20:24). The tabernacle was not yet erected, nor had any instruction been given concerning it. Clearly, then, what we have here was a divine ordinance, for Israel's immediate compliance; an altar was to be built *at the foot of Sinai*! It was not the future which was in view, but the present. All doubt as to the correctness of this conclusion is removed by a reference to Exodus 24:4—what is recorded in 22 and 23 being a connected account of what God made known to Moses in the mount for communication unto His people. There in 24:4, we read, "And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel" (Exo 24:4). That there may be no uncertainty in identifying *this* altar, it is immediately added, "And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered *burnt* offerings, and sacrificed *peace* offerings of oxen unto the LORD" (Exo 24:5)—the "young men" who performed this priestly work were probably the "firstborn" who had been sanctified unto the LORD (Exo 13:2, etc.), the Levites not yet being set apart to their office.

It was here and at this time that the covenant was formally entered into and ratified. First, "Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD [in Exodus 20], and all the judgments [of Exodus 21-23]: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do" (Exo 24:3). Previously, they had given a general assent to be under Jehovah's government (Exo 19:8), but now they agreed to be obedient in particular unto the laws which Moses had just enumerated unto them. Instead of rebuking them for what some regard as an arrogant boast on Israel's part, the LORD approved of their avowal: "I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have *well said* all that they have spoken" (Deu 5:28), only further breathing the wish, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" "And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD" (Exo 24:4), which was the first time that any part of God's Word was committed to writing!

The altar being built and the young men having offered the sacrifices unto the LORD, "Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words" (Exo 24:6-8). Everything here was of the nature of a formal and binding transaction. The "altar" was the token of God's presence, the "twelve pillars" the memorial of their presence. Half of the blood being sprinkled on the altar was the LORD's portion, and the other half sprinkled on them, Israel's—thereby the *mutual* agreement between them was indicated. First, the terms of the covenant were verbally

made known unto them (Exo 24:3); and upon their free and universal approval of the same, those words were recorded in writing (Exo 24:4), designated “the book of the covenant” (Exo 24:7), which was also sprinkled with the blood (Heb 9:19).

Since the covenant which Israel entered into with Jehovah at Sinai formed the basis of all His subsequent dealings with them, it is most essential that we spare no effort to obtain a right conception of its character. In order thereto, it must first be clearly recognized that this contract in no wise set aside the earlier covenant with their fathers, in which Jehovah made donation of the land of Canaan unto them and promised to be a God to them and their seed (Gen 17:7; 18:13). This is abundantly clear from Exodus 19:4-6: for there God addressed the Hebrews as already standing in such a relation of nearness to Himself, as secured for them in interest, in His love and faithfulness, and ensured the supply of their every need. It is further proven from His preface to the Ten Commandments, for in affirming, “I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt” (Exo 20:2), He rested His claim to their obedience on the ground of their favoured relation to Himself—His chosen, covenanted, redeemed people. Thus, both from the time when the Law was given and the language in which it was introduced, we see that it was never designed to interfere with the prior covenant of promise, but rather was something supplementary thereunto.

To affirm that the covenant at Sinai made void the provisions of the Abrahamic, which secured for his seed the inheritance as heaven’s free gift, or to insist that its object was to establish *a new title* to gifts and blessings already conferred, is to grossly misinterpret the transaction and utterly confound the proper relation of things. Rather was this latter compact to be the handmaid of the former, to minister in an inferior though necessary place to the higher ends which the former had in view. The Abrahamic was the root of life and blessing; the Sinaitic, being grafted thereon with the design of making more fully known the requirements of divine righteousness. The seed of Abraham as God’s acknowledged people and heirs were going to receive for their possession that land which He claimed as peculiarly His own. But they must occupy it as the partakers of His character of holiness, for thus alone could they either glorify His name or enjoy His blessing. Delivering them as He had from the region of idolatry and pollution, He would not suffer them to enter Canaan until He had set before them that standard of character and conduct at which they must ever sincerely and diligently aim.

They bound themselves by the most solemn engagement to realize as far as possible the pattern of excellence which had been set before them on the mount. As an abler pen than ours has pointed out, “Had they been faithful to their engagement—had they as a people striven in earnest through the grace offered them in the one covenant to exemplify the character of the righteous man exhibited in the other, ‘[delighting]...in the law of the LORD...[meditating therein] day and night’—then in their condition, they should assuredly have been ‘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 1:2-3]. Canaan, would then indeed have verified the description of a land flowing with milk and honey”—Patrick Fairbairn (1874-1905). A clear demonstration of that was furnished under the leadership of Joshua, for while Israel abode by their agreement and were obedient to the LORD, His smile of approbation was manifestly upon them. But alas, the next generation kept not the covenant, and dire were the consequences—as the book of Judges sadly exhibits.

Again: the nature of the Sinaitic covenant can only be rightly apprehended as we perceive and keep steadily in mind its *mixed* nature. In all of God’s dealings with His people, He acts in His twofold character as “light” (1Jo 1:5) and as “love” (1Jo 3:11). While He dealt in sovereign grace with the father of all them that believe, He pressed upon him the obligation which privileges entailed: “Walk before me, and be thou perfect [upright]” (Gen 17:1); and as we have pointed out previously, God bore testimony unto Isaac that “Abraham *obeyed* my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws” (Gen 26:5); though that is no more to be understood absolutely (i.e. that his conduct was flawless), than we are to take Christ’s words concerning His apostles, “they *have kept* thy word” (Joh 17:6) as signifying they had done so perfectly. In like manner, whereas God had most conspicuously manifested His favour unto the Hebrews in Egypt and in the wilderness, at Sinai, He enforced the requirements of His holiness. First, in the Ten Commandments; yet even in them, definite mention was made of His “shewing mercy” (Exo 20:6), which was a vastly different and more blessed thing than His “taking vengeance” on transgressors. Second, in the ceremonial law which followed, wherein He not only declared the purity required from them, but appointed means for the removal of their impurities. And third, in the plans for the tabernacle, where He took up His abode in their midst, and the provisions of the priesthood to maintain their communion with Him.

Had there been nothing more than law in the Sinaitic covenant, nothing but a strict regime of unrelieved justice, then obviously there had been nothing further in Israel’s experience save their suffering penalty, which was the just

desert of sin. But as we read their subsequent history, we see clear evidences of something else—their availing themselves of the provision which mercy had made: the turning unto God as the Pardoner of sin and the Healer of iniquity, and a falling back from the covenant of Law to the covenant of grace and promise, to which it was added. Thus we find, that upon Israel’s making the golden calf and Jehovah’s wrath thereat, Moses pleading with Him for clemency on the ground of His promises to the fathers (Exo 32:13). So too we find that however sinful one individual or one generation might be, yet if the next in descent heartily turned unto the LORD, they were received into forgiveness and blessing. It was only those children who persisted in the wickedness of their fathers who had visited upon them the guilt of their forebears. Thus, in Numbers 14, we find Moses entreating the LORD “according unto the greatness of thy mercy,” and He declared, “I have pardoned according to thy word” (Num 14:19-20); and though that unbelieving generation was debarred from entering Canaan, their children had that privilege.

Glorious Sinai! Let us indeed stand in awe before its solemn revelation of the majesty of Jehovah. But let us also admire the wondrous co-mingling of law and grace, justice and mercy, holiness and leniency, which was there displayed. That marvel of divine wisdom—for there is nothing in the least resembling it in all the productions of the human mind—appears at every point. We behold it in the “adding” of the Sinaitic covenant to the Abrahamic (Gal 3:19), for whereas promises predominated in the one, precepts were more conspicuous in the other. We see it in God’s gracious delivering of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, and then bringing them under His government. We see it in the joining of the ceremonial law to the moral—for while the latter enforces the requirements of that purity which the LORD demanded from His people and His condemnation of all that was contrary thereto, yet full provision was made for the promotion of the one and the removal of the other. The whole may well be summed up in that admirable dictum of Augustine: “The law was given that grace might be sought; grace was given that the law might be fulfilled.”

Witness Bearing

One of the ways in which Christians may give evidence in favour of their God is by testifying to the fact of His unmistakable interposition in answer to believing prayer. The world ridicules the idea, imagining that Nature is wound up like a clock, which mechanically and automatically sets the machinery of the universe in motion, without any present and direct intervention by the Creator. But the Lord’s people *know* quite otherwise. Many times, and in a great variety of ways, they have proved for themselves that the Lord hears prayer, for there was such an evident *connection* between their supplications and the ordering of events that they cannot doubt for a moment the latter was the Father’s granting of their requests. While they must not cast their pearls before swine, it is both their privilege and duty (as suitable opportunities are provided in private conversation) to acquaint their brethren and sisters with God’s gracious answers of peace, thereby rejoicing their hearts and strengthening their faith.

A striking instance of divine intervention in response to believing prayer is narrated by George Müller (1805-1898): “When the water was dried up in Bristol, and the waterworks were not able to serve sufficient to the people, I, with more than a thousand children dependent upon me, never asked any man for a drop of water, but went on my knees before God; and a farmer, who was neither directly nor indirectly asked by me, called at my door the next hour and offered to bring us water; and when his supplies were dried up, instead of telling anybody, I went to my God, and told Him all about it; and another friend offered to let me fetch water from his brook.” Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) declared: “I have had as distinct answers to prayer as if God had thrust His right hand through the blue sky and given right into my lap the bounty which I had sought of Him.” Such too has been the writer’s experience. And we trust *yours* too.



MAY

Nonconformity

“And be not conformed to this world” (Rom 12:2). In the preceding verse, the believer’s duty Godward is set forth: the same is continued here, first warning against that which will seek to prevent a continuance of his surrender and dedication to Him. The relation and attitude of a believer unto this world is a matter of no small moment, and one upon which the Scriptures have not a little to say. Christ gave Himself for our sins “that he might deliver us from this present evil world” (Gal 1:4), therefore we are bidden, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1Jo 2:15); and we are warned, “The friendship of the world is enmity with God...whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jam 4:4). But before proceeding further, we must ask, Precisely, what is meant here by “this world”? What is signified by “conformity” to it? Is the Christian’s nonconformity to be a relative or absolute one? If the former, where is the line to be drawn? It should be obvious that answers to these questions must be obtained ere we are in a position to render intelligent obedience to this divine precept.

“This world” is in contrast with another “world”: it is the present and temporal world, as distinguished from the future and eternal one; and since *faith* is engaged with the latter, then the former is that system of things which is the enemy of faith. It is that world which hated Christ (Joh 15:18) and whose princes crucified Him (1Co 2:8). It is that world the whole of which “lieth in the wicked one” (1Jo 5:19). It is therefore the mass of mankind who are strangers to God, haters of His holiness and of all who exhibit His image (Joh 15:19; 1Jo 3:1). It is both a society and a system. The members of it are described as “from men of the world, which have their portion in this life” (Psa 17:11)—whose chief good resides in the things of time and sense, whose consuming object is to crowd as much as possible of earthly joy into their brief lives. All who are self-willed and self-pleasing belong to its wide empire. As a system, it is under the dominion of Satan: he is its “prince” (Joh 16:11), regulating its politics and policy; its “god” (2Co 4:4), directing its religion.

This world is therefore the embodiment of Satan’s spirit: bearing his image, and wearing his livery. In their unregenerate days, the saints too “walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2)—mark well those last words, for they define the outstanding feature of its subjects. The language of their hearts is “What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?” (Job 21:15); while their secret thought is “The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it” (Psa 94:7). The world listens willingly to its seducer and readily credits his lies. They are persuaded that God’s commandments are grievous and His service hard, yet they cherish the idea that somehow His indulgence may be safely counted upon in the end. Enlightened eyes should have no difficulty in recognizing what is and what is not a part of “this world” and the need of separation from it. The world is the open foe of Christ, and it is acting the traitor’s part for any of *His* followers to hold close converse with the enemy’s camp.

“And be not conformed to this world.” In view of what immediately precedes, this means, Allow not the evil example of those surrounding you to mar or modify the completeness of your devotedness unto God. Be not like the unregenerate in heart and life. Be neither animated by their spirit, nor regulated by their principles. Fashion not your ways after the *disobedience to God* which marks them. This is evident too from what follows, for the antithesis drawn in the second half of the verse shows plainly what is prohibited in the first: “But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, *will* of God.” The unregenerate would fain have you believe that He is a hard Taskmaster, that His commandments are unreasonable and harsh. But so far from that being the case, if you run in the way of His commandments, you shall have experiential proof that God’s preceptive will is blessed, agreeable to the one who yields thereto, yea most excellent. The transformation begins *within*: the “mind” here signifies the entire inner man; the soul is *purified* by “obeying the truth through the Spirit” (1Pe 1:22).

“Be not conformed to this world” means neither that the Christian is to decline all intercourse with its subjects, nor that he should impose upon himself any restraints not required by Scripture in order to make himself as unlike the world as possible. If, on the one hand, we must sedulously avoid any sinful compliance with the world, on the other, we need to be on our guard against a vain singularity which springs from self-righteousness and which repudiates the spirit and liberty of the Gospel. If instead of blindly following a multitude to do evil, or fashioning ourselves after the traditions, customs, and whims of men, we are resolutely determined (by grace) to be guided by the Word, and have our “senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb 5:14), little difficulty will be experienced in applying this divine injunction to all the varied details of our lives. To renounce the society of the world was the error of those who fled to the monastery, for that made it impossible for them to “let [their] light so shine before men” (Mat 5:16).

Nor is the Christian required to renounce the duties of relative life or to become careless in the discharge of the same. Rather is he to conduct himself according to the rules of God’s Word in that station wherein His providence has placed him: whether husband or wife, parent or child, master or servant, magistrate or civilian; bearing rule, or yielding obedience as unto God; being faithful and diligent in the management of his temporal affairs. Neither are Christians required to refuse a moderate use of the comforts and conveniences of life, suitable to the place which God has appointed for them in the world. It is nothing but pride and “will worship” (Col 2:23) which supposes there is anything praiseworthy in long fastings, abstaining from pleasant food, and wearing meaner clothes than are suited to their rank of life. There is certainly great need of constant watchfulness against allowing lawful things to become harmful to us by their abuse, yet not a few have adopted an austerity which the New Testament nowhere enjoins. Some attract as much attention to themselves by their *prudery* as others do by their *pride*.

Taking upon ourselves unpleasant tasks and the practice of outward severities may be carried to great lengths without their performers having a spark of life. The mortifications and bodily macerations practiced by the Brahmins of India far exceed the most zealous superstitions and self-imposed severities obtaining among fanatics in Christendom. There is a “strictness” which arises from ignorance rather than knowledge, which is wholly concerned about *externals*, and which in reality gratifies the spirit of self in one way as much as it seems to deny it in another. It is possible to starve the body in order to feed pride, but to those who fear God and order their lives by His revealed will, “For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving” (1Ti 4:4). In seeking to avoid the sin of epicureanism, let us beware of the folly of spartanism.

Notwithstanding the above limitations, the precept, “Be not conformed to this world” is very extensive. Christians are “strangers and pilgrims” on earth (Heb 11:13; 1Pe 2:11). Heaven is their country, and Christ is their King. They are to be known and noticed as *His subjects*. They are not to be assimilated to the sentiments of “the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2), regulated by their counsels, nor dominated by their aims and ambitions. Believers are neither to be allured by the smiles of unbelievers, nor intimidated by their frowns. They are neither to be swayed by their opinions and objects, nor to adopt their standard of expediency. “Be not conformed to this world” means allow not your characters to be moulded by the influences of this present scene, where all who are unregenerate act according to the principles and proclivities of fallen human nature. The things which mark “this world” are its *spirit*—selfishness: self-will, self-seeking; its *pursuits*—the things of time and sense; its *inspirer*—Satan and not Christ; its *religion*—which is but a pose, a convenience, a sop for the conscience.

Christ declares of His disciples, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (Joh 17:14, 16). They count its religion a delusion, they regard its principles as corrupt, they deem its happiness an empty bubble, and they know that its course is hellward. Just to the extent to which we are not conformed to this world, but are transformed by the renewing of our minds, walking in subjection to His scepter, do we really witness for and honour our Master; and the world itself is conscious of that fact, for it is quick to see the inconsistencies of those claiming to be His followers, and despises them for the same. The world perceives and derides the insincerity of empty professors. Reader, you are either a man of God, or a man of the world. You are either pursuing shadows and missing the Substance, or proving for yourself that in keeping God’s commandments, “there is great reward” (Psa 19:11).

The Prayers of the Apostles

65. 1 Peter 5:10-11

There are seven things which we propose to consider regarding this prayer. First, *the suppliant*, for there is an intimate and striking relation between the experiences of Peter and the terms of his prayer. Second, *its setting*, for it is closely connected with the context, particularly with verses 6-9. Third, *its Object*, namely “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10)—a title extra dear to His people, and especially appropriate here. Fourth, *its plea*, for so we regard the clause, “who hath called us unto his eternal glory.” Fifth, *its petition*: “Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” Sixth, *its qualification*: “After that ye have suffered a while,” for though that clause precedes the petition, yet when treating the verse homiletically, it logically follows it. Seventh, *its doxology*: “To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1Pe 5:11). The prayer as a whole is a very sublime one. Its contents are remarkably full, and richly repay a careful study of and devout meditation upon it. Our present task will be rendered the easier, for we purpose making considerable use of Thomas Goodwin’s (1600-1680) excellent and exhaustive exposition of the passage, since we feel he was favoured with much light from it, and wish to share with our readers what has been of no little help and blessing to us personally.

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (verse 10). In those words, the apostle appealed unto Him who is the Fountain of grace, and with such a One to look unto the chief of sinners need not despair. Next, he mentioned that which gave proof unto all believers that He is indeed the God of all grace, having effectually called them from death unto life and brought them out of nature’s darkness into His own marvelous light. Nor is that all: nay, it is but an earnest of what He has designed and prepared for them, since He has called them unto His eternal glory. The realization of *that* moved the apostle to request that—following a season of testing and affliction—He would complete His work of grace within them. Therein we have it clearly implied that God will preserve His people from apostasy, move them to persevere unto the end, and, notwithstanding all the opposition of the flesh, the world, and the devil, bring them safe to heaven.

1. *Its suppliant*. The one who approached God thus was Simon Peter. While Paul had much more to say about the grace of God than any other of the apostles, it was left to poor Peter to denominate Him “the God of all grace.” The reason for this and the appropriateness of the same is not far to seek. While Saul of Tarsus is the outstanding New Testament trophy of *saving* grace (for King Manasseh is an equally remarkable case in the Old Testament), surely, it is Simon who is the most conspicuous New Testament example (for David supplies a parallel under the Mosaic era) of the *restoring and preserving* grace of God. What is it that appears the greater marvel to a Christian, which most moves and melts his heart before God: the grace shown to him while he was dead in sin, and which lifted him out of the miry clay and set him upon and within the Rock of ages; or that grace exercised toward him *after* conversion—which bears with his waywardness, ingratitude, departure from his first love, grievings of the Holy Spirit, dishonourings of Christ; and yet, notwithstanding all, loves him unto the end and continues ministering unto his every need? If the reader’s experience be anything like that of ours, he will have no difficulty in answering.

Who but one who has been made painfully sensible of the plague within him, who has had so many sad proofs of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of his own heart, and who has perceived something of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, not only in the light of God’s holiness, but as it is committed against the dying love of his Saviour, can gauge the sad fall of that one who was not only accorded a place of honour among the twelve ambassadors of the King of glory, but was privileged to behold Him on the mount of transfiguration and was one of the three who witnessed more than any others His agonies in the Garden? And then to hear him, a very short time afterwards, denying Him with oaths! And who but one who has personally experienced the “longsuffering of God” (1Pe 3:20), and has himself been the recipient of His “abundant mercy” (1Pe 1:3) can really estimate and appreciate the amazing grace which moved the Saviour to look so sorrowfully, yet tenderly, upon the erring one as to cause him to go forth and weep “bitterly” (Mat 27:69-75; Luk 22:60-62), and the abounding grace which led Him to have a private interview with him after His resurrection (1Co 15:8-10; Luk 24:34); and, above all, the infinite grace which not only recovered His wandering sheep, but restored him to the apostolate (Joh 21:15-17)? Well might *he* own Him as “the God of *all* grace” (1Pe 5:10)!

2. *Its setting.* If this be closely examined, it will be found there is much to be learned and admired. Before entering into detail, let us observe the context generally. In the foregoing verses, the apostle had been making a series of weighty exhortations, and since those in verses 6 to 9 are preceded by impressing upon the public servants of God their several duties (verses 1-5), a word to them first. Let all Christ's under-shepherds emulate the example which is here set before them. Having bidden believers to walk circumspectly, the apostle bent his knees and commended them to the gracious care of their God, seeking for them those mercies which he felt they most needed. The minister of Christ has two principal offices to discharge for those souls which are committed to his care (Heb 13:17): to speak for God *to* them, and to supplicate God *for* them. The Seed which the minister sows is not likely to produce much fruit, unless he personally waters it with his prayers and tears. It is but a species of hypocrisy for him to exhort his hearers to spend more time in prayer, if *he* be not a frequenter of the Throne of Grace. The pastor has only fulfilled half his commission when he has faithfully proclaimed all the counsel of God: the other part is to be performed in private.

The same principle holds good equally of those in the pew. The most searching sermon will profit the hearer little or nothing, unless it be turned into fervent prayer. So too with what we *read*! The measure in which God is pleased to bless these articles unto you is to be determined by the influence they have upon you and the effects they produce in you—the extent to which they bring you to your knees in earnest supplication, seeking power from the Lord. From exhortation, the apostle turned to supplication. Let us do likewise, or we shall be left without the necessary strength to obey the precepts. To the various duties inculcated in the context was added this prayer for divine enablement for the discharge of them, however arduous, and for the patient endurance of every trial, however painful. Observe, too, the blessed contrast between the assaults of the enemy in verses 8 and 9 and the character in which God is here viewed. Is not that designed to teach the saint that he has nothing to fear from his vile adversary, so long as he has recourse unto Him in whom resides every kind of grace which is needed for his present walk, work, warfare, and witness? Surely this is one of the principal practical lessons to be drawn from our prayer as we view it in the light of its context.

Certain it is that we shall never be able to “resist stedfast in the faith” (1Pe 5:9) him who is as a roaring lion, and who walketh about “seeking whom he may devour” (verse 8), unless we daily look to and cast ourselves upon “the God of all grace” (verse 10). And equally sure is it that divine grace is needed by us if we are to “be sober [and] vigilant” (verse 8). We need strengthening grace that we may successfully resist so powerful a foe as the devil; courage-producing grace if we are to do so steadfast in the faith; and patience-producing grace in order to meekly bear afflictions. Not only is every *kind* of grace available for us in God, but every *measure*, so that when we find one exhausted, we may obtain a fresh one. One of the reasons why God permits Satan to assail His people so frequently and so fiercely is that they may prove for themselves the efficacy of His grace. “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (2Co 9:8). Then let us bring to Him every pitcher of our needs and draw upon His inexhaustible fullness. “The ocean is known by several names, according to the shores it washes, but it is the same ocean. So is it ever the same love of God, though each needy one perceives and admires its special adaptation to *his* needs”—Frederick B. Meyer (1847-1929).

But, as T. Goodwin showed, there is a yet more definite relation between our present prayer and its context, and between both of them and the experience of Peter. The parallels between them are so close and numerous that they cannot be undesigned. Christ had bidden His servant, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Mat 26:41); and in his epistle, he exhorts the saints, “Be sober, be vigilant” (1Pe 5:8). Again, the Saviour had warned him, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luk 22:31)—as the Puritan expressed it, “and shake forth all grace out of him.” So in verse 8, he gives point to his call for sobriety and vigilance by saying, “Because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” Then the Saviour informed him, “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not” (Luk 22:32). And as T. Goodwin pointed out, “Faith’s not failing is Satan’s foiling.” Answerably thereto, the apostle in his exhortation added, “Whom resist stedfast in the faith” (verse 9)—the *gift* of faith, as John Calvin (1509-1564) expounded it. Though Peter’s self-confidence and courage failed him, so that he fell, yet his faith delivered him from giving way to abject despair, as Luke 22:61-62 shows.

Once more: our Lord concluded His address to Simon by saying: “And when thou art converted [brought back, restored], strengthen thy brethren” (Luk 22:32). Answerably thereto, the apostle wrote, “knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (verse 9), and then prayed that, after they had suffered a while, “the God of all grace [would]...perfect [or restore them], stablish, strengthen, settle [them]” (verse 10), which had been the very case with himself. Finally, T. Goodwin observed that Christ, when strengthening Pe-

ter's faith against Satan, set His "*But I have prayed for thee*" (Luk 22:32) over against the worst the enemy could do; and therefore, he too, after portraying the adversary of the saints in his fiercest character, as "a roaring lion" (verse 8), brings in by way of contrast, "*But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect*" (verse 10), thereby assuring them that He would be their Guardian, Undertaker, Strengtheners. If, notwithstanding his sad lapse, *he* was recovered and preserved unto eternal glory, that is a sure pledge that *all* the truly regenerate will be so. How wondrously Scripture (Luke 22) interprets Scripture (1 Peter 5)!

Ere passing on to our next section, let us note and admire how the particular instruments whom God employs as His penmen in communicating His Word were personally qualified and experientially fitted for their several tasks. Who but Solomon was so well suited to write the book of Ecclesiastes, the man who was afforded such exceptional opportunities to drink from all the poor cisterns of this world, and then to record the fact that no satisfaction was to be found in them; thereby providing a fitting background for the Canticles, wherein a Satisfying Object *is* displayed? How appropriate was the selection of Matthew to be the writer of the first Gospel, for he was the only one of the Twelve who held an official position before his call to the ministry (a tax-gatherer in the employ of the Romans); and he alone of the four Evangelists presents Christ in His official character as the Messiah and King of Israel. Mark, the one who ministered to another (2Ti 4:11), is the one chosen to set forth Christ as the Servant of Jehovah. Who so eminently adapted to write upon the blessed theme of divine love (as he does throughout his epistles) as the one who was so highly favoured as to lean upon the bosom of God's Beloved? So here *Peter* is the one who so feelingly styles the Deity "the God of all grace." And so it is today: when God calls any man to the ministry, He experientially equips him, qualifying him for the particular work He has for him to do.

3. *Its Object.* "The God of all grace." Nature does not reveal Him as such, for man has to work hard and earn what he obtains from her. The workings of Providence do not, for there is a stern aspect as well as a benign one to them; and, as a whole, they rather exemplify the truth that we reap according as we sow. Still less does the Law, as such, exhibit God in this character, for its reward is a matter of debt and not of grace. It is only in the Gospel that He is clearly made manifest as "the God of all grace." Our valuation of Him as such is exactly proportioned by our devaluation of ourselves, for grace is the gratuitous favour of God unto the undeserving and ill-deserving; and therefore, we cannot truly appreciate it, until we are made sensible of our utter unworthiness and vileness. He might well be "the God of inflexible justice and unsparing wrath" unto rebels against His government. Such indeed He is to all who are out of Christ, and will continue so for all eternity. But the glorious Gospel discovers to hell-deserving sinners the amazing grace of God to pardon, and to cleanse the foulest who repent and believe. Grace devised the plan of redemption: grace executed it; grace applies it and makes it effectual.

Peter first made mention of "the manifold grace of God" (1Pe 4:10), for nothing less would avail those who are guilty of "manifold transgressions" and "mighty sins" (Amo 5:12). The grace of God is "manifold" not only numerically but *in kind*, in the rich variety of its manifestations—every blessing we enjoy is to be ascribed thereto. But "the God of *all* grace" is even more comprehensive; yea, incomprehensible to all finite intelligences. This title, as we have seen, is set over against what is said of the devil in verse 8, where he is portrayed in all his terribleness: as our "adversary" for malice, likened unto a "lion" for strength, unto a "roaring lion" for dread, "walketh about" for his unwearied diligence, "seeking whom he may devour," unless God prevent. How blessed and consolatory the contrast, "But...God"—the Almighty, the Self-sufficient and All-sufficient One; "the God of *all* grace." How comforting is the singling out of *this* attribute when we have to do with Satan in point of temptation! If the God of all grace be *for* us, who can be against us? (Rom 8:31). When Paul was so severely tried by the messenger (angel) of Satan who was sent to buffet him, and he thrice prayed for its removal, He assured him of this relief: "My *grace* is sufficient for thee" (2Co 12:9).

Though mention be made frequently in the Scriptures of the grace of God and of His being gracious, yet nowhere but in this verse do we find Him denominated "the God of all grace." There is a special emphasis here which claims our best attention: not simply "the God of grace," but "the God of *all* grace." As T. Goodwin showed, He is so essentially in Himself, and in His eternal purpose concerning His people, and in His actual dealings with them. They personally receive constant proof that He is indeed so, and those of them whose thoughts are formed from the Word know that the benefits with which He daily loads them are the outworkings of His *everlasting design* of grace toward them. They need to go still farther back, or raise their eyes yet higher, and perceive that all the riches of grace He ordained, and of which they are made the recipients, are from and in His very *nature*. "The grace in His nature is the fountain or spring; the grace of His purposes is the well-head, and the grace in His dispensations the streams." It was the grace of His nature which caused Him to form "thoughts of peace" toward His people (Jer

29:11), as it is the grace in His heart which moves Him to fulfill the same. In other words, the grace of His very nature, what He is *in Himself*, is such as guarantees the making good of all His benevolent designs.

As He is the Almighty, self-sufficient and omnipotent, with whom all things are possible, so He is also an all-gracious God in Himself—lacking no perfection to make Him infinitely benign. There is therefore a sea of grace in God to feed all the streams of His purposes and dispensations that are to issue therefrom. Here then is our grand consolation, that all the grace there is in His nature, and which makes Him to be the “God of all grace” unto His children, renders certain not only that He will manifest Himself as such unto them, guarantees the supply of their every need, but ensures the lavishing of the exceeding riches of His grace upon them in the ages to come (Eph 2:7). Look then beyond those *streams* of grace of which you are now the partaker, unto Him who is “full of grace” (Joh 1:14), and ask for continual and larger supplies from Him. The straitness is in ourselves and not in Him, for in God there is a boundless and limitless supply. We beg the reader (as we urge ourselves) to remember that when he comes to the Mercy-seat (to make known his requests), he is about to petition “the God of all grace” (verse 10), that in Him there is an infinite ocean to draw upon, and that He bids him “open thy mouth *wide*, and I will fill it” (Psa 81:10), and has declared, “according unto your faith be it unto you” (Mat 9:29).

The Giver is greater than all His gifts, yet there must be a personal and appropriating *faith* in order for any of us to *enjoy Him*: only so can we particularize what is general. God is the God of all grace unto *all* saints, but faith has to be individually acted upon Him if He is to be known and delighted in as such by *me*. An example of this we have in Psalm 59, where David declared, “The God of *my* mercy shall prevent [or ‘anticipate’] me” (verse 10). There we find him appropriating God *unto himself* personally. Take it first of the essential mercy of God, that which is in His very nature, and observe how he says again in verse 17: “Unto thee, O *my* strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy”—“the God of all grace.” The God of *my* mercy: I lay claim to Him as such—all the mercy there is in God is *my* mercy. Since He be my *God*, then all there is *in Him* is mine. On the same account, it was the mercy (or grace) which is in Him that moved Him to become my God at the first, that made Himself over to me, saying, “I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (Rev 21:7). “If any one saint had the needs that all the brotherhood have, and nothing would serve his case but all the grace of God which He has for the whole, He would lay it all upon *him*”—T. Goodwin.

Second, take it of the *purposing* mercy of God, and each individual saint had appointed and allotted him that which he may term “my mercy.” God hath set apart in His decree a portion so abundant that it can never be exhausted either by thy sins or thy wants. “The God of my mercy shall prevent me”—from all eternity, He has *anticipated* and made full provision for my needs, as a wise father has a medicine chest prepared with remedies for the ailments of his children. “And it shall come to pass, that *before* they call, I will answer” (Isa 65:24). What an amazing condescension it is that God should make this a characteristic of Himself—that He becomes the God of the mercy of every particular child of His! Third, take it of His *dispensing* mercy, that which is actually bestowed upon us moment by moment. Here too has the believer every occasion to say, “The God of my mercy,” for every blessing enjoyed by me proceeds from His hand. This is no empty title of His, but one that ensures He will make it good, directing Him to take care of my interests in every way: that as He is my God personally, so also of my need.

The Life and Times of Joshua

45. Strategy, Part 2

In our last, we pointed out that in Joshua 8:1, the LORD gave unto His servant a word of cheer, a word of instruction, and a word of promise. His “fear not, neither be thou dismayed” was to graciously reassure Joshua’s heart after the dishonourable repulse Israel had met with upon their first assault on Ai—the reasons for their defeat having been shown. In its wider application, it was a message of comfort to the whole nation, after their elders had duly humbled themselves before the LORD, that they must not be unduly cast down nor suffer Satan to induce them to give way to a spirit of despair. The word of instruction was an intimation of the divine will of what was now required from Joshua and those under his command: “Take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai.” Therein their presumptuous conduct in Joshua 7:3 was denounced, and an order was given for them to return to the divine pattern which they had received in Joshua 6:3. The word of promise was addressed unto their faith: “See, I

have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land” (Jos 8:1). *That* was spoken from the standpoint of the certainty of the divine counsels, and faith was to receive it without question.

The word of instruction received amplification in the second verse: Ai and its inhabitants were to be utterly destroyed. In this instance, Israel were given permission to take the cattle as a spoil unto themselves. Finally, the strategy to be followed was made known: an “ambush” was to be laid for the city from its rear. Next we are told, “So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai: and Joshua chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valour, and sent them away by night” (Jos 8:3). That is to be regarded as an act not only of obedience, but of faith too, or rather, as “the obedience of faith” (Rom 18:26, margin). It is a great mistake to suppose that faith in God renders needless our discharge of duty or the use of all lawful means: instead, it is to energize unto the one and to look unto God for His blessing upon the other. Confidence in God does not produce passivity, nor will the diligence which it evokes issue in self-confidence. True faith ever produces good works, yet those works are performed in a spirit of dependence upon the LORD. It is written: “The way of man is not in himself” (Jer 10:23), but it is written again: “This is the way, walk ye in it” (Isa 30:21). Thus does Scripture always guard Scripture!

“And he commanded them, saying, Behold, ye shall lie in wait against the city, even behind the city: go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready” (Jos 8:4). Though victory was divinely guaranteed, that did not preclude the discharge of their responsibilities. Faith in God was to operate in the performing of His commandments. Accordingly, Joshua issued very definite orders to those thirty thousand of his soldiers, telling them where to go and how to conduct themselves. As we said at the close of our last article, equally explicit are the instructions given to the Christian in connection with his spiritual warfare, and the measure of his success therein will very largely be determined by how closely he adheres to the same. It is to be noted that the force which was to lie in wait behind the city was “sent...away by night” (Jos 8:3), and thus, its members were deprived of their rest, calling for self-denial on their part. *That* is the first and chief task appointed the believer: as Israel had to overcome and dispossess the Canaanites ere they could enter into their inheritance, so we have to get the victory over the flesh, the world, and the devil before there can be any present possessing of our possessions and enjoyment of the same. Before Christ can be followed, *self* has to be “denied,” and the *cross* (self-sacrifice) accepted as the regulating principle of our lives (Mat 16:24).

That to which we have just called attention receives confirmation in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, where Paul says, first, “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but [only] one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain,” likening the Christian life unto the running of a race—which calls for rigorous training, vigorous exertion, and patient endurance. Then he informs them what is required, and is essential, in order to succeed therein: “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things”: that is, he puts a bridle upon his appetites, is abstemious in the use of comforts, and exercises a strict self-control at every point. Next, the apostle made mention of his own life, which exemplified what he had just said, and which sets before us an example to follow: “*I therefore* so run, not as uncertainly”—I myself practice such self-discipline as being absolutely necessary in order to ensure success. I conduct myself in such a manner and order my life in such a way that the outcome is not left in any doubt. I run within the lines marked out—keeping to the prescribed path of duty; pressing on till the goal is reached, exerting myself to the utmost unto the end.

Then, slightly varying his figure, and coming closer to what Joshua 8 has in view, the apostle added: “So fight I, not as one that beateth the air” (1Co 9:26)—I conduct myself, and so observe the rules of the contest, that there can be no uncertainty that I shall be “more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom 8:37). Paul daily denied himself, mortified his lusts, and consequently, he knew that the crown of life was thereby ensured. He did not waste his energies or spend his strength for naught. All his efforts were directed to the grand purpose of subjugating the desires of the flesh and bringing all his members into subjection to God. Alas, how many professing Christians today *are* wasting their energies upon tasks which God has never assigned them! Then in verse 27, he frankly stated the awful alternative: if I fail to make my body the servant of my soul, by yielding its members unto God (Rom 6:19) and fighting against the lusts of the flesh and temptations of Satan, then eternal disgrace will be my portion. Finally, let it be carefully noted that the apostle *continues* his exhortation to self-denial and caution in the tenth chapter (as its opening word indicates) from the case of Israel, who doubtless felt, as they stood on the other side of the Red Sea, that all danger was past and their entrance into Canaan was certain; yet, because of yielding to evil lusts, they were destroyed in the wilderness (1Co 10:1-15).

Thus we see how that the principles which were to regulate Joshua, and his men were the same as those which are to govern Christians in connection with their spiritual warfare. “The two Testaments, like our two eyes, mutually enlighten and assist each other”—A. Searle. They were to proceed with the utmost confidence in God, yet with entire submission to Him. They were to act faith in His sure promise, and at the same time, render implicit obedi-

ence to His precept. They were to go forward fully assured that Jehovah had given Ai into their hands; nevertheless, they must adhere strictly to the strategy He had specified. So, though told, “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom 16:20), we are definitely bidden to resist him “stedfast in the faith” (1Pe 5:9). Our confidence is “that he which hath begun a good work in [us] will perform [finish] it” (Phi 1:6); nevertheless, in the very next chapter, we are exhorted, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phi 2:12). Mighty foes and powerful forces are arrayed in the fight, but the ultimate issue is not in doubt: “Forasmuch as ye *know* that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1Co 15:58).

Unto the thirty thousand who were to lie in ambush behind the city, Joshua had said, “Go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready” (Jos 8:4)—awake, alert, prepared promptly to make the most of any favourable opportunity which should be presented to them. Such must be the demeanour and spirit of the soldiers of Jesus Christ: “be sober, be vigilant” precedes the call to resist our adversary “stedfast in the faith” (1Pe 5:8-9). Then Joshua added, “And I, and all the people that are with me, will approach unto the city: and it shall come to pass, when they come out against us, as at the first, that we will flee before them” (Jos 8:5). How different was this policy from their boldly walking around the walls of Jericho! How humiliating to proud flesh to have to turn their backs upon the Canaanites! Surely, it is obvious from such a course of procedure that Israel had *missed* God’s best! True, the enemy was routed and utterly destroyed, and his city reduced to ashes, yet the method which the LORD here called upon Israel to adopt made it but too plain that they only entered into His second best for them.

“[For they will come out after us] till we have drawn them from the city; for they will say, They flee before us, as at the first: therefore we will flee before them” (Jos 8:6). Those words expressed a deduction which Joshua drew from what the LORD had said to him in verse 1, for since His announcement that He had given “the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land” into Israel’s hand was accompanied by instructions for them to lay an ambush for the city from the rear (Jos 8:2), it logically followed that the success of such strategy depended upon the army of Ai being lured out of it. Yet in the light of the whole context, it is clear that we have here something more than a mental inference, namely, *faith’s conclusion*. Joshua was warranted in having the utmost confidence in the successful outcome of this plan, because he was employing the means which the LORD had appointed, and was resting on His promise in verse 1, and therefore, counted upon His *blessing* the same by drawing forth the forces of the enemy, and thus leaving their city unprotected. This has been placed upon record for *our* learning and encouragement, particularly for ministers of the Gospel: if they adhere strictly to the methods and means God has appointed, and they look to Him for His blessing on the same, then whatsoever He has purposed shall assuredly be accomplished thereby.

From the above, we see how that we should profit from past experiences, especially those wherein disaster overtook us. Note how in the fifth verse, Joshua had declared, “They [will] come out against us, *as at the first*.” That knowledge was now put to good use, and by availing himself of the same, Joshua turned a previous defeat into a success. As Joshua perceived what course the king of Ai would follow, so Christians are told concerning their great adversary, “We are not ignorant of his devices” (2Co 2:11)—nor are we of the various allurements and snares of the world, and least of all, of the treachery and wickedness of our own hearts. Great care needs to be taken and honesty exercised upon this point, for while on the one hand the Word makes it very plain that Satan tempts and assaults the saints, on the other hand, we are all too prone to father upon him our own sinful brats. It may not always be easy to decide whether a solicitation unto evil originated with our own lusts or the devil, yet this is sure, that he can gain no advantage over us without our own consent; and therefore, whenever we yield to his seductions, the fault and guilt are ours; and instead of blaming Satan, we must unsparingly condemn ourselves and confess the same to God.

This is obviously the principal practical lesson for us to draw from this detail of verse 6: that our knowledge of the enemy’s policy and tactics should be turned to good account, or otherwise, we fail to profit from God’s exposure of the same in the Word of Truth. “For we are not ignorant of his devices” (2Co 2:11): from what is revealed in Holy Writ, from what we observe by carefully noticing the falls of our fellows, and from what we learn from our personal experience, we are cognizant of his favourite methods, baits, subtleties, and lines of approach; and such knowledge *increases* our responsibility to be ever on our guard, to take measures to counteract the same, and, as Joshua here did, turn them to our advantage. To be forewarned is to be forearmed, and when we know beforehand from which direction the attack upon us is most likely to take place, we can not only forestall the same, but turn it to good account. The favourite devices of Satan are to prejudice unbelievers against the Truth, and so engulf them in the pleasures of the world that they lose sight of the interests of their souls and the inestimable importance of the world to come, to mar the believer’s testimony for Christ, and to destroy the peace of Christian assemblies by fomenting a spirit of strife and jealousy.

Ere passing on from this point, let us remind the young preacher that he may gather a wealth of suitable material from the Scriptures themselves should he desire to make a sermon on “Satan’s devices.” In such case, he should, of course, concentrate mainly on those which were employed upon Eve in Genesis 3, and those upon our Lord in Matthew 4. Without furnishing a complete list, he may supplement them from the following: Satan seeks to puff up (1Ch 21:1), to stir up to rebellion against the divine providences and encourage hard thoughts of God (Job 1:11; 2:7-9), to produce a spirit of cowardice and induce us to betray Christ, as in the case of Peter (Luk 22:31), to consort and bargain with the open enemies of Christ and lead us to betray Him (Joh 13:2), to drive to despair and self-destruction (Mat 27:5), to foster the spirit of covetousness and attempt to impose upon the Holy Spirit (Act 5:3), to tempt to marital infidelity (1Co 7:5), to undue severity (2Co 2:6-11), to corrupt our minds from the simplicity which is in Christ (2Co 11:2-3), to pose as an angel of light and transform his ministers as the ministers of righteousness (2Co 11:14-15), to deny the Truth (2Ti 2:25-26), to intimidate (1Pe 5:8), and to slander God’s servants and saints (Rev 12:10).

“Then ye shall rise up from the ambush, and seize upon the city: for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand” (Jos 8:7). Joshua was still addressing the thirty thousand of his men who were to lie in wait behind Ai until the opportune moment arrived for them to fall upon it. That would be when the main force of Israel had made a frontal approach in order to tempt its defenders to come out against them, and on their being thus drawn out into the open, Israel would pretend to flee, inducing them to pursue and leave their homes defenceless. “*Then* ye shall rise up,” seizing the favourable opportunity without delay. The success of the plan required the full *co-operation* of Joshua’s men. Not all of them were appointed to the same stations or allotted the same tasks, but each was required to play his part faithfully. Had those who were to accompany Joshua refused to turn tail when the men of Ai advanced upon them, those who formed the ambush had their long wait in vain; and unless *they* acted promptly in occupying the soldierless city, then Joshua’s plan had failed. Hence it was that Joshua had bidden them, “be ye all ready” (Jos 8:4), that they might immediately avail themselves of the great advantage which his ruse offered them.

The spiritual application to us of the above is obvious. The Lord’s people are called upon to act together in their spiritual warfare. Not all are assigned positions of equal honour, nor are they given the same tasks to perform, yet they must supplement one another and act in conjunction if the interests of their Master’s cause are to be furthered, and if they are not to be humiliated before the common enemy. Unless the pastor has the full co-operation of his church officers, he is placed at a most serious disadvantage; and unless the rank and file of the members co-operate with both, little success will crown their efforts. Nor is it sufficient for one local church to fulfill its spiritual functions; there must be *mutual accord* and concerted action on the part of the several battalions of Christ’s soldiers, if the enemy is to be defeated. Is it not the deplorable absence of such united effort on the part of God’s people that explains the comparative impotency of modern Christianity? While a spirit of jealousy and discord prevails, and factions and schisms so largely obtain, corporate fellowship is impossible; and where there is no fellowship, there can be no united front presented before the powers of darkness, and therefore, no Ais captured to the glory of God.

Let us now observe and admire the blessed *balance* of Truth as exemplified in the passage which is now before us. In the last three or four verses which have engaged our attention, it is the human-responsibility side of things which is manifestly in view, the several duties which the different parts of Israel’s army were called upon to perform—and perform them they *must* if success was to attend their efforts. Nevertheless, Joshua was most particular in guarding the LORD’s glory, and in letting his men know that it was *the divine blessing* upon their efforts which would make them prosperous. This is clear from his words: “Then ye shall rise up from the ambush, and seize upon the city: for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand” (Jos 8:7). *There* was the divine-grace side of things! The two things are not contradictory but complementary, as in “the hand of the diligent maketh rich” and “the blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich” (Pro 10:4, 22). Both are consistent: the one reveals the primary cause; the other, the subordinate and instrumental one. Neither will be effectual without the other. The sluggard looks for prosperity without diligence; the self-sufficient or practical atheist, from diligence alone; but the balanced Christian, from the blessing of God in the exercise of diligence. That wise combination keeps him both active and humble, energetic, yet dependent on God. “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it” (Psa 127:1)—yet if they build not, there will be no “house”!

The Doctrine of Revelation

29. In Glory, Part 2

We are now to consider some of the details revealed in Scripture about the death of a child of God. It is a most important and practical subject, and, though a solemn one, a very blessed one too; for it is then that the saint enters into glory. Let it be pointed out that if we be prepared for God's summons to pass from hence, then—whether His messenger be death or the appearing of the Lord of life—we shall be equally ready. On the other hand, those who are unprepared for death, yet profess to be daily looking for that Blessed Hope, are woefully deceiving themselves that *they* will be among the number who shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. What we have here said requires no proof: it is self-evident that since a saint's departure from this scene is in order for him to enter the presence of God, that if he be prepared for *that*, it can make no difference to his soul whether death or Christ personally be the one to conduct him thither. Let the Christian make his calling and election sure (2Pe 1:10) by ascertaining that he has a valid title to heaven through Christ (Rom 5:11) and a personal meetness by the miracle of the new birth (Joh 3:5; Col 1:12)—and he has no good reason to dread either death or the Redeemer's return.

Death may be defined as the dissolution of that union which exists between the constituent elements of human nature: it is a separating of the immaterial part of man from the material, an emerging of the soul from the body. But that severance in the Christian for a while produces no separation of either his soul or his body from the Lord Jesus. The union there between the redeemed and regenerate members of Christ's mystical body and their glorious Head is indissoluble and endless, and is both the basis and security of every blessing they enjoy in time and eternity. His people are as truly His in death as in life. Their union with Christ is the same, nor is their interest in Him lessened. As the beloved Robert Hawker (1753-1827) said, "The covenant rots not in the grave, however their bodies moulder into dust." Moreover, that separation which the believer sustains of soul and body at death is but for a season; and, among other blessings with which it is accompanied, will be amply compensated on the resurrection morning, when an everlasting union shall be effected between them, nevermore to be broken.

Let us now consider four expressions used in the New Testament in connection with the death of a believer, none of which be it noted, contains the least suggestion of an experience to be dreaded. (1) The apostle Paul spoke of his decease as a *departing* from this world: "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Phi 1:23). Young's concordance defines the word as signifying "to loose up (an anchor)." It is a nautical term, which describes a vessel leaving her temporary moorings. The figure is a suggestive and picturesque one. The hour for sailing has arrived. The anchor is weighed, the gangway raised, the ropes are released, and fond farewells are said and waved to beloved friends who have come to see us off. The ship now moves gently away from the quay, down the river, into the vast reaches of the ocean beyond. *That* is what death is to a Christian: a loosening of those moorings which bound him to the earth, a gliding out into a life of freedom, a going forth unto another Country. This same figure is used again in "the *time of my departure* is at hand" (2Ti 4:6)—the exact hour of sailing has been divinely appointed!

(2) The apostle Peter likened his impending dissolution unto the *taking down of a tent*: "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me" (2Pe 1:14 and compare Joh 21:18-19). In the previous verse, he had similarly spoken of his body, declaring that he would continue urging upon the saints their obligations and duties "as I am in this tabernacle [or better, 'tent']." The body, for whose wants the majority of our fellows are as anxious as though it were the whole man, is but a *tent*. The figure is a very suggestive one. A "tent" is a frail structure, designed only for temporary occupation, is suited for use in the wilderness, and is exchanged for a house "eternal in the heavens" (2Co 5:1). In the fourteenth verse, Peter employed a mixed metaphor, as Paul did in 2 Corinthians 5:1-4, where the breaking up of the earthly house of our tabernacle is spoken of as our being "unclothed." Here, then, is the Christian concept of death: it is no more terrible or distressing than the removing of a tent (which is easily taken down), or the putting off of our garments when retiring to rest—to be resumed at the dawn of a new day!

(3) Death is likened unto an *exodus*. The term is used first in connection with our Saviour: when He was transfigured before His disciples on the holy mount, there talked with Him Moses and Elijah, "who...spake of his *decease* which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luk 9:31). The Greek word is *exodos* and is found again in Hebrews 11:22, where it is recorded that "By faith Joseph, when he died [in Egypt], made mention of the departing [*exodus*] of the children of Israel." It is hardly to be thought that Moses and Elijah would confine their speech unto Christ's death, but would rather converse upon "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1Pe

1:11). Dr. John Lightfoot (1601-1675) was of the opinion that Christ's exodus included His ascension, pointing out that Israel's exodus from Egypt was a "triumphant and victorious one." The term literally means "exit," and Thomas Manton (1620-1677) regards its scope in Luke 9:31 as including Christ's death, resurrection (Act 2:24), and ascension (Luk 24:51). Peter also made use of the same term when he referred to his *own* "decease" or exodus (2Pe 1:15), thereby giving it a general application unto *all* of God's people.

Here, then, is another simple but suggestive figure to express the blessedness of a believer's departure from this life. Like the previous one, this also imports the going forth on a journey; but, in addition, the leaving behind of the house of bondage and the making for the promised inheritance—the anti-typical Canaan. There is a striking analogy between the death of a Christian and Israel's emancipation from the cruel slavery of Pharaoh. One of the distinct features of the Christian's life in this world is his groaning under the burden of indwelling sin (Rom 8:23; 2Co 5:2), a crying "who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom 7:24). But death is, for him, a snapping of his fetters, an escaping from the bonds that hold him, a going forth from sin and sorrow into freedom and immortality. Israel's exodus from Egypt was a leaving behind of all their enemies, and such is death for the saint: the world, the flesh, the devil—all that opposes God and hinders him, for ever done with. Israel's exodus included their safe passage through the Red Sea, a crossing over unto the farther shore, their faces turned unto the land of milk and honey. How eagerly should the Christian welcome death!

(4) The death of God's people is likened unto a *sleep*. This is the most familiar figure of all, and since it is used much more frequently in the Scriptures, and because certain errorists have perverted its meaning, we will dwell longer upon it. To the saints in his day, the apostle said, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep" (1Th 4:13). We regard it as a mistake to restrict that to their bodies: obviously it is their *persons* ("them") which are "asleep"; yet that by no means warrants the conclusion which some have drawn—that at death, the soul passes into a state of total inactivity and unconsciousness. Such a verse proves too much for the case of "soul sleeping," for it would make it teach that the soul *died* with the body, since "sleep" is here an image of death; which would be in direct variance with our Lord's words, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are *not able* to kill the soul" (Mat 10:28). Even in this life, when the body is soundly asleep, the soul or mind is not inactive, as our dreams manifestly evidence.

Whether or not Luke 16:19-31, be a "parable," certain it is that our Lord was there setting forth the condition of both the righteous and the unrighteous immediately after death, and if their souls then pass into a state of oblivion, His language would be utterly misleading when He declared the one to be "comforted" and the other "tormented" (verse 25). So too His promise to the dying thief had been meaningless, unless he was to enjoy the company of Christ in Paradise that day and enter upon all the delights of that place. Further, it would not be true that "death" is one of the things which is unable to separate believers from receiving manifestations of God's love and their enjoyment of the same (Rom 8:38-39), if they pass from this world into a state of insensibility. Again, Paul, who was favoured with such intimate and precious fellowship with Christ in this world, had never been in any "strait" between his desire to remain in the flesh for the sake of his converts and his longing to "depart" (Phi 1:23), had the latter alternative meant the complete suspension of all his faculties, without any communion with God. Nor had he spoken of "the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb 12:23), if they are without life and light, and peace and joy, immediately after death.

While rejecting the false glosses put upon this figurative expression, let us be careful the enemy does not rob us of its true import, and thereby deprive of the comfort it contains. Was it not for the consolation of His disciples (and all His people) that the Saviour said: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of *sleep*" (Joh 11:11)? Again, we are told that after the first Christian martyr had knelt down and prayed for his enemies, he "fell asleep" (Act 7:60). How much more was conveyed by that statement of the inspired historian than had he merely said that Stephen *expired*! Amid the curses of his foes, and while their stones were crushing the life from his body, he "fell asleep." Inexpressibly blessed is that! As the sleep of the body brings welcome relief when it is racked with pain, so death delivers from spiritual warfare and puts an end to all the woundings of the believer's soul by indwelling sin. As sleep gives rest from the toils and burdens of the day, so that we are oblivious to the perplexities and trials which harass our waking hours, so death for the saint puts a period to all the things which occasioned him anxiety and distress down here: he is released, henceforth, from all cares and troubles.

No doubt the principal idea which this figure should convey to us is the entire *harmlessness* of death. What is there in sleep to dread? Instead of being an object of horror, it is a merciful provision of God's, for which we should be most grateful. It comes to us not as a rough and terrifying foe, but approaches gently as a kind friend. Christ has removed the "sting" from death (1Co 15:56-57); and therefore, it can no more harm one of His redeemed than could a hornet whose power to injure has been destroyed. In employing this comforting metaphor, God would

have His people assured that they have nothing more to fear from the article of death than in lying down on their beds to slumber. Again, sleep is of but *brief duration*: a few hours of repose, and then we arise refreshed and reinvigorated for the duties of another day. In like manner, death is but a sleep, an entering into rest, and resurrection will be the restoration and glorification of our bodies. Finally, death is likened to a sleep to intimate *how easily* the Lord will quicken our mortal bodies. The sceptic may ridicule as an impossibility the truth of resurrection, but to Christ, it will be simpler than waking a sleeper. A slumbering person is aroused most easily by one *speaking* to him, and “the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall *hear his voice*” (Joh 5:28)!

In addition to those figurative expressions, which so manifestly depict the harmlessness of death, God has made many plain statements in His Word for the comfort and assurance of His saints. It is evident from Genesis 15 that He preached the Gospel to Abraham in clear terms: not only the basic doctrine of justification by faith and the righteousness which is imputed to the believer, but also that state of blessedness into which all His people enter immediately upon their death. First, He made known to the “father” or prototype of all the faithful of what heaven is and wherein the happiness of the saints consists: “I am thy shield” in this life, “and thy exceeding great reward” in the life to come (Gen 15:1). For as T. Goodwin pointed out, “Reward is after the finishing of work, and what is this reward but the blessedness of heaven? Christ Himself says no other, nor no more of it, ‘The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance’ [Psa 16:5]. For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, knowing that ‘in thy presence is fulness of joy’ [Psa 16:11].” Second, God informed him that the condition of his soul should be: “Thou shalt go to thy fathers *in peace*” (Gen 15:15). No wonder Balaam said, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!” (Num 23:10).

What a blessed declaration is this: “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints” (Psa 116:15)—then certainly it ought not to be dreadful in theirs! That verse presents an aspect of our subject which is all too little considered by Christians. They look at it, as at most other things, too much from the human angle: but here we have what may be termed the Godward side of a believer’s death—it is *precious* in His sight! The Hebrew word *yaqar* is rendered “costly” in 1 Kings 5:17, “honourable” in Psalm 45:9, “excellent” in Psalm 36:7. It occurs again in “precious stones” (1Ki 10:10), yea, is used of Christ Himself—“a precious corner stone” (Isa 28:16). Whatever form it takes, and no matter what be the attendant circumstances, such is the death of His people unto the LORD: an honourable, costly, excellent, precious thing. Note well the words, “in the sight of the LORD”: His eyes are then fixed upon them in a peculiar and special manner. Their death is precious unto Him, because it releases them from sin and sorrow, because it is sanctified by His own death for them, because it is a taking unto His immediate presence of those upon whom He set His heart from all eternity, because they are the trophies of His own victory, and because they then “enter...into the joy of [their] lord” (Mat 25:23).

In the closing verses of 1 Corinthians 3, a number of things are mentioned as appertaining to God’s children: “For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, *or death*, or things present, or things to come; all are yours” (1Co 3:21-22). Those words were first addressed to shame some who sought pre-eminence in the house of God and whose affections were too much set upon things on the earth; yet they are full of instruction and comfort for us today. The ministry of God’s servants, the things God has provided for us in the world, life or death, are equally ours. Death is ours not by way of punishment and curse, but as a privilege and blessing. It is ours not as an enemy, but as a friend. It is our conquered foe, and is not to be feared, for it has neither strength nor sting to harm us: Christ, our victorious Captain, has disarmed it of both—He “hath abolished [rendered null and void] death” (2Ti 1:10). Life and death are administered by God, so as to fulfill His gracious designs unto His people. Death is theirs because they share in Christ’s triumphs over it, because it furthers their interests and ministers to their well-being, because it is a means of their inexpressible advantage, removing them from a world of ills, conducting them into a world of glory and bliss.

What a word is this: “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev 14:13). Here was a special and immediate revelation from heaven. It was to be placed upon imperishable record for the comfort of believers to the end of time. “*Blessed* are the dead”: pronounced so by God, happy in themselves. Not “blessed shall they be” at the resurrection morning, though that will be their case; but “blessed *are*” they at the moment. Why? Because they “die in the Lord”: whether conscious of the fact or not, they die in union and communion with Him, His smile of approbation resting upon them. To die in the Lord is “to die in the favour of God, in a state of peace with Him as members of His mystical body”—T. Manton. But more: they are blessed “from henceforth,” without delay or cessation, which at once gives the lie to their lapsing into a state of entire unconsciousness. “Yea, saith the Spirit.” Here is solemn confirmation: “the Holy Spirit maketh affidavit”—T. Manton. They “rest from their labours”: not only the toils of their temporal callings, but their conflicts with sin.

“And their works do follow them”: “We carry nothing out of the world with us but the conscience and comfort of what we have done for God”—T. Manton.

We will conclude this article by borrowing a few thoughts (though clothing them mostly in our own language) from Thomas Boston’s (1676-1732) counsels on why a Christian should be reconciled to death, and then how to prepare for it. Some dread the prospect of leaving behind their wives and children in this cold world: yet they have a reliable Guardian to commit them unto. Says He, “Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me” (Jer 49:11). But death will remove me from my dearest friends! True, yet it will conduct unto your best Friend; and if those you leave are God’s children, you will meet them again in heaven. But the approach and pains of death are sometimes very dreadful! Not nearly so terrible as pangs of conscience caused by apprehensions of divine wrath; remember that each pang of bodily disease brings you a step nearer unto a soul made every whit whole. But I am naturally timorous, and the very thoughts of death alarms me! Then familiarize yourself with it by frequent meditations thereon, and especially view the bright side of the cloud, and by faith look beyond it.

That there may be a readier disposition of heart and preparedness of mind, make it your care to “have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Act 24:16). Walk closely with God, maintain a diligent and strict course in the way of His precepts; and because of the infirmities which cleave to us in this present state, renew your repentance daily and be ever washing in that Fountain which has been opened for sin and for uncleanness. Be constantly engaged in weaning your heart from this world. Let the mantle of earthly enjoyments hang loosely upon you, that it may be easily dropped when the summons comes to depart for heaven. Set your affections more and more upon things above, and pass through this wilderness scene as a stranger and pilgrim. We are ready for heaven when our heart is there before us (Mat 6:21). Be diligent in laying up *evidences* of your title to heaven, for the neglect of so doing renders uncomfortable the dying pillow of many a Christian. Grieve not the Holy Spirit, so that *He* will bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God (Rom 8:16).

Glorious Sinai

Part 5

In all our approaches unto God in Christ, two things should ever be borne in mind by us. First, the amazing and sovereign grace which has delivered us from a bondage immeasurably worse than that experienced by the Hebrews in Egypt, and which grace has “[brought] us unto God” (1Pe 3:18) and made us “a kingdom of priests” (Exo 19:6) unto Himself (1Pe 2:9). Second, the awe-inspiring majesty and ineffable holiness of God, and our native meanness and depravity. If either of these be lost sight of, we shall entertain an ill-formed concept of the divine character; and if we be unduly occupied with one to the virtual exclusion of the other, then our own characters will suffer and the worship which we offer unto God will be sadly defective. On the one hand, we should approach the divine footstool in the freedom and joy of those who are accepted in the Beloved (Heb 10:22); otherwise, the spontaneity and fervor of our praise will be choked. On the other hand, it is equally necessary that we draw nigh unto the Majesty on high “with reverence and godly fear” (Heb 12:28); or, because of an unholy and unbecoming familiarity, we are in grave danger of offering “the sacrifice of fools” (Ecc 5:1). “Hallowed by thy name” should ever be our first concern when approaching the Father!

That holy balance was blessedly preserved on glorious Sinai. It has been far too generally overlooked by our moderns that, whatever awe-inspiring grandeur and solemn majesty attended the promulgation of the Decalogue, uttered as it was amid sounds and sights which filled the beholders with amazement and terror; yet that very Law proceeded from Him who is love, and was given by God in His character of the gracious and faithful Redeemer of His people, as well as their rightful LORD. Nevertheless, the whole transaction was manifestly designed to teach His ransomed people their proper place, and to show them that while the LORD had brought them unto Himself (Exo 19:4), yet an infinite distance separates between the Creator and the creature, the Infinite and the finite. As we said in these pages (in our “Gleanings in Exodus”) more than twenty years ago, “Such a view of God’s majesty as Israel were favoured with at Sinai is the crying need of our day. The eye of faith needs to see Him not only as our Father and as the God of all grace, but also as the ‘high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity’ (Isa 57:15), as the

‘great and dreadful God’ (Dan 9:4), as the apostle beheld Him in Revelation 1:13-18.” Let it not be forgotten that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament are one and the same.

Though the Decalogue proceeded from God as Israel’s Redeemer, it did not on that account assume a less stringent character. Being an expression of the divine dominion and a revelation of Law in form, as well as in substance, it could not but assume a predominantly authoritative tone. Its precepts were therefore given in the form of explicit announcements of duty and stern prohibitions against the ways of transgression. The benign spirit which breathes in its preface is not absent from the body of its enactments, as appears in the assurance of mercy unto the thousands who should love God and keep His commandments, and in the promise of long life in the land to those who honoured their parents. But those were more “the relieving clauses of the Code” as one expressed it; the substance of the whole being in the imperative form. “Thou shalt not do this,” “thou shalt do that,” leaves no doubt that the course prescribed is the one which *ought* to be taken, which *must* be taken if the divine approbation is to be enjoyed. As John Calvin (1509-1564) pointed out, the Moral Law throughout both commands and prohibits: each duty prescribed implying an abstention from everything contrary thereto, each prohibition involving the performing of the opposite good. As the Psalmist said, “Thy commandment is exceeding broad” (Psa 119:96).

None but the Ten Commandments were spoken by Jehovah in the hearing of Israel, and they alone were inscribed by His own finger upon the tables of stone—thereby intimating *their* fundamental and lasting nature. Subordinate to them and closely related are the statutory directions recorded in Exodus 21-23, there called “judgments.” Therein a series of particular cases are legislated for by way of illustrative examples of how the Moral Law was to be applied to the everyday life of the Hebrews, restricting and regulating them, yet without unduly cramping their liberty. We urge each reader to give a careful consideration to those three chapters, noting how the principle of *brotherly love* is enforced throughout. *That* was to be exercised even toward him from whom an injury had been received. Where one had acted unjustly toward another, the wronged one was forbidden to take revenge. Even though an enemy, if a neighbour’s ox strayed or his ass fell helplessly beneath a burden, assistance was to be rendered (Exo 23:4-5). Love to every neighbor was enforced (Lev 19:18), not in words merely, but also in giving to him in time of need without usury, thereby manifesting toward him the spirit of divine beneficence (Exo 22:25-27 and compare Eph 5:1-2).

Glorious Sinai! From it was given the wisest, justest, and best legislation which was ever furnished a nation for the regulation of its social, economic, and domestic life, as well as its religious; statutes which inculcated the exercise of justice and mercy alike, and which exemplified a spirit both of holiness and magnanimity. Selfish or careless disregard of animals was penalized (Exo 21:33-34). The rights of private property were protected (Exo 22:5-6). The special regard of God for the widow and fatherless was pressed on the people (Exo 22:22-24). Consideration for the poor was enjoined (Exo 22:25-27; 23:10-12). Kindness unto strangers was inculcated (Exo 23:9). The plea which some might take, that any loss sustained by a neighbour (as from the kindling of a fire which spread to another’s vineyard, or leaving open a pit into which his ox fell) was the result of *inadvertency* rather than malice, was ruled to be invalid, because men were held responsible to promote the good and avoid the injury of all around them. The death penalty was indeed attached to the more flagrant violations of the Decalogue (as of witchcraft, which involved an act of homage to the devil), yet while wilful murder must be avenged, provision was made for the unwitting man-slayer (Exo 21:13-14). Very, very different were such benign precepts from the principles which regulated all the nations of antiquity.

Such was the moral and judicial law which constituted the charter upon which the nation of Israel was incorporated under the immediate and special government of God, and which formed the terms of that covenant mutually entered into at Sinai. Under it, God engaged to grant Israel an entrance into Canaan, to protect them in it, to make the land fruitful, and the nation victorious and prosperous, to continue His oracles and ordinances among them—so long as they did not, as a people, reject His authority, apostatize to idolatry, or tolerate open wickedness. *Those* corporate offences—or those offences when committed by a majority and countenanced by their leaders—constituted a *breach* of the covenant and a forfeiture of its privileges, as also did the national rejection of Christ afterwards. True believers—or the regenerate minority among them—God treated with personally, according to the everlasting Covenant of Grace (2Sa 23:5), even as true Christians now are; whereas the unbelieving majority were, as individuals, under the Covenant of Works, as at present (Rom 5:12,18); but the *national* covenant with the Hebrews was not, strictly speaking, either the one or the other, but had something in it of the nature of each—which must ever be the case where God is enforcing human accountability.

The Sinaitic Covenant can only be fully understood as it is viewed, first, as a system of religion and government designed for the immediate use of Israel as a nation during the Mosaic era. While they remained obedient to its terms, they continued to occupy Canaan and enjoy all the blessings of the Theocracy—under the dominion of

God as *King* (1Sa 8:7)—but it had no relation to the spiritual and eternal salvation of individuals. Second, that it was of a mixed nature, being neither purely evangelical, nor purely legal. Third, that it was preparatory to another and better economy by which it was to be succeeded when its temporary purpose had been fulfilled. Its initial design was to order the religious and civil life of Israel; its ultimate, to pave the way for the appearing of Christ. “The economy of Moses, whatever prominence it gave to the Law, was unquestionably a dispensation of the Covenant of Grace. So far from superseding the promise given to Abraham, or making it void or of ‘none effect,’ it was expressly founded upon it, and designed to carry it on to its accomplishment. That economy gathered up into itself all prior revelations of divine truth”—James Buchanan (1804-1870), on “The Doctrine of Justification” (Cunningham Lectures, 1867).

The charter which contained the articles of the Covenant was written in a book (Exo 24:4, 7) and was “sealed” or ratified with blood. As John Owen (1616-1683) pointed out (in his exposition of Hebrews 9:19), “The same blood was on the book, wherein the covenant was recorded, as upon the people that entered into it....It was sprinkled as it lay on the altar where atonement was made, and this was plainly to signify that atonement *was to be made* with blood for sins committed against that book, or the Law contained in it. Without *this*, that book would have been unto the people like that given to Ezekiel, that was written within and without, and there was “written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe” (Eze 2:10)—nothing but curse and death could they expect from it. But the sprinkling of it with blood as it lay upon the altar was a testimony and assurance that atonement should be made by blood for the sins against it.” How fully and emphatically that statement is borne out, the first half of the book of Leviticus and the whole subsequent history of God’s dealings with Israel clearly shows; and how much better taught were the despised Puritans than our conceited Dispensationalists appears to any spiritual eye which takes the trouble to compare the writings of one with the other.

Immediately following upon the confirmation of the covenant by the shedding and sprinkling of blood, a scene is presented which, for wonderment and blessedness, has no parallel elsewhere in the whole of the Old Testament. Here we behold not only Moses and Aaron and his two sons, but also seventy of the elders of Israel in the very presence of God: yea, thoroughly at ease there, eating and drinking before Him! To duly appreciate that amazing event, we must mark closely its setting. In the immediate context (Exo 24:5-8), we are shown the division made of the blood of sacrifice between Jehovah and the Hebrews, and the sprinkling of the latter with the portion assigned to them, the manifest design of which was to give an emblematic but palpable exhibition of *the oneness* which now subsisted between the two parties of the covenant. By nature, they stood far apart from each other, for sin had made a fearful breach between man and his Maker—a breach which no human efforts could possibly bridge. But what man could not do, the LORD most graciously accomplished. He appointed an altar and suitable offerings to be sacrificed thereon, and having accepted for Israel the blood of atonement, by that portion of it which was sprinkled upon the altar, they were thereby brought into a capacity of union and fellowship with Him.

Let the reader pause and attentively ponder and admire what has just been pointed out: Glorious Sinai! The Gospel of the grace of God was there proclaimed in the hearing and acted out before the eyes of the LORD’s people on that very mount. It is too often lost sight of that, as the Gospel published by the Lord Jesus and His apostles contained a renewed revelation of the Law (Mat 5:17; Rom 3:31), so at the promulgation of the Law, there was made a clear revelation of the Gospel. Such was indeed the case, and failure to perceive those facts will be imperfectly to apprehend either the one or the other. After God had graciously accepted on Israel’s behalf the blood of atonement, and they had solemnly declared their adherence to the terms on which the national agreement was to be maintained—as recorded on the tables, or the covenant and the “judgments” or statutes connected therewith—the compact was formally ratified by the sprinkling of the other half of the blood upon them. Thus were they impressively taught the grand truth that God and His people *shared* part and part: the pure innocent life which He provided and accepted on their behalf was also regarded as *theirs*—a vital and sacred bond united the two into one: they were now the *friends* of Jehovah, admitted into close communion with Him!

“Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel” (Exo 24:9-10). Note well the opening word. Each time we meet with this “then” in the Scriptures, we should stop and ask *when*, seeking in the context the answer, thereby obtaining the key which opens the significance of what immediately follows. In the present instance, the answer to our “When?” is: right after the blood had been applied! Precious beyond words is this, revealing as it does the inestimable value of the sacrificial blood, and the wondrous privileges it procures for those who are sprinkled with it. Here we behold how that atoning and applied blood secured for Israel’s leaders, and the seventy elders as the representatives of the whole nation, the right of access into the immediate presence of their reconciled and covenant God. Most blessedly did that prefigure what we are told in Hebrews 10: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us” (verses 19-20); and again, “These are they which came out

of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. *Therefore* are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple” (Rev 7:14-15).

“And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness” (Exo 24:10). Having averred their submission to God and been sprinkled with the blood, they were now honoured with special tokens of His favour and manifestations of His glory. It is worthy of particular mention that this was the first time the LORD took the title of “the God of Israel”—that is, their *covenant* God. Pertinently did Matthew Henry (1662-1714) point out: “Nothing is described but that which was under His feet, for our conceptions of God are all below Him, and fall infinitely short of being adequate.” The description which is here given of the “paved work” which was under the feet of Israel’s God is both highly significant and exquisitely beautiful. The “sapphire stone” is the symbol of the divine government; and the Throne of God, as a reference to Ezekiel 1:26, shows—and its mention *here*, intimates—that the Sinaitic covenant formed the basis of all the future providential dealings of God with Israel. The “body of heaven in his clearness” seems to speak of the divine *counsels*, for in Christ, God has made known His mind and will in perfect clarity (Joh 1:18; Heb 1:1-2).

“And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink” (Exo 24:11). What a truly amazing and blessed occasion! “But yesterday it would have been death to them to ‘break through and gaze,’ but now they saw God! And such was their ‘boldness,’ due to the blood of the covenant, that they did ‘eat and drink’ in the divine presence”—Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918). That the God of Israel “laid not His hand upon” the official representatives of the nation was a negative way of saying that He was reconciled to them, that His smile of approbation was upon them. Not only was the Gospel of the grace of God visibly enacted upon “the mount of the LORD” (Gen 22:14), but the precious privileges and benefits which it confers upon those who savingly believe the same were most blessedly adumbrated. Here we behold not only a bringing nigh unto God of those who availed themselves of its provisions, but a granting of a sight of Himself. Nay, more: they are at perfect peace with Him, in intimate fellowship with Himself! Glorious, glorious Sinai, for it is *there* we witness a redeemed people treated as God’s friends, partaking of the meat of the peace offering, eating and drinking, thoroughly at home in His immediate presence! Heaven itself contains no grander experience.

The Value of Fear

“And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire” (Jude 1:22-23)—that is, make them afraid, threaten and terrify them, that they may be saved. Some spirits must be dealt with gently; others, roughly—therefore make “a difference,” rather than let any perish. Some must be led to heaven by the way of hell. It is a desirable fear which is a means to pull a soul out of the fire. We are saved by faith, as it receiveth and taketh hold of Christ; we are saved by fear, as it takes hold of us and driveth us to Christ. By faith, we see and apply our help in Christ; and by fear, we are brought to see our need of His help. Christ used the argument of the fear of hell to cure His friends of the fear of man and to dissuade them from deserting Him and the truth of the Gospel: “And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, ‘Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him’” (Luk 12:4-5). We may parallel it with that expression of Paul’s: “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phi 4:4). So Christ to His friends’ “fear.” Some might object: Is this suitable counsel to a friend, to bid him be afraid? Should he be kept in heaven’s way by fear of hell? Enemies have cause of fear, but should friends? Yea, saith Christ, I say *again* to you My friends, fear Him. It is good to bid a friend fear, when that fear tendeth to his good. Paul, writing to saints and applying the doctrine of free grace to the believing Romans, yet tells them: “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die” (Rom 8:13), even die *eternally*. He threatens them with hell who were candidates of heaven, that he might keep them out of the ways of death.

It is indeed most noble to obey out of love. Yet it’s good to fear the Lord and His wrath. It is most excellent to say, we fear the Lord because there is mercy with Him, but it is our duty to fear the Lord because there is justice and judgment with Him. A good heart will improve the judgments of God as well as His mercies; and the wrath of

God, as well as His love. Every word of God is good and hath a savour of life in it, by the working of the Spirit. It is best and most Gospel-like when we can say, “Having therefore these *promises*, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves...in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1). But it is well when we can say: “Having these *threatenings*, we cleanse ourselves and perfect holiness in His fear.” “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb 12:28)—Joseph Caryl (1602-1673), 1658.



JUNE

Conformity

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29). What an amazing statement is that!—certainly one which no mortal mind had ever thought of inventing. That some out of the fallen descendants of Adam should be not only saved from their sins and delivered from the wrath to come, but decreed by God to be made like that blessed One in whom His soul delighteth. That is the climax of grace, for it is not possible to confer a greater or higher favour upon its chosen subjects. That depraved creatures should yet become replicas of the Holy One—that worms of the earth should be fashioned after the Lord of glory—passes finite comprehension, yet faith receives and love adores. But mark the perfect accuracy of this statement: not predestinated “to be conformed to the image of his Son”—for that would have involved our deification (which is impossible)—but unto His “image.”

What does this “conformity” consist of? Summarizing the teaching of the New Testament thereon, we may say it is a spiritual, a practical, an experiential, and a physical one. A line must not be drawn too sharply between those distinctions, for they shade off the one into the other. The first begins at our regeneration; the second has to do with our sanctification; the third concerns our mortification; and the fourth will not be effected until our glorification. Before there can be any real conformity to Christ outwardly, there must be an inward one of nature, as we must first “live in the Spirit” before we can “walk in the Spirit” (Gal 5:25). At regeneration, the spiritual image of Christ is stamped upon the soul, and He is “formed” in the heart—the “new man” (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10) being created after His likeness. The members are of the same nature as the head: the life of Christ must be imparted to us before there can be any communion with or conformity to Him. “And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” (Joh 1:16)—i.e. grace communicated to us corresponding in nature to the grace of which He is full.

That initial conformity is continued throughout the Christian’s life on earth: he is renewed in the inner man day by day (2Co 4:16). It is both his privilege and duty to become increasingly Christlike in his character and conduct: that ye “may grow up into him in all things” (Eph 4:15) is to be our ceaseless aim and endeavour. We are enjoined, “put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 13:14)—as the soldier does his uniform—evidencing by our daily deportment that we serve under his banner. We are required to express or “shew forth” His virtues (1Pe 2:9, margin), making it manifest that He indwells us. Said the apostle, “Be ye followers [or ‘imitators’] of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1Co 11:1). Our bearing the *name* of Christ is justified only so far as we display His *perfections*. Christ not only lives for His people, but in them (Gal 2:20); and *He* cannot “be hid” (Mar 7:24). Christ died for them, and they are to die unto sin, self, the world. It is by their conformity unto Christ that His followers are distinguished from empty professors.

This spiritual and inward conformity to Christ is promoted by our regular use of appropriate means. “But we all [regenerate souls], with open face [in contrast with the veiled Jews—verses 13-16] beholding as in a glass the glory

of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:18). The “glass” in which the “glory of the Lord” is seen is the Scriptures. That glory is “beheld” by faith, for faith is the eye of the spirit—as it is by our physical eyes, we take in light from the sun. As the regenerated soul is believingly and adoringly occupied with that wondrous “glory,” he is “changed into the same image”: not completely so in a moment, but gradually and progressively “from glory to glory.” Not by any effort or striving of ours, but “by the Spirit,” whose office it is first to unite us to Christ and then to make us like Him. The closer communion we have with the Lord Jesus, the nearer affiliation shall we have to Him. As faith feeds upon Him who gives us His own flesh to eat, we become assimilated to Him spiritually. The more we are affected by His love, the more we shall strive to please Him.

“Beholding as in a glass [Greek—‘mirror’] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.” The figure is taken from the mirrors used by the ancients, which, unlike ours, were made of highly polished metal. For their use, a brilliant light was required; and as it fell upon the mirror, not only did the person holding it see in it his countenance, but upon his face was reflected the glow from the metal: if the mirror was of brass or gold, the reflection would be yellow; if silver, white. And as faith is occupied with the person of Christ and the Spirit shines upon our hearts, His perfections are reproduced in us. We cannot bask long in the presence of the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2) without our reflecting His beams. As Moses descended from the mount after forty days’ converse with Jehovah, “the skin of his face shone” (Exo 34:30). The more the saint is in Christ’s company, the more is he assimilated unto His likeness.

Practical conformity to Christ, in our conduct, is furthered by our following the example He has left us (1Pe 2:21). One of the great ends for which God sent His Son into the world in our nature was that He might reveal to us through His life in this scene how we should conduct ourselves acceptably unto God. In Christ, the divine ideal of manhood has been realized. All the original goodness (Gen 1:31) of human nature has been exercised and exemplified to the glory of God in the perfect life of Christ. As all colours meet in the rainbow, so all virtues and excellencies meet in Christ. He is a perfect and glorious pattern of all graces. Not so the most eminent saints. The best of their graces and the highest of their attainments were marred by blots and failures. Christ is “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16) the Lamb “without blemish and without spot” (1Pe 1:19). In His life, we behold the Law translated into concrete terms and its requirements set before us by personal representation. In His deportment, we have a clear display of what practical holiness consists of.

In His life, Christ has exhibited what He requires from His followers: “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1Jo 2:6). As one of the lesser-known Puritans expressed it, “Christ is the sun, and all the watches of our lives should be set by the dial of His motions.” A Christian is one who has renounced his own will and wisdom as the rule of his actions, and has surrendered to the sceptre of Christ to be governed by Him, and He teaches both by precept and example. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me” (Mat 11:29) is His requirement, and compliance therewith is to be the business of our lives. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phi 2:5). We are to learn from Christ’s conduct as well as His counsels, that holy obedience to God’s will may mark us in all things. “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John [not their ‘sweetness,’ but their uncompromising fidelity, their loyalty at all costs]...they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Act 4:13)!

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mat 16:24). The “cross” stands for self-sacrifice, a life yielded up to God; and it is not laid upon the disciple, but voluntarily “taken up” by him, so that he may be “made conformable unto his death” (Phi 3:10)—dying daily unto sin. There must be an experimental conformity unto Christ *in suffering*. The members of Christ’s body share, in their measure, the experiences of their Head; and they do so in proportion as they follow the example which He has left them. As the world hated Christ, so it hates those who bear His image. It was the unregenerate religious world which most fiercely opposed Him, and sufficient for the disciple to be as his Master. The closer we follow Him, the more shall we bring down upon ourselves the hostility of Satan: “But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of *Christ’s* sufferings” (1Pe 4:13).

“But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him” (1Jo 3:2): *there* is the blessed consummation. Chosen in Christ, called to Christ, communing with Christ, fully conformed to Christ! As God has predestinated His people to be conformed to the image of His Son spiritually, practically, and experientially, so also physically: for at His return, Christ “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Phi 3:21). Nothing short of *entire* conformity will satisfy the desires of God for His elect! “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1Co 15:49). But conformity to Christ will not be consummated in heaven, unless it has been commenced on earth: there must be regeneration, sanctification, and morti-

fication, before there is glorification. Christ was humiliated on earth before He was exalted in heaven; so with us the cross precedes the crown.

The Prayers of the Apostles

66. 1 Peter 5:10-11, Part 2

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us” (1Pe 5:10). In our last—availing ourself of Thomas Goodwin’s (1600-1680) analysis—we pointed out that this most blessed title respects what God is in Himself, in His eternal purpose, and in His actings unto His people. Here, in the words just quoted, we see the three things joined together—God’s effectual *call*, whereby He brings a soul out of nature’s “darkness into his [own] marvellous light” (1Pe 2:9), is the *first* evident or outward proof that person receives that He is unto him “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10). Yet that was not the first outgoing of God’s heart unto him, but instead, the *proof* that His love had been set upon him from all eternity: “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called” (Rom 8:30). God has “from the beginning” chosen His people unto salvation, and in due time effects the same by the invincible operations of the Spirit, who capacitates and causes them to believe the Gospel (2Th 2:13-14). They “believed through grace” (Act 18:27), for faith is the gift of divine grace (Eph 2:8), and it was given them because they belonged unto “the election of grace” (Rom 11:5); and they belonged to that favoured election, because the God of all grace singled them out to be the everlasting monuments of His grace.

That it was the grace which was in the heart of God that moved Him to call us is clear from 2 Timothy 1:9: “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” Regeneration (or effectual calling) is the consequence, and not the cause, of divine predestination. God resolved to love us with an unchangeable love, and that love designed we should be partakers of His eternal glory. His good will toward us moves Him infallibly to carry out all the resolutions of His free grace unto us, so that nothing can thwart the same, though acting consistently with His other perfections. None magnified the grace of God more than T. Goodwin, yet when asked, “Does the divine prerogative of grace mean that God saves men, continue they what they will?” answered, “God forbid.” We deny such a sovereignty so understood, as if it saved any man without rule, much less against rule. The very verse which speaks of God as ‘the God of all grace’ in relation to our salvation adds, ‘who hath called us,’ and our calling is a *holy* one (2Ti 1:9).

It helps us to a better understanding of this divine title if we compare it with another found in 2 Corinthians 1:3, “the God of all comfort”—except that it is more restricted to the dispensing aspect, as the words which follow show: “who comforteth us in all our tribulation.” As “the God of *all* comfort,” He is not only the Bestower of all real consolation and the Sustainer under all trials, but also the Giver of all temporal comforts or mercies, for whatever natural refreshment or benefit we derive from the creature is due alone to His blessing the same unto us. In like manner, He is “the God of *all* grace”: seeking grace, quickening grace, pardoning grace, cleansing grace, providing grace, recovering grace, preserving grace, glorifying grace—grace of every kind, and of full measure. Yet though that expression, “the God of all comfort,” serves to illustrate the One we are here considering, nevertheless, it falls short of it, for God’s dispensations of grace are *wider* than those of His comfort. In certain cases, God gives grace where He does not comfort—as His illuminating grace brings with it the pangs of conviction, which sometimes last a lengthy season before any relief is granted; and as under His chastening rod, sustaining grace is vouchsafed where comfort is withheld.

Not only is there every conceivable kind of grace available for us in God, but He gives it forth as our wants require, for then is the occasion for grace to show itself. We are freely invited to come boldly unto the Throne of Grace that we may “find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16), or, as Solomon expressed it, that the LORD God would maintain the cause of His people Israel “at all times, as the matter shall require” (1Ki 8:59). Such is our gracious God: ministering to us at all times as well as in all matters. So again, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man [i.e. is human, for the sin against the Holy Spirit is the devil’s sin]: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1Co 10:13). As Christ declared, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be

forgiven unto men” (Mat 12:31), for the God of all grace works repentance and forgives all sorts of sins, after conversion, as well as before—as the cases of David and Peter show. Saith He, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely” (Hos 14:4). Full cause has each of us to feelingly say from experience, “And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant” (1Ti 1:14).

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us *unto his eternal glory*.” Here is the greatest and grandest proof that He is such unto His people. No more convincing and blessed evidence are needed to make manifest the good will which he bears them. The abundant grace which is in His heart toward them and the beneficent design He has unto them are made clearly evident therein. They are “the called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28), namely, that “eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph 3:11). That effectual call which brings from death unto life is the first open breaking forth of God’s electing grace, and is the foundation of all the actings of His grace unto them afterwards. It is then He commences His “good work” in them, which He completes “until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phi 1:6). By it, they are called unto a life of holiness here, and a life of glory hereafter. What the latter consists of, we endeavour to show in our articles under the doctrine of divine revelation: here, we are told that those who were by nature the children of wrath will be sharers of God’s own eternal glory. Though God’s effectual call does not bring them into the actual possession of it at once, yet it fully qualifies and fits them for the same: “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col 1:12).

But let us look beyond the most delightful of the streams of grace unto the Fountain. It is the infinite grace which is in the nature of God that engages itself to make good His beneficent purpose, and continually supplies those streams. It is to be well noted that when God uttered that great charter of grace, “I...will be gracious to whom I will be gracious,” He prefaced it with: “I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee” (Exo 33:19). All of that grace and mercy which is in Jehovah Himself, and which is to be made known unto His people, was to engage the attention of Moses *before* his mind turned to consider the sum of His decrees or purposing grace. That ocean of goodness which is in God is engaged in promoting the good of His people; and that goodness He caused to pass before His servant’s eyes, that he might be heartened by beholding such an illimitable wealth of benevolence, that he should be fully assured the God of all grace would indeed “be gracious” unto them He chose in Christ before the foundation of the world. It is the essential grace which is rooted in the very being of God which is to be the first object of faith; and the more faith be acted upon the same, the more will our souls be upheld in the hour of trial, persuaded that such a One cannot fail us.

Fourth, its *plea*: “Who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus” (1Pe 5:10). While that clause is undoubtedly brought in to magnify God and to exemplify His wondrous grace, yet considered separately, in relation to the prayer as a whole, we personally regard it as the plea made by the apostle in support of the petition that follows. He was making request that God would perfect, settle, strengthen, stablish His saints, and it was tantamount to asking: “Since Thou hast already done the greater, grant them the lesser; seeing that they are to be sharers of Thy eternal glory in Christ, give them what they need while left in this time state.” If our hearts were more engaged with *Who* it is that has called us, and to *what* He has appointed us, not only would our mouths be opened wider, but we should be more confident of their being filled. It is none other than Jehovah, who sits resplendent on His Throne, surrounded by the adoring celestial hosts, who will shortly say unto each of us: “Come unto Me and feast thyself on My perfections.” Think you that He will withhold anything that will be for your good? If He has called me to heaven, is there anything needful on earth He will deny me?

A most powerful and prevalent plea is this. First, it is as though the apostle said: “Have Thou respect unto the works of Thy hand. Thou hast indeed called them out of darkness into light, but they are still fearfully ignorant. It is Thy gracious pleasure that they should spend eternity in Thy immediate presence on high, but they are here in the wilderness, and are compassed with infirmities. Then, in view of both the one and the other, carry on all those other workings of grace unto and in them which are needful in order to bring them to glory.” What God has already done for us should not only be a ground of confident expectation of what He will yet do (2Co 1:10), but be used as an argument when making our requests unto God. Since Thou has regenerated me, make me now to grow in grace. Since Thou hast put into my heart a hatred of sin and a hunger after righteousness, intensify the same. Since Thou hast made me a branch of the Vine, make me a very fruitful one. Since Thou hast united me to Thy dear Son, enable me to show forth His praises, honour Him in my daily life, and thus commend Him to those who know Him not. But we are somewhat anticipating our next division.

In that one work of calling, God has shown Himself to be the God of all grace unto you, and that should greatly strengthen and confirm your faith in Him. “Whom he called, them he also *justified*” (Rom 8:30), which consists of two things: forgiveness and pronouncing sentence of righteousness. To estimate the plenitude of His grace in for-

givenness, thou must calculate the number and heinousness of thy sins. They were more than the hairs of thy head, for thou wast born as a wild ass's colt and from the first dawns of reason, "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen 6:5). As for their criminality, most of them were committed against the voice of conscience, and consisted of privileges despised and mercies abused. Nevertheless, His Word declares: "Having forgiven you all trespasses" (Col 2:13). How that should melt your heart, and move you to adore "the God of all grace." How it should make you fully persuaded that He will continue dealing with you not according to your deserts, but according to His own goodness and benignity. True, He has not yet rid thee of indwelling corruption, but that affords further occasion for Him to display His longsuffering grace unto thee.

But wonderful as is such a favour, yet the forgiveness of sins is only *half* of even the legal side of salvation, and the negative and inferior part of it at that. Though everything recorded against me on the debit side has been blotted out, still there stands not a single item to my credit on the other side. From the hour of my birth to the moment of my conversion, not one good deed has been registered to my account, for none of my actions proceeded from a pure principle, nor were they performed for God's glory: issuing from a filthy fountain, the streams were polluted. How then could God *justify* me, or pronounce me up to the required standard? That standard is a perfect and perpetual conformity to the divine Law, for nothing less secures its award. Here again the wondrous riches of divine grace appear; God has not only blotted out all my iniquities, but has placed to my account a full and flawless righteousness, having imputed to me the perfect obedience of His incarnate Son: "Much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the *gift of righteousness* shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)...by the obedience of one shall many be made [i.e. legally constituted] righteous" (Rom 5:17, 19). When God effectually called thee, He clothed thee "with the robe of [Christ's] righteousness" (Isa 61:10), and that supplied an inalienable right to the inheritance.

What has just been pointed out is only another way of saying that He "hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus," or rather, is part exposition of those words. When God regenerates a soul, He gives him faith; and through its exercise on Christ, that which disqualified him for eternal glory (his guilt and pollution) is removed, and a sure title to heaven is bestowed. God's effectual call is both our qualification for and an earnest of glory. Our glorification was the grand end which God had in view from the beginning; and all that He does for us and works in us here are but means and prerequisites unto the same. Next unto His own glory therein, our glorification is God's supreme design in electing and calling us: "God hath from the beginning chosen you...to the obtaining of *the glory* of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Th 2:13-14). "Moreover whom he did predestinate...them he also glorified" (Rom 8:30). "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luk 12:32). "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mat 25:34)—that is, heaven, His eternal glory. Nothing less than that was what the God of all grace set His heart upon as the portion of His dear children. Hence, when our election is first made manifest by the effectual call, God is so intent upon this glory that He then gives us a title thereto.

Thomas Goodwin gave a striking illustration of what we have just said from God's dealings with David. While he was but a mere shepherd-boy, God sent Samuel to anoint him king in the open view of his father and brethren (1Sa 16:13), and by that solemn act, invested him with a visible and irrevocable *right* of the kingdom of Judah and Israel. His actual possession thereof God delayed for years; nevertheless, his divine title thereto was then bestowed, and God engaged Himself to make the same good unto him, and swore not to repent of it; and then suffered Saul (the figure of Satan!) and all the power of his kingdom, and almost the whole of his subjects, to do their worst—to demonstrate that no counsel of His can be thwarted. Though for a season, David was exposed like a partridge on the mountains, and had to flee from place to place; nevertheless, he was miraculously preserved by God and ultimately brought to the Throne. So at regeneration, God anoints us with His Spirit, sets us apart, and gives a title to everlasting glory; and though afterwards, He lets loose fierce enemies upon us, and leaves us to the hardest of wrestlings and fightings with them, yet His mighty hand is over us, succouring and strengthening, or restoring if we be temporarily overcome and taken captive.

God has not called us unto any evanescent, but unto an *eternal* glory, estating us into the same at the new birth. At that time, a spiritual life is communicated to the soul: a life which is indestructible, incorruptible, and therefore everlasting. More, we then received "the spirit of glory" (1Pe 4:14) as "the earnest of our inheritance" (Eph 1:13-14). Further, the image of Christ is progressively wrought in our hearts during this life, and that is styled "glory" (2Co 3:18). Not only are we thereby "made...meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," but we are then put into an eternal *right* of glory, for by regeneration or effectual calling, God begets us unto the inheritance (1Pe 1:3-4): a title thereto is given us at that moment which holds good for ever. That title is ours both by the covenant-stipulation of God and the testamentary bequest of the Mediator (Heb 9:15). "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God" (Rom 8:17). "Put these three things together: first, that that glory we are called unto is in itself eternal; second, that that person who is called hath a degree of that glory begun in him that shall never die or perish;

third, that he hath a right unto the eternity of it, and that from the time of his calling, and the argument is complete” (T. Goodwin). That “eternal glory” is “the exceeding riches of his grace” which He will lavish upon His people in the endless ages to come (Eph 2:6-7); and as those verses tell us, even now we are—legally and federal-ly—“[seated] together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

“Who hath called us unto his eternal glory” (1Pe 5:10). God has not only called us into a state of grace—“this grace wherein we stand”—but unto a state of glory, *His* eternal glory, so that we “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2). The two things are inseparably connected: “The LORD will give grace and glory” (Psa 84:11). Although we are the persons to be glorified by it, it is His glory which is put upon us. Obviously so, for we are wholly poor empty creatures, whom God will fill with the riches of His glory. Truly, it is “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10) who does this for us. Neither creation or providence—nor even His actings unto the elect in this life—fully display the abundance of His grace: only in heaven will its utmost height be seen and enjoyed. It is there the ultimate manifestation of God’s glory will be made, and which we shall behold for ever—the very honour and ineffable splendour with which Deity invests Himself. That glory is to be communicated to His people, so that “then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Mat 13:43)—the glory of God will so completely fill and irradiate their souls that it will break forth from their bodies. Then will the eternal purpose of God be fully accomplished. Then will all our fondest hopes be perfectly realized. Then will God be “all in all” (1Co 15:28).

“Who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus”; or better, “*in* Christ Jesus”—that is, by virtue of our union with Him. The glory pertains to Him as He is our Head, and is communicated to us only as we are His members. Christ is the first and grand Proprietary of it, and He shares it with those whom the Father gave to Him (Joh 17:22, 24). Christ Jesus is the Centre of all the divine counsels, for His eternal counsel “he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph 3:11). “For all the promises of God in him [Christ] are yea, and in him Amen” (2Co 1:20). God has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3). We are heirs of God because we are “joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17). As all the divine purposes of grace were made in Christ, so they are effectually performed and established by Him, as is clear from the words of Zacharias, for when he blessed God for having “raised up an horn of salvation,” he added: “To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant” (Luk 1:68-72). We are “preserved in Jesus Christ” (Jude :1). As God has “called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1Co 1:9)—that is, to be partakers (in our proportion) of all that He is partaker of Himself, so has He entered into possession of the same in our names to keep it for us (Heb 6:20).

Does it seem too good to be true that “the God of all grace” is *your* God? Are there times when you doubt if he *has* personally called you? Does it surpass your faith, Christian reader, that God has actually called you unto His eternal glory? Then let us leave this closing thought with you: it is by and in *Christ Jesus*! His grace is stored up in Christ (Joh 1:14, 16), the effectual call comes by Christ (Rom 1:6), the eternal glory is reached through Him. Was not *His* blood sufficient to purchase everlasting blessings for the hell-deserving? Then look not at your unworthiness, but at the infinite worthiness and merits of Him who is the Friend of publicans and sinners. Whether our faith takes it in or not, infallibly certain it is that His prayer will be answered, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory” (Joh 17:24). That beholding will not be a transient one such as the apostles enjoyed on the mount of transfiguration, but for *evermore*. As it has often been pointed out, when the queen of Sheba contrasted her brief visit to Solomon’s court with the privilege of those who resided there, she exclaimed: “Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand *continually* before thee” (1Ki 10:8; 2Ch 9:7). Such will be our *blissful* lot throughout the endless ages.

The Life and Times of Joshua

46. Strategy, Part 3

“And it shall be, when ye have taken the city, that ye shall set the city on fire: according to the commandment of the LORD shall ye do. See, I have commanded you” (Jos 8:8). In those words, Joshua completed the orders given to thirty thousand of his men who were to lie in ambush behind Ai. He had already assigned the position they were to occupy. He had bidden them to be all of them ready to strike the blow while the iron was hot. He had ex-

plained the part which the major portion of his army would play, making their own task much easier. He had assured them the LORD God would deliver the city into their hands. And now he informed them how they must make a thorough job of and complete the task allotted them. Only half of it was accomplished when the city was captured: it must be reduced to ashes. This teaches us that there is to be no relaxing in the performance of duty when God has granted our efforts a measure of success, but a continuing to render full obedience unto *all* His commandments. Much easier said than done, declares the reader. True, we reply, but enabling grace is available if we seek it wholeheartedly. When the LORD is leased to prosper our labours, instead of a complacent slackening on our part, it should serve as a spur and encouragement to attempt yet greater things in His name.

Observe the time-mark again: “*When ye have taken the city, that ye shall set the city on fire.*” There was to be no tardiness in executing the orders given them. Each of us should be able, by divine grace, to aver, “I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments” (Psa 119:60). When our duty is clear, it should be performed with alacrity. The more unpleasant it be, the sooner it is done, the better. Least of all can we afford to trifle with sin or indulge our evil lusts: no quarter must be shown our enemies—Ai must be completely destroyed! The revealed will of God is to be complied with without any reservation on our part. As full obedience was here required from Joshua’s men, not only to take the city, but to destroy it, nothing less is required from the soldiers of the Lord Jesus. There was a needs be for these men to carry out their part of the plan promptly, for the sight of the smoking houses would not only dismay and panic the king of Ai and his forces (Jos 8:20), but was to serve as a signal to Joshua that his “ambush” had made themselves masters of the city, and therefore, that he and his company might turn round and fall upon their pursuers. Thus we see that tardiness on our part acts as a hindrance to our brethren!

“Joshua therefore sent them forth: and they went to lie in ambush, and abode between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai” (Jos 8:9). It speaks well for the spirit and loyalty of these men that they made no objection to their leader’s orders: that in view of the disaster which overtook their brethren on a former occasion (Jos 7:4-5), they raised no demur. Nor did they complain at being deprived of their rest through being sent away “by night” (Jos 8:3). It is also to be recognized that the position assigned unto *them* was the real post of danger, for, isolated as they would be from the main body of Israel’s army, they ran the imminent hazard (humanly speaking) of being discovered by the enemy, and cut off and annihilated by them. It therefore says much for their courage, too, that they promptly complied with Joshua’s orders. From the divine side of things, we may perceive again that when God works, He always works at *both* ends of the line: having assured Joshua of the certainty of victory, the LORD also wrought in these men “both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13), by inclining them to fulfil their mission faithfully. Incidentally, we may observe the minute accuracy of Scripture, as seen in the topographical harmony between this verse and Genesis 12:8, Bethel and Ai being in close proximity.

“But Joshua lodged that night among the people” (Jos 8:9). He did not accompany the thirty thousand, for there was other important work to engage his attention. It was his evident duty to be with the principal body of his force, that he might maintain their morale, for only a day or two previously, “the hearts of the people melted, and became as water” when tidings of the initial failure reached them (Jos 7:4-5). He would therefore seek to inspire them with confidence and courage, and turn their minds from the defeat unto the LORD’s promise. Not only must discipline be enforced, but there were duties to be discharged which he could not suitably delegate to others, for he had to supervise all the arrangements which needed to be made for the morrow. Yet there is something more here. There is no reason to believe that Joshua had ever done otherwise: nowhere else is such a statement made. Why, then, this particular emphasis: “Joshua lodged *that* night among the people” (Jos 8:9)? We believe it is because the Holy Spirit looked forward to the Antitype. The Lord Jesus was the homeless Stranger here, and had “not where to lay his head” (Mat 8:20; Luk 9:58); spending His nights upon the mountain side (Joh 7:53 and 8:1). So far as we are aware, the Gospels record but one exception: the last night but one before His crucifixion, Christ lodged with His friends at Bethany (Mar 14:3 and compare 14:10 with Joh 13:2)!

“And Joshua rose up early in the morning, and numbered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai” (Jos 8:10). As there was to be no slackness on the part of those whom he had sent away to ambush Ai, so there was no lazing or giving way to self-indulgence by their commander, but the setting before his men a pattern of alacrity and intensesness. “Those who would maintain their spiritual conflicts must not love their ease”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714). The pastor should set his members an example of earnestness, diligence, and zeal. There was no neglecting of his duty on Joshua’s part, no treating casually the approaching engagement. All was done decently and in order, in preparation for the forthcoming march. By his “numbering of the people,” we understand his marshalling of the host in their proper ranks, seeing to it that each man was in his correct place under his own tribal standard. Then he *and* the tribal heads took the positions of command. Pastors must have the co-operation and support of their church officers; and they in turn inspire the rank and file with courage and unselfish-

ness. It is to be observed that the “elders” were here accorded a position of *honour*, for those who humble themselves before God (Jos 7:6) are in due time exalted by Him.

“And all the people, even the people of war that were with him, went up, and drew nigh, and came before the city, and pitched on the north side of Ai: now there was a valley between them and Ai” (Jos 8:11). The whole fighting force of Israel, having been duly mustered, left the camp at Gilgal, where the women, children, and other non-combatants would remain until the return of the army. Once again, we mark the geographical accord of the statement that they “went up” with Genesis 12:8, where, quite incidentally, we are told that Bethel and Ai were situate in a mountainous region. They “drew nigh, and came before the city,” which was in fulfillment of the agreement Joshua had entered into with the thirty thousand (Jos 8:5)—foreshadowing the fidelity of the Captain of our salvation to fulfil His engagements and make good His promises. It is blessed to see how the LORD overcame the fears of Joshua’s followers (Jos 7:5) and wrought in them a willingness to accompany their leader—which is to be regarded as a part of His gracious answer to the prayer of Joshua 7:7-12! The statement that “there was a valley between them and Ai” (Jos 8:11) is not without spiritual significance—they lined up their forces on *high* ground, and Christians must regard themselves as “partakers of the *heavenly* calling” (Heb 3:1) and conduct themselves accordingly if they would be successful in the good fight of faith.

“And he took about five thousand men, and set them to lie in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city” (Jos 8:12). No hurried assault was made upon the enemy by Joshua, but first an orderly disposition of his forces was arranged. It seems strange that some of the commentators should boggle over this verse and be in doubt as to whether or not the five thousand men here spoken of were drawn from the thirty thousand, or were another company, for to us the narrative makes it quite plain that they were a separate force which was now assigned to another position. Joshua’s design therein was evident, for his project served a twofold purpose: it cut off Bethel sending any reinforcements to Ai, and it prevented the forces of Ai escaping in that direction when Joshua turned round and fell upon them. It was what strategists would term a flanking movement. Therein we behold the *thoroughness* of Joshua’s preparations, notwithstanding the divine promise which he had received—“I have given into thy hand the king of Ai,” etc. (Jos 8:1)—he took every possible precaution and spared no effort on his part to ensure victory. In other words, he made the fullest possible use of all the means at his disposal. And we are required to do likewise.

“And when they had set the people, even all the host that was on the north of the city, and their liers in wait on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley” (Jos 8:13). After their uphill march from Gilgal, Joshua decided that his forces should remain stationary until the morning—another illustration of the important principle, “he that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa 28:16). But though he had risen up early that morning, there was no taking of his ease by Joshua that night. No furloughs are granted the soldiers of Jesus Christ, for their enemies take none. Our spiritual warfare calls for incessant alertness. How Joshua spent that night we are not told. Some think it was to make a reconnaissance—to ascertain the lay of the land, its roads, etc.—but that was hardly likely by night. Others suppose he spent the time in prayer, asking God’s blessing on the forthcoming fight, yet advance no reason why he should leave the camp in order to do so. In any case, it was a bold act on his part to venture alone so near unto Ai—an act in accord with the LORD’s words to him in Joshua 1:9. Turning from the type to the Antitype, we have here what confirms our remarks on verse 9. Our Lord’s last night before the great conflict was spent alone in “the valley” of *humiliation*—from Gethsemane to Pilate’s judgment hall!

“And it came to pass, when the king of Ai saw it, that they hastened and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain; but he wist not that there were liers in ambush against him behind the city” (Jos 8:14). From the opening words of this verse, it seems clear that whatever Joshua had done that night in the valley, it was now *visible* to those in Ai as soon as day broke, and that it at once attracted their attention: something which appears to have constituted a challenge to them—reminding us again of our Lord, who so far from hiding from His enemies, boldly “went forth” to meet those who had come to apprehend Him (Joh 18:4). Their “[rising] up early” indicates their bloodthirstiness and eagerness for the fray, doubting not that an easy conquest would be theirs; possibly they thought to spring a surprise upon Israel by a dawn attack. Alas, how often *are we* surprised and overcome through failure to be constantly upon our guard. It is while Christ’s servants “sleep” that the enemy sows his tares (Mat 13:25). There is some difficulty in determining the meaning of “went out against Israel to battle...at a time appointed” (Jos 8:14): possibly it signifies the same hour as when they were successful against Israel on a former occasion (Jos 7:5), deeming it a “lucky” one.

“But he wist not that there were liers in ambush against him behind the city.” That appears quite a commonplace statement, yet in reality, it is far otherwise. The success of Israel’s strategy depended upon their men in am-

bush being undetected; and that, in turn, depended upon the secret operations of God upon and within the king of Ai. It seems well-nigh impossible that no less than thirty thousand should remain concealed within so short a distance of the city, and not merely for a few minutes, but for forty-eight hours. It was a *miracle*, as truly so as the sun's remaining stationary at the command of Joshua—the tenth chapter. It was due to the power of Jehovah, who prevented the king of Ai from sending out scouts and discovering the hostile force in his rear. "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Pro 21:1)—sometimes to act wisely; at others, foolishly; sometimes to deal kindly with His people (Ezr 6:22); at others, to hate them, as in the case of Pharaoh. What is before us in our present passage supplies a striking illustration of the dominion of God over all and His full control of the wicked, preventing this heathen monarch from taking the most elementary precautions for the safeguarding of his city and people.

What has just been pointed out is far too little attended unto today even by the people of God, that the almighty Governor of the world exerts a *restraining influence* upon the wicked, and that for the good of His people. Yet Scripture records many specific examples of the same. Thus when Abraham sojourned in Gerar, and from fear denied that Sarah was his wife, her honour was (humanly speaking) placed in the utmost jeopardy—for the king of that place sent and "took her," yet "had not come near her," for, as God said to him, "for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her" (Gen 20:1-6). Had not the LORD—secretly but effectually—interposed, Abimelech had grievously wronged Sarah. Ah, my reader, how often hath thy gracious God withheld the wicked from touching thee—burglars from breaking into thy house, etc. Again we say, the restraining operations of the Most High are all too little perceived by us. Another notable instance is that of Balaam. He was hired by the king of Moab to curse Israel; and it is clear from the divine narrative that he was anxious to do so, that he might earn "the wages of unrighteousness" (2Pe 2:15). But the LORD prevented him, so that he had to acknowledge, "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?...he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it" (Num 23:8, 20).

When Jacob was recounting the wrongs he had suffered at the hands of Laban, his father-in-law, who had deceived him and changed his wages ten times, he added, "But God suffered him not to hurt me" (Gen 31:7), and received a further proof thereof in the immediate sequel (Gen 31:29), when the LORD again held Laban back from venting his anger upon him. The brethren of Joseph hated him, and "conspired against him to slay him" (Gen 37:18), but Jehovah interposed and thwarted their designs. Nor is this restraining power of God limited to individuals, but is exerted upon whole communities and nations. Thus we are told: "The terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob" (Gen 35:5). Centuries later, the Psalmist was moved to make reference to that phenomenon, "When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it. When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; He suffered no man to do them wrong" (Psa 105:12-14), bridling their lusts and causing the wolf to dwell with the lamb and the leopard to lie down with the kid. "Neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year" (Exo 34:24). When the menfolk were no longer present to defend their farms, God restrained the covetous desires and designs of the surrounding heathen.

We consider that what has been alluded to in the last two paragraphs casts much light upon the incident which is here before us, that it was due to the restraining operations of God that the king of Ai failed to send out scouts in all directions ere he led forth the whole of his army from the city, and left it defenceless. Instead, "they hasted and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle" (Jos 8:14). Infatuated by his previous success, filled with self-confidence, he rushed forward to complete disaster. Thus it was with Pharaoh and his hosts when they pursued the Israelites through the Red Sea and perished therein. Before God destroys the wicked, He first gives them up to a spirit of madness. Should these lines be read by a Christless soul who is yet in his sins, we beg him to pause and heed the solemn warning which is here presented to him. Let not his previous immunity from divine judgment fill him with a false sense of security: "They are most in danger who are least aware of it"—M. Henry. The king of Ai was blind to his own interests—are not *you* the same? He failed to take the most obvious precautions—are not *you* guilty of similar folly: hastening unto eternity and utterly unprepared to meet your God? O "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isa 55:6). "To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness" (Heb 3:7-8).

The Doctrine of Revelation

30. In Glory, Part 3

Though our specific subject be that revelation with which God favours His people in heaven, yet because the great majority of them pass thereto through the door of *death*, and since quite a number of our readers have been denied the comforting teaching of Scripture thereon, we have taken the opportunity to write upon the same. We come now to consider some of the *accompaniments* of a Christian's death. Among these first place must be given unto *the presence of the Lord* with him at that time. While it is blessedly true that He never leaves nor forsakes them, being with them "alway" (Mat 28:20), yet He is with them in a *special manner* at certain crucial times. This idea seems to be clearly borne out by the statement that God is "a *very* present help in trouble" (Psa 46:1), as though He draws nearest of all to us in the seasons of acutest need. Do we not have an illustration and exemplification of that fact when the three Hebrews were cast alive into Babylon's furnace, and the king beheld Another walking with them in the midst of the fire, "and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" said he (Dan 3:25)?

Again, has not the LORD declared: "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee" (Isa 43:1-2). How blessedly that was demonstrated at the Red Sea, where God so gloriously showed Himself strong on behalf of His people; and again at the Jordan, which was more definitely a figure of the safe passage of believers through death. Was not the passing of Israel dry shod through Jordan into Canaan a blessed adumbration of the saints' harmless exit from this world and entrance into their everlasting inheritance? As Jehovah manifested Himself most conspicuously on those occasions, so—whether perceived by them or not—He is in a most particular sense present with His beloved ones as they walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Said the Psalmist, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psa 23:4). Thy rod and Thy staff: "by which Thou governest and rulest Thy flock—the emblems of Thy sovereignty and of Thy gracious care"—Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892).

The meaning of those figures is plain: it is by His Word and Spirit that the good Shepherd governs and cares for His sheep, and which are their "comfort" in the hour of their supreme crisis. That the believer *is granted* a special supply of the divine Comforter at that hour can scarcely be doubted. "The Spirit was given us for that purpose, as a brother is said to be 'born for adversity' (Pro 17:17). Certainly, He who was given for a comfort to thee all through thy life long, and hath delivered thee out of all thy distresses and fears, will carry thee through this; and though thy heart should for a while fail thee, together with thy flesh, yet God and His Spirit will not fail thee (Psa 73:26). The interest of the Spirit's own glory moves Him. No captain rejoices more to bring his vessel home into harbour, after he has sailed it safely through so many storms, than the Holy Spirit doth rejoice to bring a soul He hath wrought upon and who was committed to His trust, safe to heaven"—Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680). Let it be noted that "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" is given not only in life, but also in death (Phi 1:19-20)!

2. *The soul rid of sin.* There shall in no wise enter into the new Jerusalem "any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination" (Rev 21:27). No serpent shall find admittance into the celestial paradise, nor will any who are still polluted by him. Not only the holiness of God, but the happiness of the saints also requires that they be freed from all evil ere they enter heaven, or otherwise their bliss would be marred. Their communion with and delighting themselves in the Lord is hindered down here by the sin which still cleaves to them. From the moment of the new birth until the moment a regenerated person leaves this world, "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh," and since those two principles of action are "contrary the one to the other," it follows that he "cannot do the things that [he] would" (Gal 5:17); and daily has he occasion to lament, "O wretched man that I am!" (Rom 7:24). Even when the power of God subdues the ragings of sin within His children, they are not delivered from its inbeing. But when the divine summons to the soul comes to depart hence, it is entirely delivered from inbred corruption. The conflict is then ended; the victory over sin is complete. No propensity to evil remains, no guilt of conscience or defilement shall ever again be contracted.

"Although the whole troop of evils, like the army of Egypt, will pursue me (as it did Israel) to the borders of the sea, death ends the warfare—"The Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever" (Exo 14:13). O the inconceivable blessedness which immediately opens at death to every redeemed and regenerated child of God!"—Robert Hawker (1753-1827). Yet it is not death itself which effects this blessed purification of the soul. That is evident not only from the cases of Enoch and Elijah, who were caught up to heaven without dying, but of those saints, too, who will be alive on earth at the personal return of Christ (1Co 15:51; 1Th 4:17). No, it is pro-

duced by the supernatural operation of God. It is the Lord Himself fitting His “temple” (2Co 6:16) for His fuller and final possession. It is to be noted that Christ cleansed the temple at Jerusalem *twice*: at the beginning of His ministry (Joh 2:13-17) and again, near the close thereof (Luk 19:45), which adumbrated His twofold cleansing of the hearts of His redeemed. At conversion, they are purged from the love, the guilt, and the dominion of sin; at death, they are delivered from its very inbeing and presence.

3. *Enlarging of their faculties.* We regard that expression, “The spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb 12:23), as denoting not only their being purged of all evil and misery, but also of their being capacitated to take in immeasurably more good and happiness than ever they did previously. Sin has not only greatly impaired the vitality and functions of the body, but it has considerably injured the health and defiled and limited the faculties of the soul; and therefore, the latter will experience a grand elevation when rid of the incubus of sin. As the resurrected body will be possessed of powers far transcending its present ones, so when the soul is glorified, its faculties will be much greater: the understanding no longer beclouded, the affections purified, the will emancipated. In its present state, the soul—even when engaged in spiritual acts—is sadly cramped and hampered; but upon its dismissal from the body, the Holy Spirit will strengthen, enlarge, and elevate the faculties of the soul, raising them up to a suitability and harmony with their new life in heaven. Then will the believer “know even as [he is] known” (1Co 13:12).

It was, we believe, to this gracious operation of the Spirit that David referred in Psalm 23:5, where, after describing his passage “through the valley of the shadow of death” and before mentioning his dwelling “in the house of the LORD for ever” (Psa 23:4, 6), he declared: “Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.” In Old Testament typology, “oil” was the outstanding emblem of the Holy Spirit (compare 1Jo 2:27); and as the Lord Jesus was anointed by the Spirit at the beginning of His ministry (Act 10:38) and again at the completion of it (Psa 45:7; Act 2:33), so the believer is anointed by Him first at conversion (2Co 1:21-22), and then receives a fuller infusion of Him at death. Then it is that mortality is “swallowed up of life” (2Co 5:4)—words which are “as applicable unto the condition of the soul then, as at the resurrection, they are applicable to the condition of the body”—T. Goodwin. As that eminent expositor pointed out: “In 1 Corinthians 15, where the change of the body is insisted on, Paul says, ‘For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality’ (verses 53-54), but here he says, ‘swallowed up of life’ (2Co 5:4), which is the proper happiness of the soul.” We will condense below the rest of his remarks thereon.

“Though the soul in the substance of it be immortal, yet take the condition of life which it now leads, and it may be most truly said to have a ‘mortality’ adhering to it; yea, inhering in it as the adjunct of it. There is a mortal state the person is in. There is an animal life, as one calls it; there is a dying life, a life of death, in which as to a great part the soul now lives; and it is this present state, or this dying life of the soul, which causes believers to ‘groan, being burdened’ (2Co 5:4), and which the apostle here terms ‘mortality,’ but which he assures us, at its dismissal from the body, will be ‘swallowed up of life’—that which is life only, and only deserves the name of *life*: the true and eternal life, life indeed. For what is life? ‘And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent’ (Joh 17:3). It is a peculiar life of living in God, as knowing Him and seeing Him face to face.” The soul which hitherto had been so trammelled by sin shall then be taken into a life so rich, so full, so overflowingly abundant, as to rid it in a moment of all misery and imperfection, freeing and perfecting all its faculties.

4. *Perfuming of their persons.* This, too, is intimated in Psalm 23—a part of which we have somewhat anticipated. It seems to us that each experience described in verses 4-6 receives a general fulfillment throughout the life of a saint, and a particular one at his death. Thus, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death” well expresses his journey through the wilderness, for though men term this world “the land of the living,” it would be far more accurate to designate it, “the land of the dying,” for the shadow of the grave is cast heavily across it; nevertheless, such language also suitably describes the believer’s passage through the article of death. “I will fear no evil”; why should he? A “valley,” in contrast with a “mountain,” suggests *easy* travel; and a “shadow” cannot harm him! Moreover, the “shadow” necessarily presupposes the presence of *light*. Unbelief may talk of “the dark valley of death”; not so David. It was far otherwise with him: “The light of life” (Joh 8:12) was there, as his words acknowledge, “For *thou* art with me”—to support, to guard, to comfort, to rejoice. “With me” now in a peculiarly intimate and special way.

The one present was Jehovah, whom David knew and owned as “my shepherd” (Psa 23:1) in the opening verse. But observe a striking alteration in his language in the latter part of the Psalm. In the first three verses, all the pronouns referring to the LORD are in the third person: “*He* maketh me to lie down in green pastures: *he* leadeth me...*He* restoreth my soul.” But in the last three verses, David changes to the second person: “*Thou* art with me; *thy* rod [not ‘His’ rod] and *thy* staff...*Thou* preparest a table before me...*thou* anointest my head.” Why the varia-

tion? Ah, there is something inexpressibly blessed in that change. During life, the believer speaks *of* the LORD—“*he* leadeth me” (Psa 23:2-3); but as he enters the valley of the shadow, he speaks *to* the LORD, for He is there by his side. How much we miss through our careless and hurried reading of God’s Word! How we need to weigh and ponder every jot and tittle in it. Sometimes the tense of the verb—at others, the number of the noun—marks that which is most important for us to observe; here, the change of pronouns brings out a precious line of truth.

Having acknowledged the presence of the good Shepherd in the valley, and the comfort derived from His gracious care, the Psalmist next went on to say: “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies” (Psa 23:5). In Scripture, the “table” always speaks of *fellowship*, and that of the most intimate kind (Luk 22:21); and here, it tells of the Lord’s communion with the dying saint, and the loving and full provision He has made to supply his every need. His “enemies” may refer to the forces of evil, who would make their final assault upon him if they could. But they are prevented from doing so, for God has promised “the end of that man *is peace*” (Psa 37:37). His enemies are not only thwarted, but mocked by the LORD in this “table.” Then as he emerges from the valley, the believer exclaims, “Thou anointest my head with oil” (Psa 23:5)—as Moses did the heads of the priests as they were on the point of entering upon their tabernacle privileges and duties (Exo 28:41; 29:7), thereby preparing them for the presence of God. Thus the Redeemer puts upon the soul His own blessed fragrance as it enters into the courts above. Then David exultantly declared, “and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever” (Psa 23:6). Thus, this remarkable psalm portrays the saint’s happy life (verses 1-3), comfortable death (verses 4-5), and blissful eternity (verse 6).

5. *An angelic convoy.* This is clear from our Lord’s statement in Luke 16:22: “And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” Abraham is “the father of all them that believe” (Rom 4:11), and is here shown to be in paradise. His “bosom” speaks of the place of peculiar privilege (Joh 1:18; 13:23): the once-despised beggar—counted unworthy of a seat at the rich man’s table on earth—is accorded a position of honour on high, placed next to the eminent patriarch. The same gracious provision has God made for the safe conduct of each of His people in their journey from earth to heaven: “For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in *all* thy ways” (Psa 91:11). Angelic ministry occupies, most probably, a far more extensive place in the lives of believers than any of them realize. “These encamp about them in the time of their life, and surely will not depart in the day of their death. These happy ministering spirits are attendants on the Lord’s bride, and will doubtless carry her safely home to His house. The Captain of the saints’ salvation is the Captain of this holy guard: He was their Guide even unto death, and He will be their Guide through it too”—Thomas Boston (1676-1732).

What we are now considering presents another most blessed, though little-known, contrast between the death of the righteous and the death of the unrighteous. The souls of the former are carried to heaven by the holy angels; the souls of the latter are seized by demons and taken to hell. In Luke 12:20, Christ declared that God would say to the rich boaster, “Thou fool, this night do *they* require thy soul” (margin, and see Greek). Upon which, after affirming “the devils take others’ souls away,” T. Goodwin the Puritan, asked: “Who are they?” And made answer, “Hell is a prison” (1Pe 3:19), and the Judge delivers to the officer, and the officer casts into prison (Luk 12:58). This ‘officer’ is the devil that hales souls to that prison.” In this convoy or guard of angels for the redeemed, saints are conformed to their Head, when He was “carried up to heaven” (Luk 24:51). “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them...Thou hast ascended on high” (Psa 68:17-18). “Angels were the chariots in which Christ rode, and these the guard that attends believers”—John Gill (1697-1771). Thus, the soul of the saint is conducted *in state* from his earthly house to his heavenly abode.

Immediately after death, without any interval of waiting either long or short, the ransomed soul is inducted into paradise. The heir of glory enters at once upon his eternal inheritance: “Absent from the body, and...present with the Lord” (2Co 5:8). This needs emphasizing in certain quarters, where the idea seems to obtain that the glorification of the saint’s soul awaits the time of the glorification of his body. We do not like to see Protestants employing the term “intermediate state” (in contrast with “the eternal state”), for it savours too much of the imaginary “limbo” of the Romanists; greatly preferring the “disembodied” and the “resurrection state.” Immediately at death, “the spirits of just men [are] made perfect” (Heb 12:23) in knowledge, in holiness, in blessedness. Mortality is then “swallowed up of life” (2Co 5:4): as T. Goodwin expressed it, the soul “is now all life and joy in God the Fountain of life.” As we shall yet seek to show, the request of Christ in John 17:24, receives its fulfillment in the experience of His redeemed as soon as they leave this earth—the beatific vision is then theirs.

In the very moment of his dismissal from the body, the Saviour receives His redeemed into the actual possession of that eternal heritage which He has purchased for him. It was this reception for which the expiring Stephen

made request when he said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Act 7:59), and as T. Goodwin pointed out: “He not only receives it into His own bosom, but He brings it to God and presents it to Him with a joy infinitely more abounding than can be in us. Then it is that Christ is glorified and rejoiceth in us, and so we may be said rather to die to the Lord and His interest than to ours.” Then it is that He “sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied.” While at a later date, Christ will present the entire company of His people to Himself “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Eph 5:27), yet He does so to each individual member of it at death, as His words to the dying thief clearly implied. Oh, what praise is due unto Him for having extracted the sting from death and robbed it of all its terrors! What cause have we to exclaim, “Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Co 15:57)!

What has been before us should surely make it easier to bear the trials through which a Christian may now be passing: at longest, they are but for a moment in comparison with the eternity of bliss awaiting him. How faith should feed upon and hope anticipate the same! With what contentment should such a prospect fill us. What little reason have we to envy the deluded worshippers of Mammon, even though such now be clothed in purple and fine linen and fare sumptuously every day. How the contemplation of what God has prepared for them that love Him should wean their hearts from the perishing baubles of this world. How the certainty of being “with Christ” for ever should make them desire to depart from this scene. How the knowledge that at death, they will be for ever done with sin and sorrow should make them willing to die. Why should any believer be backward in longing to go unto the eternal Lover of his soul, especially when he learns from Scripture what full provision God has made for his passage to Him to be an easy and pleasant one? Oh, that all our ambitions and longings may be swallowed up in that of the Psalmist’s: “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD” (Psa 27:4).

Glorious Sinai, Part 6

How long the honoured leaders and official representatives of Israel were privileged to continue eating and drinking before the LORD, we know not; but after a while, Moses was required to detach himself from them and resume his mediatorial position. “And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them” (Exo 24:12). Apparently, Moses was here called to ascend to a higher level on glorious Sinai, and receive from Jehovah the Ten Commandments which He had first spoken in the hearing of the people, and which He had now recorded with His own finger in more permanent form. A special honour was thereby placed upon the Moral Law which was not accorded the “judgments” or statutory enactments mentioned in chapters 21 to 23, nor to the ritual institutions which were given subsequently. Rightly did Thomas Scott (1747-1821) point out, “This intimated that the Rule of duty remains unchangeably the same, though the covenant of works is broken.” In other words, the Moral Law is lastingly binding upon unregenerate and regenerate alike, notwithstanding the violation of the covenant made with Adam as the federal head of his race.

“And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God” (Exo 24:13). Moses complied promptly, hesitating not—after the recent favour the LORD had so signally shown His people—to approach still nearer the divine presence. This time, he took with him Joshua his minister, whom God had chosen to be his successor. He had previously been singled out for special favour (Exo 17:9-14); and here, he is granted a further privilege above his fellows. It is to be noted that Sinai is designated, “the mount of God,” because it was here that He vouchsafed His people such glorious manifestations of Himself and revelations of His will for them. “And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them” (Exo 24:14). Thus, the two men who had supported him by upholding his hands in Exodus 17:12 were now appointed by Moses to see to the ordering of the congregation during his absence from them, and being held responsible for the maintenance of its government and peace.

“And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel” (Exo 24:15-17). Well might we denominate this unique and glowing scene the Old Testament mount of transfiguration, for one who was upon the New Testament mount of transfiguration spoke of it as “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” being “eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2Pe 1:16); and did not the glorious power and majesty of Jehovah appear here at Sinai when He set up His Throne in Israel’s midst and organized them into His kingdom? For six days Moses, accompanied by Joshua, continued in this elevated station, ere the

mediator himself was bidden to approach the summit of the mount. During that time, the divine Shekinah or visible token of the LORD's presence rested like a crown of glory on the apex of Sinai—the nation at its base beholding its blazing splendour. In appearance, it was “like devouring fire” (Exo 24:17) intensely bright and scintillating, awe-inspiring, yet a magnificent sight.

“And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights” (Exo 24:18). Nor are we left in ignorance of how that time was spent: he was favoured with further gracious communications from the LORD which had in view the blessing and good of His dear people. Part at least of those communications is recorded in the next seven chapters—Exodus 25-31. From them, we learn that God made known unto His servant that He purposed to take up His abode in Israel's midst, and therefore, that He would have them provide a habitation for Him: “And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them” (Exo 25:8). Full directions were given concerning its structure, dimensions, furnishing, etc. We do not propose to digress and comment upon the same, but merely make three brief remarks. First, the materials for the tabernacle were to be *voluntarily* supplied by the people. No levy was made upon them, no tax demanded from them; instead, an offering was to be brought unto the LORD “of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart” (Exo 25:2)! Let *that* be duly noted by those who are so fond of drawing contrasts between the Mosaic and Christian eras.

What crass ignorance is it which affirms that God dealt with the Hebrews on radically different principles from those which regulate His dealings with His people in the present “dispensation.” They who so aver do err, “not knowing the scriptures” (Mat 22:29). There was no “legal” compulsion for the children of Israel to contribute supplies for the tabernacle: rather were their offerings to proceed from gratitude and love, as an unconstrained expression of their devotion unto and delight in the LORD. What clearer proof could be given that under His government the people of the theocracy were dealt with *in grace*—yet a grace which ever reigns “through righteousness” (Rom 5:21) and produces holiness (Ti 2:11-12). Thus it was here: the grace of God working in the hearts of His redeemed, moving them to willingly provide the required materials. How blessedly divine grace wrought in this matter we learn from Exodus 35:21 and 36:5, where we are told, “the people bring much more than enough,” so that they had to be “restrained from bringing” (verse 6), so spontaneously and freely did they contribute.

Second, a word upon the divine appointment of *the priesthood*: “And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons” (Exo 28:1). Here again we behold the goodness of God, making provision not only for the upholding of His own honour, but the supply of their spiritual needs. They were still a people compassed with infirmity and offending in many things, but the selfsame grace which had *brought* them nigh unto the Holy One, here made provision for the *keeping* of them nigh. The priesthood was never designed to procure Israel's relationship to God, but to *maintain* the privileged one previously established. Typically, Aaron pointed to Christ as the great High Priest over the House of God (Heb 10:21), and his sons—“who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things” (Heb 8:5)—to the children of Christ as offerers to God of spiritual sacrifices (1Pe 2:5). Very striking is the “take thou unto thee Aaron...and his sons with him...that *he* [not “they”] may minister unto me” (Exo 28:1)—a blessed foreshadowing of the *union* between our great High Priest and the members of His House (Heb 3:6).

That the appointment of the Levitical priesthood was not a burden which the LORD laid upon Israel, but rather a special mark of His favour and a provision of love for the blessing of His people, is clear from the closing verses of Exodus 29. For immediately after the LORD's declaration: “And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office.” He added: “And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall *know* that I am the LORD their God”—“by His presence among them, by the blessings He had bestowed upon them, by His care of and kindness to them”—John Gill (1697-1771). “That brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God” (verses 44-46): “That they might be a free people, under the protection of their King and their God, all of which was a great encouragement to them, and an obligation on them to attend the service of the sanctuary and to obey the LORD in whatever He had enjoined or should command them”—John Gill.

Third, a “pattern” was set before Moses, after which the tabernacle and “all the instruments thereof, even so shall [be made]” (Exo 25:9). Full and minute instructions were supplied concerning the materials to be used, the size of each vessel, where it was to be placed; every board and pin was defined and even the colours of its curtains described. Nothing whatever was left to the wit or will of man. No less than seven times are we informed in the Word that Moses was to make this sanctuary for the LORD and everything in it in exact conformity to the model shown him (Act 7:44; Heb 8:5, etc.), because everything prefigured the person and perfections of *Christ*, and intimated that He would infallibly perform “the [eternal] purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his

own will” (Eph 1:11). Let it be pointed out, however, that nowhere in the Gospels did Christ promise to supply any such “pattern” after which His *local churches* were to be organized and regulated, and that there is no hint in the Epistles that such a pattern has been given. Had such *been* supplied, it would have been as clearly recognizable as the model set before Moses, and all who truly desired to please the LORD had conformed uniformly thereunto, leaving no place for the diversity or variety now obtaining.

While Moses was at the summit of Sinai with the LORD, the nation was acting most horribly at its base. Moses was absent from them for forty days, and that is the number of probation and *testing* (Mar 1:13). How the congregation conducted themselves during that interval is made known in Exodus 32. The key to what is recorded there is found in Acts 7:38-40: “This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness...whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us.” It was not only that they resented the lengthy absence of Moses, but had cast off their allegiance to Jehovah. Less than six weeks before they had heard Jehovah saying, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image” (Exo 20:3-4); and they had solemnly promised, “All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient” (Exo 24:7); and now they had blatantly trampled both of those commandments under their feet. The LORD acquainted His servant with this sad fact, and said: “Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them” (Exo 32:10).

It is clear from what follows that those words of God were a *testing* of Moses. And what a test! If ever an apparently hopeless situation confronted a servant of God, it was here. And, my reader, had God been dealing with Israel on the ground of nothing but “Law” (as the dispensationalists assert), strictly enforcing its demand and penalty according to unrelieved justice, the situation had been *utterly hopeless*. But Moses was better taught than our moderns, and at once betook himself to intercession. First, he appealed to the redeeming grace of God which had delivered His people from Egypt (Exo 32:11), then to the honour of His name (verse 12 and compare Joshua 7:9), and then to His covenant faithfulness (verse 13). And his intercession prevailed: “And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people” (verse 14). Those words are not to be understood absolutely, but as a divine condescension—God’s deigning to express Himself in *our* language: they signify that He had graciously answered the prayer of Moses. But such a thing was impossible had Israel been “under the law” in the sense that some imagine. In fact, it was a clear case of “mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (Jam 2:13)!

But how are we to explain what immediately follows Exodus 32:14? Is it not entirely inconsistent? No, complementary: though mercy be shown, the claims of holiness are not ignored. God forgave the penal consequences of their sin, but “thou tookest vengeance of their inventions” (Psalm 99:8). The sequel brings out more fully the perfections exercised by God in His governmental dealings with His people, and shows that, in this life, they are made to reap what they have sown. The typical mediator is now seen acting as the typical *judge*: not in consuming wrath, but in holy zeal correcting and chastening, as Christ is beheld in Revelation 1:13-16, with eyes “as a flame of fire” and His feet like burnished brass, inspecting and governing His churches. “And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses’ anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount” (Exo 32:19). In holy indignation he acted, just as Christ with “a scourge of small cords” (Joh 2:15) in His hand overthrew the tables of the money-changers who had defiled His Father’s House.

Next, he took the golden calf, burnt it in the fire, ground it to powder, strewed it upon the water, and made the people drink it (Exo 32:20). After interrogating Aaron, he bade those who were “on the LORD’S side” to come unto him at the gate of the camp; and, when all the sons of Levi responded, bade them take their swords and go through the camp and slay every man his brother, so that there fell that day three thousand men (Exo 32:26-28). God had been openly and grievously dishonoured, and a solemn demonstration must be made of His displeasure, the claims of holiness overriding all natural and sentimental considerations. That which is flagrantly dishonouring to God must be dealt with unsparingly. Yet righteousness *and* mercy met together even here: but a remnant was slain, that the nation at large might be brought to repentance. We cannot now trace out the process, but must look at the result. As the LORD had tested Moses (Exo 32:10), so the nation was put to the proof by His threat: “For I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people” (Exo 33:3). When they heard that, “they *mourned*” (verse 4).

The offending Israelites were moved to deep contrition; and in token of their humbling themselves before the LORD, “stripped themselves” of all outward adornments (verse 6). Next, Moses “took the [tent of meeting—for the tabernacle was not yet erected], and pitched it without the camp” and “every one which sought the LORD went out unto [it]” (verse 7). Very blessed was that: holiness forbade that Jehovah should enter the defiled camp, but grace provided a way for them to seek Him outside the camp. Next, Moses entered into the tent and “it came to pass, as

Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses” (verse 9). That “cloudy pillar was the visible symbol of the LORD’s presence (Exo 13:21), and its appearance *here* betokened His good will unto them. The effect of that upon the people was very blessed: “And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door” (Exo 33:10). The LORD was once more accorded His proper place. The false god (the golden calf) was repudiated; the true and living God was now worshipped. Thus were they, in infinite grace, brought back from their wandering, and made to bow in adoring gratitude before the manifested presence of Jehovah.

The immediate sequel is yet more wonderful and blessed: “And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto *his* friend” (verse 11). Those words must not be interpreted so as to clash with verse 23, but are to be understood as signifying the intimate communion with God to which His servant was now admitted. Moses then made request, “If I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way” (verse 13 and compare Psa 27:11), adding, “If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence” (Exo 33:15). He knew that without Jehovah’s presence, all would be in vain. Then he added, “For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have *found* grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth” (verse 16)—thus, will it be made manifest that we are restored again to Thy special favour. It was to God’s sovereign and illimitable grace that Moses appealed. *That* was all to which he could appeal—for there was nothing whatever in Israel’s favour to plead—but that was all-sufficient, as the next verse shows.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight” (verse 17). The mediation of Moses had completely prevailed. Here was the blessed response to his request, and nothing more was needed for the assuring of his heart, and to guarantee Israel’s safe conduct across the wilderness. It was *grace* pure and simple, sovereign and amazing grace. Grace vouchsafed to a people who had by their abominable conduct forfeited every claim upon God. Grace granted in response to the intercession of their mediator. Reference to this was made long after by Jehovah through one of His prophets: “Thus saith the LORD, The people which were left of the sword [Exo 32:27-28] found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest” (Jer 31:2). How unspeakably blessed, dear Christian reader, to know that Israel’s God is *our* God; that the God of Sinai, the Holy One, the Lawgiver—yet *also* the longsuffering and merciful One—is our God, and that *we* have this same precious assurance while journeying through this wilderness-world: “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest” (Exo 33:14)! Oh for faith to realize and enjoy His all-sufficient presence.

Love to All the Saints

“How should I regard Christians who ‘follow not with us’? a young believer may ask, Well, how would that great-heart, the apostle Paul, have regarded them? Are they not children of God? Hearts may agree, although heads differ; and God sees grace where we see none. If you think that these people have less light than you, their need is a claim upon your help; and, believe it or not, they can teach *you* something! Be on your guard against viewing them with suspicion or contempt. You are made of exactly the same flesh and blood as they are, and the same grace is at work in them as in you. God loves persons rather than places.

“You may not find every believer very approachable; but try to cultivate spiritual fellowship with *all* God’s people by dwelling upon the big things that all true Christians hold in common. In this way, you will help to ‘keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’ (Eph 4:3). Be a living link of fellowship between believers. Sympathy is better than criticism. Disbelieve those who have no faith in their fellow Christians. Do not take the world’s side against God’s people.

“Each group or school of thought has its own emphasis, and sometimes, its own phraseology. Do not attach too much importance to pious phrase; the same truth can be expressed in different ways. We should learn to welcome *all* the truth, through whatever channel it may come to us. And the gifts of Christ are for *all* His people.”—*E. Adams*

[N.B.¹ The above emphasizes one aspect of the truth which some extremists need to take to heart. There is a happy medium between refusing to walk with “those in error,” and declining to have fellowship with any who fail to pronounce all our shibboleths.²—*Arthur W. Pink*]

¹ N.B. – *Nota bene* is an [Italian](#) and [Latin](#) phrase meaning “note well.”



JULY

Buying

“Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Pro 23:23). Such an injunction may appear to have a “legalistic” sound to some finical ears, but if Scripture be compared with Scripture, that erroneous impression should be removed. The use of the word “buy” in such passages as Isaiah 55:1, and Revelation 3:18, shows that no thought of human merits is signified. It is by no worthiness of ours that salvation is obtained. A little thoughtful meditation indicates that this figure is a very suggestive and instructive one. The fact that we are here exhorted to “buy the truth” implies and imports the following things: First, that by nature we do not possess it, for we do not “buy” what is already ours. Second, that it is needful and valuable, for only fools will purchase things they consider of no use or worth. Third, that we desire it. Fourth, that we must go to the lawful Owner of it. Fifth, that we are willing to part with something to obtain it. Sixth, that we actually make it our own, for that is what the “buying” of a thing does. Seventh, that we now make use of it.

When our Lord said unto Pilate, “Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice,” the Roman governor responded with, “What is truth?” (Joh 18:37-38). Probably those words were uttered contemptuously, for Christ made him no answer—what value does a politician place upon truth! A short time before, the Saviour had said to the Father, in the hearing of His disciples, “Thy word is truth” (Joh 17:17)—not simply “contains the truth,” but is so. It is expressly denominated “the word of truth” (2Ti 2:15), and that because its Author is omniscient. It is inerrant throughout: without the slightest inaccuracy—“Thy word is true from the beginning” (Psa 119:160). That is what renders it of inestimable value. Living as we are in a world of liars (Psa 58:3), truth is an exceedingly rare commodity. Sin has darkened man’s understanding and unhinged his mind, so that ignorance and error, prejudice, and superstition abound on every side. How thankful then should we be that we have to hand, and in our own mother tongue, a revelation from Him that cannot lie.

The importance of truth appears from the absolute authority of Him who is its Author, from the miracles He has wrought to confirm it, from its own salutary tendency and the blessed fruits which it produces. It is by the truth that we are made “wise unto salvation” (2Ti 3:15). It is by the truth we are made free from the servitude of sin (Joh 8:32, and compare Psa 119:45). It is by the truth that we are “sanctified” (Joh 17:17). Apart from God’s Word, I can know nothing whatever of His everlasting love and sovereign grace, nothing of His will for me, nothing of the destiny awaiting me. Christ—in His wondrous person, peerless perfections, glorious offices, and so great salvation—is the sum and substance of it. Yet, indescribably precious as it is, the solemn fact remains that by nature, none of us has any love for the truth, but rather, a strong antipathy to it. We prefer to be flattered and encouraged to believe the best about ourselves; and therefore, the Lord Jesus had to say of those to whom He ministered, “And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not” (Joh 8:45).

The truth is as free as it is precious, yet, paradoxical as it may sound, it has to be *bought*. A price has to be paid before it is actually made ours. Though God’s Word is a gift to us, it has to be purchased by us; and there is nothing more incongruous and inconsistent in that statement than there is in affirming that he enjoys the greatest *liberty* who lives in completest subjection to God. To “buy” the truth is a deliberate and voluntary act: “I have *chosen* the way of truth,” said the Psalmist (Psa 119:30), and there must be given us a desire and love for the same ere we are

² **Shibboleths** – the criterion of a party; or that which distinguishes one party from another; and usually some peculiarity in things of little importance (see Judges 12:5-6).

willing to do so. Yet the absence of such a desire is no valid excuse for those who are unwilling to purchase it. “Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool *to get* wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?” (Pro 17:16). The answer is, To constitute him a responsible creature. That “price in the hand” is the rationality, the capability, the time and opportunity to acquire wisdom; and the absence of a heart for it in no wise extenuates his indifference and neglect.

Alas, what millions of such “fools” there are, with no “heart” to buy that which is more valuable than gold, “yea, than much fine gold” (Psa 19:10)! As one has said, “They would rather lose it than labour for it; rather go sleeping to hell than toiling to heaven.” That which is “more precious than rubies” (Pro 3:15) is to the majority of our fellows of less worth than a pebble. “Herod eyed it with curiosity (Luk 23:8), Pilate with indifference (Joh 18:38), the Jews with scorn (Act 13:46). Enough that it should have a place in our creed, but none in our hearts. The world is preferred to heaven, time to eternity, and the immortal soul perishes in folly”—Charles Bridges (1794-1869). It is only when we desire them that we heed that injunction: “Buy those things that we have *need of*” (Joh 13:29). Few indeed are willing to pay the price, for truth is a costly thing to come by *honestly*, entailing considerable expense and pains. But the more we pay for it, the more we shall prize it. Rare things are always the most expensive, but he who really values and loves the truth deems no price too high.

“Buy the truth” (Pro 23:23). Something has to be *parted with* in order to secure it—pride, prejudice, and presumption—so that we be willing to receive it as a little child. “Buy the truth” means *make it your own*, and that can only be done by personal effort and diligent application. “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou *criest* after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and *searchest* for her as for hid treasures; *Then* shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God” (Pro 2:1-5). *That* is part of the price which has to be paid: an open ear, an applied heart, earnest prayer to God, diligent searching of the Scriptures. Like Mary, we must fix the words of God in our mind and ponder them in our heart (Luk 2:19). Truth has only become *ours* when it is actually reduced to experience and practice, and therefore, another part of the price for buying it is our conforming to it in heart and life; and that, in turn, requires daily self-examination and supplication.

Many are content with substitutes for “the truth.” They fondly imagine they are “sound in the faith,” when in reality the great enemy of souls has deceived them with a spurious counterfeit. And when they are lovingly and faithfully warned, they are unwilling to put their beliefs to the proof, and *weigh* them “in the balances of the Sanctuary.” Though they are told that “many false prophets” (1Jo 4:1) have gone and are still going forth, they are loath to think that they have been beguiled by them. Truth cannot be secured by us till we are prepared to suspect our orthodoxy and bring every article of our creed to the test of Holy Writ. Very few are ever recovered from the abyss of error, because they are not willing to search diligently and impartially for the truth and embrace it wherever it is to be found, or whatever be the cost. They prefer the sanction of the names of “great men,” rather than a “thus saith the LORD.” Pray daily for a right understanding of His Word.

“The truth,” like its Author, is *one*—we never read in Scripture of “truths”: yet, as He has many perfections or attributes, so His Word has many parts or branches. It is not a portion of truth, but “the truth” itself we are bidden to buy. Alas, that so many content themselves with fragments thereof. Nothing short of the whole truth is what each of us should earnestly covet and seek—every particle of it, for, as one has well said, “The very filings of the gold are invaluable.” “Set thine heart upon *all* that I shall shew thee” (Eze 40:4). Nevertheless, the most eager and earnest purchaser will find, as Joshua did near the close of his life, “there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed” (Jos 13:1). But though that be the case, we must strive to acquire and assimilate more and more of it. Never rest content with your knowledge thereof, for at best, it is but meager. Remember, you buy a thing in order to make use of it. As one quaintly summarized it: *know* it in the head—memorize it; *stow* it in the heart—lovingly meditate upon it; *show* it in the life—be regulated by it; *sow* it in the world—yet cast not your pearls before swine (Mat 7:6).

The Prayers of the Apostles

67. 1 Peter 5:10-11, Part 3

We are now to consider, fifth, the *petition* of this prayer: “Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1Pe 5:10), or (compare 1Th 3:11; 5:23), as the Greek in each instance requires, “*himself* make you perfect,” etc. There is far more contained in these words than appears on their surface, and the fullness of their meaning can be discovered only by a patient searching of the Scriptures, thereby ascertaining how the several terms are used in other passages. We regard the “*himself* make you perfect” as the principal thing requested, the three words that follow being in part an amplification and in part an explanation of the process by which the desired end is reached—though each of the four words requires to be considered separately. Ancient expositors, who went into things much more deeply and thoroughly than do our moderns, raised the question as to whether this prayer receives its fulfilment in the present life or the life to come. After carefully weighing the pros and cons of their arguments, we have come to the conclusion—taking into view the remarkable scope of the Greek word *katartizō*, here rendered “perfect”—that this petition is granted a twofold answer—here and hereafter—and shall therefore take in both in our comments.

Katarizō imports “to make perfect” in the sense of, first, by adjusting or articulating so as to produce a flawless object; and, second, to restore an object which has become imperfect. That the reader may be enabled to form his own judgment, we will set before him the passages in which the Greek word is variously translated elsewhere. In each passage quoted, the word or words placed in italics is the English rendering of the Greek word for “perfect” in our text. When the Saviour said, “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou *prepared* [or ‘fitted,’ margin] me” (Heb 10:5), we are to understand, as Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) said, “That body was formed or articulated by the Holy Spirit, with the human soul, in all its parts, in one instant of its union with the Son of God,” and was immaculately holy, impeccable, and without spot or blemish. The word is used again to express the finishing and perfect consummation of God’s work of the first creation: “The worlds were *framed* by the word of God” (Heb 11:3): they were so completed that nothing more was needed to their perfection, for, as Genesis 1:31 tells us, “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.”

But this same Greek word has a very different sense in other passages. In Matthew 4:21, “*mending* their nets,” which denotes the repairing of what had been damaged. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, *restore* such an one in the spirit of meekness” (Gal 6:1), where it signifies such a restoring as of a limb that is out of joint. No doubt this was one of the significations which the apostle had in mind, for those for whom he prayed had been disjointed or scattered by persecutions. Paul also had this shade of meaning before him when he exhorted the divided Corinthians to “be *perfectly joined together* in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1Co 1:10). Again, the word is sometimes used to express a supplement or the supply of a deficiency, as in 1 Thessalonians 3:10, that we “might perfect that which is lacking in your faith,” for “lacking” implies a want. Once more, the word occurs in Hebrews 13:21, “Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight,” where the apostle prayed that the saints might advance to further degrees of faith and holiness in this life.

It will thus appear, from its usage in other passages, that the Greek word rendered “perfect” in our present text may signify “*himself* make perfect those *degrees* of grace,” which are necessary in order to full growth, and does not necessarily imply any personal fault or failure in those prayed for—as a child is not to be blamed for not having yet reached the full stature of an adult or attained unto his knowledge; as God has promised to bring to perfection the good work He has begun in the souls of His people (Phi 1:6). A Christian may walk up to the measure of grace received without any willful divergence in his course, and still be imperfect, as was the case with the most favoured of God’s children—“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect” (Phi 3:12). There have been, and are, some privileged souls who never left their first love, who followed on to know the Lord, who (as to the general tenor of their lives) carried themselves according to the light received, yet needed further additions of wisdom and holiness to make them yet more fruitful branches of the Vine, and unto a consummation of holiness in heaven.

An example of this appears in the case of the Thessalonian saints. Not only had they experienced a remarkable conversion (1Th 1:9), but they conducted themselves in the most God-honouring and exemplary manner, so that the apostle gave thanks to God always for them on account of their “work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of

hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (verses 2 and 3). Not only were their inward graces healthy and vigorous, but in their outward conduct, they were made “ensamples to all that believe” (verse 7). Nevertheless, Paul was most anxious to visit them again, that he “might perfect that which is lacking in your faith” (1Th 3:10): that is, that further blessed accessions of grace might be theirs in order to a yet closer walking with God, and resistance to and overcoming of temptations. To that faith which rests on Christ for pardon and acceptance with God, which He bestows at conversion, there is also a faith of conscious acceptance, the “full assurance of understanding” (Col 2:2); and to that, God has in store the rich experience of “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8) and the making of our calling and election sure, so that an “abundant entrance” into His Kingdom is begun in this life (2Pe 1:10-11). Yet this “perfecting” also applies to the *recovery* and restoration of lapsed Christians, as is evident from Peter’s own case.

But suppose that God should thus mend and restore those overtaken in a fault, yet might they not fall again? Yes, indeed, and evidently, Peter had such a contingency in view and therefore added “stablish”: that is, that they should be so confirmed that they would not fall away. For the fickle and vacillating, it was a request that they should be no more tossed to and fro, but fixed in their beliefs. For the discouraged, that having put their hands to the plough, they should not look back because of the difficulties of the way. For those who were walking closely with the Lord, that they might be established in holiness before God (1Th 3:13), for the most spiritual are daily in need of supporting grace. The Greek word signifies to make firm or confirm, occurring in “there is a great gulf *fixed*” (Luk 16:26). It is found again in connection with Christ, and is translated, “he *stedfastly set* his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luk 9:51). It is the word used by the Lord to Peter himself: “When thou art converted, *strengthen* [or ‘fix firmly’] thy brethren” (Luk 22:32)—re-establish those who have yielded to temptation. Likewise, Paul desired “to establish...and to comfort...concerning [their] faith” the Thessalonian saints; and that, in relation to temptation or trial (1Th 3:2, 5).

But though we may be so confirmed by the grace of God that we cannot totally and finally fall away, yet we are weak, and may be labouring under great infirmities; and therefore, the apostle added to his petition, “strengthen” you. The Greek word is not used elsewhere in the New Testament, but from its position here between “stablish” and “settle,” it appears to have the force of invigorating against weakness and corruptions—“be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man” (Eph 3:16). The term occurs in its negative form in Romans 5:6, “For when we were yet *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly”: in our unregenerate state, we were entirely devoid of ability and enablement to do those things which are pleasing to God. Not only is the spiritual impotency of an unregenerate soul styled “without strength,” but the state of the body when dead is expressed by the same Greek word: “It is sown in *weakness*” (1Co 15:43)—that is, lifeless, utterly devoid of any vigour. But contrastively, “it is raised in power”: endued and furnished with all abilities, even such as the angels have (Luk 20:36), who “excel in strength” (Psa 103:20). Thus, this request for the “strengthening” of the saints is to be understood of supplies of grace which would energize weak hands and feeble knees, and enable them to overcome every opposing force.

Though we be confirmed so that we shall never be lost, and though we be strengthened to bear up against trials, yet we may become shaky and uncertain; therefore, Peter added “settle”: that ye may be unremitting in your faith in Christ and love to God. The Greek word is rendered “founded” in Matthew 7:25, “laid the foundation of” in Hebrews 1:10, and “grounded” in Ephesians 3:17; and in our text, it appears to be used as the opposite of waverings of spirit and doubtings of heart. I pray that you may be able confidently to say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him” (2Ti 1:12); and that you may not turn from the path of duty because of the opposition you encounter. No matter how good be the tree, if it be not settled in the earth, but moved from place to place, it will bear little or no fruit. How many might trace the unfruitfulness of their lives to the unsettled state of their hearts and judgments! David could say, “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed,” and therefore, he added: “I will sing and give praise” (Psa 57:7). This too is a blessing which God only can impart: “Now to him that is of power to stablish you” (Rom 16:25); yet, as Deuteronomy 28:9 and 2 Chronicles 20:20 show, we must use the appointed means.

Himself “make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1Pe 5:10). The ultimate object seems to be mentioned first, and then the steps by which it is reached; but, whether regarded in conjunction or singly, they all have to do with our practical sanctification. The piling up of these emphatic terms indicates the difficulty of the Christian’s task, and his urgent need of constant supplies of divine grace. The saint’s warfare is one of no common difficulty, and his needs are deep and many; but he has to do with “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10)! Nevertheless, it is both our privilege and duty to draw upon Him by importunate supplication (Heb 4:16; 2Ti 2:1). God has provided grace answerable to our every need, yet it flows through the *means* He has appointed. God will “perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle” us in response to fervent prayer, by the instrumentality of His Word, through His blessing unto us the ministry of His servants, and by sanctifying unto us the discipline of His providences. He who has given His

people a sure hope will also give everything necessary unto the realization of the thing hoped for (2Pe 1:3), but we have to sue out the same by prayer (Eze 36:37).

Sixth, its *qualification*: “After that ye have suffered a while.” That clause is connected with both “who hath called us unto his eternal glory” and the petition Himself “make you perfect,” etc. The apostle did not pray that believers should be removed from this world as soon as they be regenerated, nor immediately relieved their sufferings, but “after a while”—or, as the Greek signifies, “after a *little* while”—because all time is short in comparison with eternity, and for the same reason the severest afflictions are “light” when set over against the “eternal weight of glory” that is awaiting him (2Co 4:17). The sufferings and the glory are inseparably connected, for “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22). “If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom 8:17)—no cross, no crown (Luk 14:27). All who have suffered for Christ’s sake on earth will be glorified in heaven, but none shall be glorified save those who—in some form or other—were “made conformable unto his death” (Phi 3:10). Some of the believer’s sufferings are from the hand of God’s providence, some from “false brethren,” some from the profane world, some from Satan, some from indwelling sin. Peter speaks of “manifold temptations” or “trials” (1Pe 1:6-7), but they are counterbalanced by “manifold grace” (1Pe 4:10), and both are directed by “the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph 3:10)!

The abounding grace of God does not preclude trials and afflictions, but has “appointed” (1Th 3:3) its objects thereto. Then let us not be dismayed or cast down by them, but seek grace to get them sanctified to us. Sufferings are *necessary* to the saints on various accounts. First and foremost, that the members be conformed to their Head. We are informed that “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb 2:10). Sufficient then for the disciple to be as his Master: that he should be made “perfect” “*after*...[he has] suffered a while” (1Pe 5:10). Peter himself had alluded to this in his first chapter: “The sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1Pe 1:11). It was the divine will that even the incarnate Son should “learn obedience” or submission by the things which He suffered (Heb 5:8). As He declared, “The Son of man *must* suffer” (Mar 8:31; Luk 9:22)—because God had ordained it (Act 4:28). Christ’s being tempted by the devil had not its origin in his malice, for “then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness *to be* tempted of the devil” (Mat 4:1). Remember that, dear tried one: the Saviour Himself entered the kingdom of God “through much tribulation”; and therefore, “in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb 2:18).

Second, the God of all grace has made this appointment because His grace is best seen in sustaining us and is most manifest by relieving us; hence, we find the Throne of Grace magnified by giving us grace “to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). Much of the glory of grace appears in supporting the weak, in delivering the tempted, and in raising the fallen. The Lord exempts not from conflict, but maintains us in it. Effectual calling ensures our final perseverance, yet it does not render needless continual supplies of grace. As Thomas Manton (1620-1677) expressed it, “God will not only give them glory at the end of their journey, but bears their expenses by the way.” Third, because God will thereby confound those who are opposed to us. “Grace *reign[s]*” (Rom 5:21), and the greatness of a monarchy is demonstrated by subduing rebels and vanquishing enemies. God raised up the mighty Pharaoh in order to show forth His own power. In the context, as we have seen, He suffers the devil, as a roaring lion, to rage up and down, oppose and assault us; but only to foil him, for “shall the prey be taken from the mighty” (Isa 49:24); and shortly, God will “bruise Satan under [our] feet” (Rom 16:20).

Fourth, suffering is necessary for the trying and proving of our graces: “The trying of your faith worketh patience” (Jam 1:3). “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1Pe 1:7). It is the winds of tribulation which separate the wheat from the chaff, the furnace which reveals the difference between the tinsel and the gold—the stony-ground hearer is offended and falls away “when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word” (Mat 13:21). So, too, for the purifying and the brightening of our hope, our hearts have to be more completely weaned from this world before they become *set* upon things above.

Fifth, “Heaven is not simply joy and happiness, but a glory, and a glory *won by conquest*—‘to him that overcometh’ [are the promises made] in each one of the seven epistles of Revelation 2 and 3. It is a crown won by mastery, and so by striving, according to certain laws set to be observed by those that win (2Ti 2:5). The glory won by conquest and masteries is the more valuable. The portion Jacob won ‘with my sword and with my bow’ was the one he reserved for his beloved Joseph (Gen 48:22). We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us”—T. Goodwin.

It is a mistake (made by some) to restrict either the “afflictions” of 1 Peter 5:9 or the “suffer[ing]” of verse 10 to *outward* persecutions and trials: all inward assaults (whether from our own lusts or Satan), and so all temptations

whatsoever, are to be included. The context requires this, for the “be sober, be vigilant” (verse 8) respects our lusts; and the call to “resist the devil” (Jam 4:7) relates to our inward temptations unto sin. The experience of all saints requires it, for their acutest pangs are occasioned by their corruptions. Moreover, as T. Goodwin pointed out, the setting before the eyes of our faith, God as “the God of all grace” argues the same; for His grace stands principally ready to help us against inward sins and temptations to sin. Furthermore, the *all* of His grace extends not only to all sorts of external miseries, but to all internal maladies, which are our greatest grief, and which need His abundant grace above all other, and which His grace chiefly respects. His grace is the grand remedy for every evil to which the believer is subject. Some are guilty of worse sins after conversion than before, and unless the God of *all* grace was their God, where would they be?

“After that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1Pe 5:10). This may well be regarded as a request for grace to enable us to obey the exhortation, “Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1Co 15:58)—i.e. constantly opposing sin and striving to be holy in all manner of conversation. This request receives a part fulfillment in this life, but a complete and more transcendent one in heaven. Saints are advanced to further degrees of faith and holiness, and after seasons of wavering and suffering, God strengthens and establishes them in a more settled frame of spirit. Yet only in our fixed condition after death will these blessings be fully ours. Not till then shall we be “made perfect” in the sense of fully conformed to the image of God’s Son. Our hearts will be “stablish[ed]...unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints” (1Th 3:13). Only then will all our weakness end and our bodies be “raised in power” (1Co 15:43). Then indeed shall we be eternally “settled,” for the divine promise is, “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out” (Rev 3:12).

Seventh, its *ascription*: “To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1Pe 5:11). “The apostle, having added prayer to his doctrine, here added praise to his prayer”—Leighton. It expressed the apostle’s confidence that the God of all grace would grant his request. He was assured that what he had asked for on behalf of the saints would be to the divine “glory,” and that the divine “dominion” would infallibly bring it to pass. There is thus a practical hint implied for us in this closing doxology: it intimates *where* relief is to be obtained and strength is to be found in the midst of our suffering, namely by eyeing the glory of God, which is the grand end He has in view in all His dealings with us, and by faith’s occupation with God’s dominion—if *His* be the dominion, and He has called us unto His eternal glory, then what have we to fear? So certain is our glorification (Rom 8:30) that we should give thanks for it now. The abundant and infinite grace of God is engaged to effect it, and His omnipotent power guarantees the performance of the same.

The Life and Times of Joshua

47. Victory

“And it came to pass, when the king of Ai saw it, that they hasted and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain; but he wist not that there were liers in ambush against him behind the city” (Jos 8:14). In Scripture, those words, “it came to pass,” are something more than a formal manner of prefacing a narrative, or introducing an incident—signifying the accomplishment of the divine foreordination, that it occurred precisely as God had decreed, for He has predestined the actions of the wicked equally with those of the godly. Exactly what it was that they “saw” we know not, but they failed to investigate it, and, being regulated by their senses rather than by reason, precipitately rushed forward to death. Infatuated by his previous success (Jos 7:5), unconscious that he was fighting against the Almighty and flinging himself upon the thick bosses of His bucklers (Job 15:26), the king issued forth to what he confidently believed would be an easy victory, yet only to fulfill God’s purpose (Ecc 3:1). Upon further reflection, we are now satisfied that that is the meaning of the clause which has puzzled the commentators—“at a time appointed” (Jos 8:14), i.e. of God, for He has fixed the hour of every man’s death (Job 7:1).

“And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness” (Jos 8:15). They pretended to be filled with terror, and instead of making a firm stand against these Canaanites, they gave ground, and probably fled in some disorder toward the wilderness. Yet however distasteful and degrading it was for the main body of Israel to feign themselves cowards, it was necessary for them to do so if their plan was to succeed. In like manner, there are times when some Christians are required to act a humble part, perhaps a humiliating one, if the task which is assigned others of their

brethren is to be duly accomplished. All cannot occupy positions of equal honour in the church, any more than can all the servants of a king's household be equal—scullery maids are as essential as lords in waiting. In the days of David, there were some who girded on their swords and accompanied him to the battlefield, while there were others who were required to remain behind and guard the provender; but it is blessed to observe that when the spoil was to be divided, he gave orders, "As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall [take] part alike" (1Sa 30:24).

"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him...And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary...Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1Co 12:18, 21-22, 27). In our remarks upon Joshua 8:9, we pointed out how admirable was the self-sacrificing, obedient, and courageous spirit displayed by the thirty thousand: how that they murmured not at being deprived of their rest through being sent away "by night," or at the dangerous post assigned them. Equally praiseworthy was the conduct of this force which accompanied Joshua. They might have asked, Is it for *this* that thou hast brought us from Gilgal? Have we had a long uphill march only to turn tail as soon as the enemy advances toward us? Or, Since the LORD has delivered Ai into our hands [verse 1], what need is there for us to play so ignominious a part and cut so sorry a figure before the heathen? Instead, they meekly complied with their orders and loyally supported their leader.

But in that to which we have just called attention, we should recognize the secret power of God at work, overcoming their natural scruples and inclining them to co-operate fully with their brethren, and thus fulfill His will. This too should be regarded as a part of His gracious answer to the prayer of Joshua 7:6-9. How wondrously He acts when we truly humble ourselves before Him and are concerned for the honour of His name! He makes things work smoothly, yea, work together, when He shows Himself strong in our behalf. Yet how often we miss perceiving the same through failing to observe closely His providences and connect the same with our previous cries unto Him for help. For the sake of our more hyper-Calvinistic readers, it may be well for us to point out here that there is nothing more "inconsistent" in admiring the virtues of these men of Israel while ascribing the same unto the gracious operations of God than there was in the apostle's telling the Colossians that he "rejoiced" in their orderliness and the "stedfastness of your faith in Christ" (Col 2:5), when he knew full well that God was the Author of those spiritual fruits. Because there are no official powers or authorities "but of God," that does not preclude our rendering "honour to whom honour" is due (Rom 13:1, 7)!

"And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness" (Jos 8:15). Once again, there is something more here than that which is of historical interest, or even of practical instruction for our hearts. Little as it may appear at first glance, yea, utterly incongruous as it may sound, Joshua's conduct on this occasion—when considered in the light of the immediate sequel—plainly and strikingly foreshadowed Him who though He was rich, yet for our sakes, became poor, that we through His poverty, humiliation, and suffering might be rich. "What Joshua did in this stratagem is applicable to our Lord Jesus, of whom he was a type. Joshua conquered by yielding, as if he had himself been conquered: so our Lord Jesus, when He bowed His head and gave up the spirit, seemed as if death had triumphed over Him, and as if He and all His interest had been routed and ruined; but in His resurrection, He rallied again, and gave the power of death a total defeat; He broke the serpent's head by suffering him to bruise His heel. A glorious stratagem"!—Matthew Henry (1662-1714). How wonderful are the ways of God, who not only set the sun in the heavens, gave to the lamb its characteristics, appointed the fruit-bearing vine to be a figure of Christ, but also shaped Old Testament events so as to prefigure His person and work!

"And all the people that were in Ai were called together to pursue after them: and they pursued after Joshua, and were drawn away from the city" (Jos 8:16). This too was "of the LORD," and it should be marvelous in our eyes. Therein we behold the success which God gave to Joshua's ruse, when his men made a feint as though they were beaten; or rather to his obedient compliance with the orders he had received from the Lord. Not only had the king of Ai gone out with the whole of his military force—sallying forth with the exultant cry: "They flee before us, as at the first" (Jos 8:6)—but when Israel was seen in flight, the non-combatant citizens were summoned to join in their pursuit; thereby rendering still easier the task assigned the thirty thousand. It is obvious that without the divine blessing on this plan, such a considerable body of men could no more have remained concealed, than could Jacob's device in Genesis 30:37-43 have prospered. "See how the prosperity of fools destroys them, and hardens their hearts to their ruin"—M. Henry. Because God had used the king of Ai on a former occasion to chastise Israel, he and his people were puffed up with conceit.

Note carefully the precise expression used here by the Holy Spirit: the inhabitants of Ai were "drawn away from the city" (Jos 8:16). Those words set forth another of the secret operations of the Most High in His government of this world. In our last, we called attention to the *restraining* influence which He exerts upon men; here His *impelling* power is seen. To His people, He says "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I *drawn* thee" (Jer 31:3); yet not with physical force, but a moral suasion which overcomes their native enmity and frees the will from the dominion of sin. "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love" (Hos 11:4): not by external force, such as is used on brute beasts, but by cogent arguments, tender inducements, constraining motives and obligations, such as are suited to work on the understandings, affections, and wills of rational creatures; the same being rendered effectual by the supernatural power and application of the Spirit. Such divine drawing is absolutely essential in order to the saving of sin's slaves and the freeing of Satan's captives, for as the Lord Jesus so plainly declared, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me *draw* him" (Joh

6:44)—a truth so repugnant to the proud heart of the natural man, that when Christ uttered it, “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (Joh 6:65-66).

Not only does the Word of Truth make known this drawing power of God upon His elect, but it reveals Him putting forth the same upon the non-elect, though in their case, He presents a very different set of reasons and inducements before their minds. “And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, that he shall follow after them” (Exo 14:4)—impelling Egypt’s king to pursue His people unto the Red Sea. So too with the other kings of Canaan: “For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly” (Jos 11:20). Unto Barak, Deborah announced that the LORD God of Israel had declared: “And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand” (Jdg 4:7). “And I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me” (Eze 38:16) in the power of “my fury” (verse 18). “I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat” (Joe 3:2). So it was with the Aites: the Hebrew word rendered “drawn away” in Joshua 8:16 is translated “pluck” in Jeremiah 22:24, “pull out” in Jeremiah 12:3, and “be rooted out” in Job 18:14.

“And there was not a man left in Ai or Bethel, that went not out after Israel: and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel” (Jos 8:17). Further proof was this that the king of Ai had been given up to a spirit of madness, employing every male at his disposal to pursue Israel, leaving none to guard the city or secure his own retreat in case of emergency. It is hard to conceive a greater piece of folly unless it be that of Pharaoh, who, after witnessing such manifest demonstrations of the power and wrath of Jehovah upon Egypt, should, immediately after the death of all the firstborn, pursue Israel, and then attempt to march through the Red Sea. The one equally with the other was blinded by pride and obstinacy. Yet observe well that those in verses 17 “went out” of their own volition! Thus does Scripture uniformly present together the *two* sides of man’s free agency and God’s invincible operations, without any philosophical explanation of the “consistency” of the two things. God “draws” irresistibly, yet without the slightest violation upon man’s will or the least impairment of his accountability. If we deny either the one or the other, then we flatly repudiate what is clearly revealed in Holy Writ.

What has just been alluded to is certainly profoundly mysterious, yet that is no valid reason why we should reject it, for if we believe only that which we can fully understand, our creed will be a very small one. Even our consciousness bears witness that we act voluntarily, and the ungodly will themselves, at times, admit that a “higher power” constrained them to follow such and such a course; nor do they feel that they were reduced to “mere machines” in so being. Viewing the contents of verse 17 in connection with the warfare of the saint, we are there shown that the hand of every man of this world is, spiritually speaking, *against him*. Many of them are indeed kind-hearted, generous, and benevolent unto a Christian in temporal things; but (all unconscious to themselves) they are antagonistic to his *eternal* interests. Their influence is entirely earthly, and never heavenly. What was the attitude of the world toward Christ? Without a single exception, hostile. Pharisees and Sadducees, priests and scribes, politicians and the common people, the Roman soldiers, and even the crucified malefactors, reviled Him, until a miracle of grace transformed one of them into a worshipper. If we were more like Christ, we should experience more of the world’s enmity and persecution.

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that is in thy hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand. And Joshua stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city” (Jos 8:18). He had waited for a further word from Jehovah before taking this action. As it was at Jericho, so here at Ai: each stage of the process in the capturing and destroying of the city must be ordered by the LORD. Thus it was with Moses in every project in which he engaged. So also with the apostles, teaching us that the servant of Christ must not do anything without His authorization. It is indeed blessed to observe here that Joshua’s hand was the *first* one to be outstretched against Ai. Is not the lesson for us therein plain? It is when the antitypical Joshua stretches forth His hand on our behalf that the best time has come for us to act. The need for the LORD to inform Joshua *when* to stretch forth his hand is obvious, for it served as a signal to those in ambush, and *that* required to be precisely timed—when the men of Ai had left the city—so that they might swiftly seize their opportunity.

The LORD did not fail His servant, but at the crucial moment, gave him the word of command: “Stretch out the spear that is in thy hand” (Jos 8:18). That action was not only designed as a signal to his men in ambush, but, as verse 26 makes clear, by the same, He directed the whole engagement, until complete victory was achieved. Now was drawing near the hour of Joshua’s triumph, for he was on the point of leading Israel to conquest, of which his outstretched spear was the symbol. That too was a foreshadowing of our blessed Saviour. It seems evident from verses 22 and 24 that throughout the contest, Joshua must have occupied some position of eminence, from which he gave orders to his troops; and therein, he was a figure of Christ on high. The last night, but one before the fight, lodging among the people (Jos 8:9)—as did Christ with His friends at Bethany. The next night, alone in “the midst of the valley” (Jos 8:13)—the symbol of deep humiliation (Isa 40:4; Luk 1:52), as our Lord spent His in Gethsemane and the judgment halls of the Jews and Romans. Then fleeing before the foe as if beaten (Jos 8:15), as Christ, in apparent defeat, was put to death by His enemies. Now assured by God of victory (Jos 8:18), as He has promised to make Christ’s foes His footstool.

In concluding this article, we propose to consider more closely the lines of typical teaching in Joshua 8. In the course of our comments, we have indicated some of the practical applications to be made of its contents, and have pointed out the several respects in which Joshua again foreshadowed our Lord. But now we must inquire, What contribution to the particular theme of this book is made by the capturing and destroying of Ai: What are the principal lessons there for us concerning the Christian's warfare? That question is more easily asked than answered. We must acknowledge we have experienced more difficulty here than when pondering what was before us in Joshua 3 and 4. But that is to be expected. First, because Israel here was only enjoying God's second best, and where *that* be the case His showing Himself strong on our behalf is curtailed, and acts of folly on our part raise, as it were, a cloud of dust, which prevents our perceiving so clearly the workings of God. Second, because the *human* side of things is more prominent. At first, the babe is carried, but the time arrives when it must learn to use its own feet: so with the saint, who has to develop his graces and subdue his lusts.

Both in the crossing of the Jordan and the capturing of Jericho, the LORD did all for Israel, working miracles on their behalf; but in connection with Ai, much more was required *from them*. Thus it is in the spiritual life. Regeneration is a miracle of grace, wherein we were entirely passive; but in order to our growth in grace and spiritual progress, all our faculties have to be called into action. The "lambs" Christ carries in His bosom (Isa 40:11), but the "sheep" are required to follow Him (Joh 10:27). Immediately after conversion, the power of God is so put forth that usually the believer experiences a season of peace from the assaults of Satan and the stirrings of his inward corruptions. But soon he becomes conscious of the serpent's enmity and is made painfully aware of the powerful enemies within his own heart; and the fight of faith gradually becomes fiercer, and he meets with some humiliating falls in the contest. Yet we can discern the wisdom of God therein, promoting our good. If He continued to do all for us without our active concurrence, and if nothing but victory was our uniform experience, we should quickly become proud and self-sufficient—as was the case with Israel after Jericho! But under divine chastenings, and through His instructions, we are taught how to turn former defeats into successes—by using the means appointed and counting upon God's blessing the same.

The Doctrine of Revelation

31. In Glory, Part 4

We have shown that there is a real and radical difference between the death of a believer and that of an unbeliever, and having contemplated some of the accompaniments of a Christian's departure from this world, we are thus now ready to consider how he exists in the disembodied state. It is not to be wondered at that the unregenerate should be thoroughly befogged at this point, for they are so materialistic that they find it very difficult to form a definite concept of anything that is incorporeal and intangible. But those who, by grace, enjoy a real communion with Him who is "Spirit" (Joh 4:24) ought not to flounder on this matter, for they have proved by experience how much more important is the soul than the body, and how infinitely more real and satisfying are spiritual objects than the perishing things of time and sense. So far from regarding his soul as a mysterious, nebulous, and indefinable thing, the believer looks upon it as a living, intelligent, sentient being—his *real self*. We should view a disembodied soul as one which has cast off its earthly clothing and is now appareled in a garment of light, or, to use the language of Scripture, "clothed in white raiment [or 'white robes']" (Rev 3:5; 6:11).

At death, the soul of the saint is freed from all the limitations which sin had imposed upon it; and its faculties are then not only purified, but elevated and enlarged. It will be like a chrysalis emerging from its cramped condition, or a bird liberated from a cage, now free to spread its wings and soar aloft. It is true the body is a component part of man's complex being, yet we must endeavour to view it in a due proportion. Which is the more important: the tenant or his tenement, the individual or the tent in which he resides? It must be borne in mind that the soul derives not its powers from the body. That is clear from the divine account of man's creation: after his body had been formed, and as a separate act, God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen 2:7). The mind is the noblest part of our being, and therefore, it must find exercise and satisfaction in the disembodied state; otherwise, we should not be "blessed" or happy (Rev 14:13) immediately after death. "It is the mind maketh the man; it is our preferment above the beasts that God hath given us a mind to know Him"—Thomas Manton (1620-1677).

"The soul can and does operate without the use of bodily organs in its *present* state, and in many things, stands in no need of them. The rational soul thinks, reasons, and discourses without the use of them. Its powers and facul-

ties need them not: the will is directed and guided by the understanding, and the understanding has to do with objects in the consideration of which bodily organs are noways assisting—as in the consideration of God, His nature, and perfections; of angels and their nature; and of a man’s own spirit, and the things of it which it penetrates into, without the help of any of the instruments of the body. It can consider of things past long ago, and of things very remote and at a great distance; and such objects as are presented to it by the senses, it reasons about them without making use of any of the organs of the body. And if it can operate without the body, it can exist without it; for since it is independent of it in its operations, it is independent of it in its being; and as it can exist without it, it can act in that separate state of existence without it. Wherefore, since it dies not with the body, it is not affected as to its operations by the absence of it, nor at death becomes insensible as that is”—John Gill (1697-1771).

Yet, obvious as is what has been pointed out above, the majority of Christians seem to suppose that it is impossible for us to form any definite ideas of what it is to be disembodied, or of that state into which the saint enters at death, or of what the medium is by which he will know, enjoy, and have fellowship with the Lord in that state. While they remain content with such slothful ignorance, it is not to be expected that any further light will be vouchsafed them: “According to your *faith* be it unto you” (Mat 9:29) holds good at this point as much as it does anywhere else. Not a curious and unbridled imagination, but a Scripturally informed and regulated faith, and *faith* ever has to do with God and His written Word. If His Word be searched prayerfully, diligently, and expectantly for divine instruction on these things, it will not be confounded. From some of the accounts given in the sacred volume, we may gather some real apprehensions on these subjects, yea, much more than is generally attended to. To these accounts we shall now turn.

The case of those servants of God who were favoured with ecstatic raptures and supernatural visions while their bodies were inactive and senseless shows most clearly that the soul can function without any assistance from the body. Micaiah said unto the king of Israel, “I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left” (1Ki 22:19). Though the prophet was in the body, it was not with his natural eyes that he gazed upon such a scene as that. Again, a similar sight was granted Isaiah; and in addition, he listened to the very words of the seraphim as they cried unto one another, “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa 6:1-5); and yet the eyes and ears of his body could no more have “seen the King, the LORD of hosts,” nor heard those acclamations of divine homage than could those of our bodies lying cold in death. God is Spirit, incorporeal, and His ineffable glory cannot be seen by the corporeal senses of any creature: it was therefore a visionary representation which was made to the spirit of His messenger.

Ezekiel tells us that while among the captives by the river of Chebar, “the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God” (Eze 1:1). At the close of the first chapter of his prophecy, he describes one of those celestial revelations. He says, “And above the firmament that was over their heads [i.e. the cherubim] was the likeness of a throne, as the *appearance* of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, and I saw *as it were* the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of *the likeness* of the glory of the LORD” (Eze 1:26-28). From the words we have placed in italics, it is obvious that the prophet was under the supernatural influx of the Holy Spirit, and that his spiritual faculties were granted a visionary sight of the Saviour before He became incarnate.

The experiences of Daniel also supply some illumination on the matter we are now considering: the capabilities of the soul abstracted from the body. First, he informs us: “After this I saw in the night visions,...and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him” (Dan 7:7-10). “Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I Daniel alone saw the vision” (Dan 10:5-7). A sight of Christ was there presented to the eyes of the prophet’s mind. They were opened and raised to an extraordinary degree; and they were closed again after the vision passed. His faculties were supernaturally elevated, or he could not have seen Christ thus. He tells us, “There remained no strength in me” (Dan 10:8), so that he was in the body. As his body did not prevent his seeing this vision, neither will the absence of ours prevent us seeing Christ by sight and vision of soul.

A very similar, though perhaps not identical, case is that of Peter, of whom we read that “he fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven” (Act 10:10-16). The dictionary defines a trance as “a state in which the soul appears to be absent from the body, as to be rapt in vision,” because at such a time, all the normal activities (save that of the heart) and sensibilities of the body are suspended. The most remarkable feature of this incident is that Peter was not only able to see and hear, but also to reason and speak, to express his religious prejudice; and his “Not so, Lord” demonstrates that sin has defiled our inner being, and that the soul must needs be purified before it can be admitted into the immediate presence of God on high.

Still more pertinent is the case of the apostle Paul. In 2 Corinthians 12, he relates an extraordinary experience with which God had favoured him. He declares, “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful [or ‘possible’—margin] for a man to utter,” and this he recites as an illustration of “visions and revelations of the Lord” (verses 1-4). It is remarkable that twice over in those verses, the apostle should register his inability to determine whether or not he was in the body at the time he was translated to heaven and heard and saw such wondrous things. If the soul were incapable of cognizing objects when it is detached from the body, then most assuredly, Paul had never been at any such loss as he here mentions. From the language employed, it is clear that the soul *is capable* of attending to the most important and blessed things of all when it is *out of the body*, and thus, that death will not deprive it of its capabilities and sensibilities.

Finally, the experience which the beloved John had in the Isle of Patmos supplies us with further help on the point. He too was favoured with a vision of Christ, an account of which he gives in the first chapter of the Revelation, and the effect which it had upon him. The glorious form of the Saviour shone forth before him beyond what it did on the mount of transfiguration. The splendour of it was more than the apostle could bear in his embodied state—“And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead” (Rev 1:17). He further described how the Lord Jesus acted toward him and what He said to him: “And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last.” He tells us that immediately prior to this supernatural experience, “I was in the Spirit” (Rev 1:10), or, more literally, “I became in spirit”: that is, he passed out of the condition of normal human consciousness into the supernormal. The same expression occurs again in Revelation 4:2, “And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven”: he was elevated to a new mode of consciousness and sphere of existence, in which mortal imperfections had no place, in which all bodily activities and sensations were completely suspended, and in which the soul was wholly under a divine influence, entirely abstracted from all corporeal things, being fully controlled by the spirit.

It appears to the writer that, from the accounts cited above, from both the Old and New Testaments, we may form some real, definite, and spiritual conceptions concerning the saints in their disembodied state. The soul will be detached from all occupation with natural things and entirely fixed on divine objects. The mind or spirit will be lifted above the natural or mortal state and be illumined and engaged with supernatural things. As those saints were favoured with visions of Christ while in their bodies, yet their bodies were of no use to them at that time, so all of the redeemed when dismissed from their bodies are granted a view of Christ for which their physical senses are not needed—such a complete and immediate view of Him as fills them with admiration and adoration. If it be asked what will be the medium by which disembodied believers will know, enjoy, and have fellowship with the Lord, the answer is furnished by, “For now we see through a glass, darkly [‘Now we see in a mirror obscurely’—Amer. R.V.]; but then face to face” (1Co 13:12). The “mirror” is the Word (Jam 1:23-25) and the medium of perception is faith; but in heaven, the soul will have an unobscured sight of Christ and the whole invisible world will be opened, so that we shall see as we are seen or “know as we are known,” by means of intuitional light and knowledge, crystal-clear intellectual and spiritual views of Christ and the Father in Him, by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

At the separation of the soul from the body, it—or better, *he* or *she*—enters into a state of which he has had no previous experience, yet the anticipation of the same should not occasion the slightest uneasiness, for Christ Himself passed out of the world and entered that state the same way. It is no untrodden path, for thousands of God’s people have already gone over it. Immediately upon its dismissal from the body, such a change passes upon the soul that regeneration is then completed by being instantaneously and for ever delivered from the whole being of sin and

death. As we cannot enter Christ's spiritual kingdom of grace except by the new birth and a translation out of darkness into His marvelous light, neither can any of His redeemed (prior to His second coming) enter the kingdom of Christ's glory save by death. At that moment, mortality is swallowed up of life. While death will bring a great difference in me, it will make none in my Saviour to me. "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living" (Rom 14:8-9). While I am in the body, Christ ministers to me and supplies my every need; and when He summons me to leave the body, that will afford Him opportunity to express His love to me in a new way, introducing me into heaven, there to behold His glory.

Luke 16:9 represents another aspect of the experience of saints upon their leaving of this scene. "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." As Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) remarked, "Those everlasting habitations there mentioned are in heaven, where that are many mansions." This verse is part of the parable of "the unjust steward" (verse 8); and here, the Lord made a practical application of the same. He bids His disciples emulate the wisdom (though not the wickedness) of him who has an eye to the future. The "mammon of unrighteousness" is the coinage of this world, in contrast with the "true riches" (verse 11) of the Spirit. The saints are to expend their earthly means, however small, in works of piety and charity, and thereby "make to [themselves] friends." "Our Lord here exhorts us to provide for ourselves a comfortable reception to the happiness of another world, by making good use of our possessions and enjoyments in this world"—Thomas Manton (1620-1677). The soul's passage out of this life is termed a "failing"—of the body—and its entrance on high as a being welcomed home by those to whom he had ministered upon earth. "The poor saints that are gone before to glory receive them that in this world distributed to their necessities"—Matthew Henry (1662-1714).

The above verse is one of several which make it clear that there will be the personal recognition of the saints in the next life. The question was asked Martin Luther (1483-1546) a little while before his death whether we should know one another in the other world, to which he answered by observing the case of Adam "who knew Eve to be flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone whom he had never seen before." How did he know this, asked M. Luther, "but by the Spirit of God, by revelation?" and then he said, "So shall we know parents, wives, and children in the other world, and that more perfectly." To which we may add, How otherwise can those of whose conversion and edification Gospel-ministers have been the instruments be their "joy, or crown of rejoicing" in the day to come (1Th 2:19), unless the one is able to identify the other? A further hint on the subject is supplied by the apostles knowing Moses and Elijah on the mount, for they had never beheld them previously, nor seen any statue or picture of them, for such was not allowed among the Jews.

It has long been our conviction that the glorious scene which the three apostles witnessed on the holy mount was designed (among other ends) to furnish us with a glimpse of the blessed condition and delight of *the glorified*. So ravished was Peter by the sight that he exclaimed: "Lord, it is good for us to be here" (Mat 17:4), and would fain have remained there. As T. Manton said: "So was he affected with joy in the presence and company of Christ, and Moses and Elijah appearing with Him, that all his natural comforts and relations were forgotten." They were granted a foretaste of the life to come, for those who enter that blessed state will never desire to come out of it. The account of the transfiguration is prefaced by the statement: "And after six days" (Mat 17:1) and "It came to pass about an eight days after" (Luk 9:28): thus it was a *seventh day* (the perfect number!) event—a foreshadowing of the eternal Sabbath. The central figure was Christ Himself in resplendent glory. Talking with Him were Moses and Elijah: the one who had survived death; the other who had never expired—a type of those saints alive on earth at Christ's second coming.

Not only does the above incident teach us that the departed saints preserve their individual identities and are recognizable, but the fact that the apostles were permitted to see them, and to hear their discourse with Christ, intimates that *the society of saints* is a part of heaven's blessedness, and that the Old Testament saints (represented by Moses and Elijah) and those of the New (the apostles) are all together with Christ. Is not the same fact indicated by our Lord's words, "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Mat 8:11)? Still another passage which witnesses to the truth that the company of the redeemed and our fellowship with them is an adjunct of heaven's blessedness is Hebrews 12:22-23, where among other privileges, we are said to have come to "the spirits of just men made perfect." That same passage also makes mention of "an innumerable company of *angels*." If the Bethlehem shepherds were filled with joy as they heard the heavenly hosts praising God, what delight will it give us to mingle our voices with the angelic choirs! Yet these things are but secondary, for as Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661) well said: "*The Lamb* is all the glory in Immanuel's land," or, as Matthew 17 shows us, Moses and Elijah soon faded from the apostles' view, and they "saw no man, save Jesus only" (verse 8)!

Glorious Sinai

Part 7

Following upon the gracious annunciation and assurance which Moses received from Him, the LORD bade him, “Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest” (Exo 34:1). It will be remembered that as Moses descended from the mount with the first tables, he beheld the whole congregation engaged in an idolatrous and lascivious dance before the golden calf; and that in holy terror and righteous indignation at such a sight, he flung the tables to the ground. After rebuking and chastening the offenders, he had returned to the LORD, and by his intercession, “[made] an atonement” for Israel (Exo 32:30, etc.), averting His wrath and restoring them to His favour. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. But grace does not annul the claims of God’s government nor set aside the requirements of His holiness, but “reign through righteousness” (Rom 5:21), making merciful provision for both the maintaining and meeting of the same. That fundamental principle was here plainly and blessedly exemplified. Jehovah had dealt and would continue to deal in sovereign benignity with the favoured descendants of Abraham, yet at the same time upholding the rights of His throne. God’s writing the Law on tables of stone *a second time* is full of meaning for us.

Let us quote from a piece by one who is the very last to be regarded as a “legalist,” namely *The Law and a Christian*, by John Bunyan (1620-1677). “The Law was given twice upon mount Sinai, but the appearance of the LORD when He gave it the second time was wonderfully different from that of His when at first He delivered it to Israel. 1. When He gave it the first time, He caused His terror and severity to appear before Moses, to the shaking of his soul, and the dismaying of Israel. But when He gave it the second time, He caused all His goodness to pass before Moses to the comfort of his conscience and the bowing of his heart. 2. When He gave it the first time, it was with thunderings and lightnings, with blackness and darkness, with flame and smoke, and a tearing sound of the trumpet. But when He gave it the second time, it was with a proclamation of His name to be merciful, gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgressions, and sins. 3. When He gave it the first time, Moses was called to go up to receive it through the fire, which made him exceedingly to fear and quake. But when he went to receive it the second time, he was laid in a cleft of a rock.

“From all which I gather that, though as to the *matter* of the Law, both as to its being given the first time and the second, it binds the unbeliever under the pains of eternal damnation (if he close not with Christ by faith); yet as to the *manner* of its giving at these two times, I think the first doth more principally intend its force as a covenant of works, not at all respecting the Lord Jesus; but this second time not (at least in the manner of its being given) respecting such a covenant, but rather as a *rule or directory* to those who already are found in the cleft of the rock, Christ; for the saint himself, though he be without law to God as it is considered the first or old covenant, yet even he is not without law to Him as considered under grace, nor without law to God, but under the law to Christ (1Co 9:21)...The Christian hath now nothing to do with the Law as it thundereth and burneth on Sinai, or as it blindeth the conscience to wrath and the displeasure of God for sin, for from its thus appearing, it is freed by faith in Christ. Yet it *is* to have regard thereto, and is to count it holy, just, and good, which, that it may do, it is always when it seeth or regardeth it, to remember that He who giveth it to us is merciful, gracious, longsuffering...”

In full accord with what the Spirit-taught author of *Pilgrim’s Progress* mentioned, yea confirmatory thereof, it may also be pointed out that the first “tables of stone” were provided by Jehovah Himself—“I will give thee” (Exo 24:12)—whereas the second ones were to be supplied by Moses—“hew *thee*” (Exo 34:1)—typical of the Mediator who declared: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Mat 5:17); and in the verses that followed, He enforced the strictness and spirituality of its precepts. Finally, let it be carefully noted that the second set of tables were deposited for safe custody in the ark (Deu 10:5)—a figure of Him who said: “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:8). What anointed eye can fail to see, in the whole of what has here been set before the reader in connection with the twofold giving of the Law at Sinai to God’s people—a striking adumbration of His giving it to His elect first *in Adam*, which Law they break; and second, the Law being given to them *in Christ*, who now faithfully and righteously administers it as the gracious and merciful Mediator, according to the terms of Psalm 89:30-34?

The breaking of the first tables by Moses was an expressive emblem of that moral breach which the sins of the people had made between them and God. That breach had been healed, and the covenant re-established; but before the fundamental words of the covenant were written by Jehovah on the second tables of stone, He gave to Moses—and through him, to the people—a further revelation of His name, that the broken relationship might be re-

newed under still clearer apprehensions of the benign character of the One with whom they had to do, and unto whom they were required to yield the submission of gratitude and love. “And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo 34:6-7). To proclaim His “Name” was for the LORD to make *Himself* more fully known, to disclose His wondrous perfections: as in “And thou shalt call his name JESUS: *for* he shall save his people from their sins” (Mat 1:21). The “name” Jesus revealed who and what He was and is—the divine Saviour. So “the Name” in which believers are baptized (Mat 28:19) publishes and attests the triune God. Thus here this proclamation of Jehovah’s “name” was a spelling out of *His glorious attributes*.

Before taking up the details of that sevenfold revelation of God’s Name, let us point out first that the LORD Himself was the publisher of this good news. Second, that this Gospel revelation was made by Him in His character of “The LORD, The LORD God” (Exo 34:6), or the *unchanging One*, which looks back to and then amplifies what He had said in Exodus 3:14-15. Third, that this proclamation was given *after* the nation had been guilty of the terrible sin of high treason, but restored to God’s favour through the intervention and intercession of the typical mediator. Oh, “the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering” (Rom 2:4)! “And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped” (Exo 34:8): well he might at such a discovery of the divine magnanimity. Fourth, that this grand exposition of the divine Name became henceforth the ground of Israel’s confidence and their refuge in the darkest hours of their history. Well did T. Goodwin declare: “This proclamation of grace, being a *magna charta* of the Old Testament, was so highly valued by the prophets and saints of those times, that ever after it had been proclaimed to Moses, they had, throughout all ages, free recourse thereto.”

“And the LORD...proclaimed, The JEHOVAH, the JEHOVAH El”: that is, The Immutable, the Immutable Mighty One. *First*, “*merciful*.” How unspeakably blessed it is to observe that *this* is placed in the fore! It is, we might say, the fountain from which the others flow: because God is merciful, He is “gracious, longsuffering,” etc. *Mercy* was the hope of David when he had sinned so grievously: “According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions” (Psa 51:1). Jehoshaphat appointed singers to go before the army and to say, “Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever” (2Ch 20:21). Hezekiah reminded Israel in his day, “The LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him” (2Ch 30:9). Nehemiah, at a still later date, when supplicating God, made mention of His “manifold mercies” (Neh 9:19, 27). Even in the dark days of Jeremiah, that prophet was bidden to proclaim these words, “Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am *merciful*, saith the LORD” (Jer 3:12). A captive in Babylon, Daniel acknowledged, “To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him” (Dan 9:9).

Second, “*and gracious*.” This tells us *the ground* on which God bestows His mercy: it is not for anything in man or from man, but solely of His own benignity. All of God’s mercies are gifts to those who are entirely devoid of merit, and therefore, each must say with Jacob of old: “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant” (Gen 32:10). Many are the appeals to the *grace* of God recorded in the Old Testament. David cried, “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious” (Psa 86:15a). Isaiah assured the people of his day: “And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you” (Isa 30:18). When Joel called upon his generation to “rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God,” he used the inducement, “for he is *gracious*” (Joe 2:13). While in the last book of the Old Testament, the prophet bade the people to “beseech God that he will be gracious unto us” (Mal 1:9).

Third, “*longsuffering*.” How strikingly did the whole history of Israel furnish witness to the wondrous patience of God! The word for longsuffering here means “slow to anger.” It was to this divine perfection that Moses first appealed when the nation had sinned so terribly at Kadesh-Barnea (Num 14:18). It was the realization of God’s great forbearance which stayed David’s heart (Psa 145:8). When reviewing Israel’s history and God’s patience with them, Nehemiah said: “But thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, *slow to anger*” (Neh 9:17). In Nahum’s brief but powerful message, we read, “The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power” (Nah 1:3). The Lord Jesus pointed to this same perfection when He said to the Jews, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, *how often* would I have gathered thy children together!” (Mat 23:37).

Fourth, “*abundant in goodness*.” The Hebrew word is generally rendered “kindness.” David acknowledged this attribute of the divine character when he said, “Blessed be the LORD: for he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city” (Psa 31:21). The Hebrew word is also rendered “lovingkindness,” frequent mention of the same being made in the Psalms. “For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes” (Psa 26:3). “How excellent is thy

lovingkindness, O God!” (Psa 36:7). “We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple” (Psa 48:9). Isaiah declared: “I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD” (Isa 63:7). Through Jeremiah, God said: “But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD” (Jer 9:24). Let dispensationalists take note that the “lovingkindness” of God is mentioned far more frequently under the Mosaic economy than it is in the New Testament!

Fifth, “and truth.” The Hebrew word signifies “steadfastness.” “All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth” (Psa 25:10). “His truth shall be thy shield and buckler” (Psa 91:4). “For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds” (Psa 108:4). “The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it” (Psa 132:11). In Psalm 111:7, the word is rendered, “The works of his hands are *verity* and judgment”; and in Nehemiah 7:2, it is translated “faithful.” God is faithful to His covenant engagements and true to both His promises and His threatenings. How highly should we value this divine perfection: that our God “cannot lie” (Ti 1:2)!

Sixth, “keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Exo 34:7). How often God pardoned Israel’s sins! “For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. *But he*, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, *many a time* turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath” (Psa 78:37-38). How different is the God of Judaism from the dispensationalists’ perverted portrayal of Him! “Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption” (Psa 130:7). That was spoken to the nation which was under the Sinaitic covenant! “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins” (Isa 43:25). “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy” (Mic 7:18). Such, my reader, is the God of the Old Testament. Such was the blessed discovery which He made of Himself unto His people at *Sinai*.

Seventh, “and that will by no means clear the guilty.” Carnal reason will deem this a contradiction: for God to announce that He will pardon sin, and yet in the same breath declare He will not acquit the guilty—for what is pardon but an acquittal of those who are guilty? But there is no contradiction here: the guilty whom God pardoneth are penitent and believing sinners (Isa 55:7; Act 3:19); the ones He acquits not are the finally impenitent, who are found under guilt in the day of judgment (Psa 9:17; Rev 21:8). Let it not be forgotten that as the Law threatens death to the impenitent transgressor, so the Gospel proclaims damnation unto those who comply not with its terms (Mar 16:16). The Saviour presented both sides of the truth when He declared: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (Joh 3:36). Thus the God of the Old and the New Testaments is one and the same, and deals with men in precisely the same way!

It should be carefully noted that punitive justice is a branch of the divine “goodness” and was proclaimed here under that very notion, for when Moses had prayed so earnestly, “Shew me thy glory,” the LORD responded, “I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee” (Exo 33:18-19); and here in Exodus 34:6-7, He expounded the fullness of His glorious name. Thus, not only is justice an essential part of God’s character, but it is here included under the general notion of His *goodness*! Yet it must not be overlooked that God here spoke far more of His mercy than He did of His justice, and that it was mentioned before the other: “For justice is only added to invite men to take hold of His mercy, and to show that justice is never executed but in avenging the quarrel of abused mercy”—T. Manton. Mercy is what God delights in and judgment is His “strange work” (Isa 28:21); nevertheless, He here warns men not to presume upon His clemency—yea, declares that the hopes of those who do will certainly be dashed. In like manner, *in the Gospel* are revealed both the righteousness and the “wrath of God” (Rom 1:16-18).

“This emphatic proclamation of the divine name, or description of the character in which God wished to be known by His people, is in principle the same as that which heads the Ten Words: but it is of greater compass, and remarkable chiefly for the copious and prominent exhibition it gives of the gracious, tender, and benignant character of God as the Redeemer of Israel, that they might know how thoroughly they could trust in His goodness, and what ample encouragement they had to serve Him. It intimates indeed that obstinate transgressors should meet their desert, but gives this only the subordinate and secondary place, while *grace* occupies the foreground. Was this, we ask, to act like one who was more anxious to inspire terror than win affection from men? Did it seem as if He would have His revelation of Law associated in their minds with the demands of a rigid service, such as only an imperious sense of duty or a dread of consequences might constrain them to render? Assuredly not, and we know that the words of the Memorial Name, which He so closely linked with the restored tables of the Law, did take an

abiding hold of the more earnest and thoughtful spirits of the nation, and ever and anon, amid the seasons of greater darkness and despondency, came up with a joyous and reassuring effect into their hearts (Psa 103:8; Joe 2:13; Jon 4:2, etc.)”—Patrick Fairbairn (1805-1874).

It was this glorious discovery of His benign character, which Jehovah made to Israel at the giving of the Law, that made David to exclaim: “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth” (Psa 86:15). Abundant proof had He given of the same during the time which had elapsed since the days of Moses. Read through the book of Judges and mark how often, after the LORD had righteously chastened Israel for their grievous backslidings, it is recorded that “when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer” (Jdg 3:9, 15; 6:7, etc.)! It was on the basis of the same that Samuel urged Israel to walk worthily of such a God: “Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: *for* consider how great things he hath done for you” (1Sa 12:24)—there is no more *evangelical motive* than that employed in the New Testament when exhorting the saints to the performance of duty. So far from being under a harsh regime, they were taught “but he *giveth grace* unto the lowly” (Pro 3:34). It only remains for us now to add that, inasmuch as He “changeth not” (Psa 15:4), the same seven perfections of the divine character which we have contemplated above are exercised by God in His government of Christendom corporately, and of the Christian individually. With the Father of lights, there is “*no* variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam 1:17); and therefore, no change of dispensation can possibly effect any change in the manner in which He deals with His people.



AUGUST

Selling

“Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Pro 23:23). There are three things to be attended to in those words. First, a needful act to be performed—“buy”; second, an invaluable object to be acquired—“the truth”; third, a solemn prohibition to be observed—“sell it not.” The first two have already been before us; the third is now to engage our attention. As many distinct things are implied and imported in the “buying” of a spiritual object, so a number of different things are included in the figure of “selling.” As the “buy” is a figurative term to express desire, to seek, and make your own; so “sell it not” signifies despise it not, value it not lightly, grow not tired of it, and do not part with it, no matter how you may be induced by temptation to do so. At first sight, such an interdiction may strike us as strange and unnecessary: if the truth was valued and sought by us, surely we shall not now disesteem and discard it. Alas, the human heart is very unstable and its affections fickle. First love is easily lost. When the novelty of a thing wears off, enthusiasm usually wanes. Moreover, Satan hates the truth and fiercely assails those who buy it.

The Jews “were willing *for a season*” to rejoice in John the Baptist’s light (Joh 5:35). Even Herod revered our Lord’s forerunner, and listened to him—“and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly” (Mar 6:20)—yet soon after, consented to the beheading of him. When the truth became incarnate (Joh 14:6), what crowds first attended His preaching, yet later they cried, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him” (Joh 19:15)! Nor was it any better with those who became His regular attendants and adherents, for we are told, “Many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (Joh 6:66). Scripture contains many pertinent examples and solemn warnings for us to heed. Paul had to lament: “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2Ti 4:10); and to the Galatians, who had turned against him, the apostle wrote, “For I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” (Gal 4:15-16). What a sad picture is presented in Isaiah 59:14: “And judgment [discre-

tion] is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street.” How accurately that portrays present-day conditions: Truth *sold*—rejected, cast away as worthless, trodden underfoot!

If we compare other passages of God’s Word where “selling” is in view, it will the better enable us to understand the meaning and scope of the word “sell” in our text. Thus, “He [Esau] sold his birthright unto Jacob” (Gen 25:33), valuing it so lightly that he bartered it “for one morsel of meat” (Heb 12:16). Alas, how many preachers do likewise, sacrificing the truth for personal considerations: “And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise [literally, ‘a trade’] of you” (2Pe 2:3). Elijah made this charge against Ahab: “Thou hast *sold thyself* to work evil in the sight of the LORD” (1Ki 21:20). Lusting after Naboth’s vineyard, he listened to the evil counsel of his wife Jezebel and lost his soul in securing a piece of ground. In the days of Ahaz, the children of Judah: “And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and *sold themselves* to do evil” (2Ki 17:17)—that is to say, they gave themselves up willingly to Satan to be his slaves. Judas, the betrayer, sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver.

From the case of Esau, we see how that some esteem divine things so lightly that they prefer the gratification of their carnal appetites. From the case of Ahab, we learn that others allow the spirit of covetousness to make them blind to their own interests and ready to listen to the advice of the wicked, and so call down upon themselves the judgment of God. From the case of the children of Judah, we behold how that following the ways of the heathen issues in a fatal sale, which brings completely under the power of the devil. From the case of Judas, we are warned that even those who have enjoyed the highest spiritual privileges, and received the truth from the lips of Christ Himself, are in danger of betraying their trust. In addition to these examples, it should be pointed out that many have been guilty of selling the truth through a desire to maintain peace at any price. They rightly dislike controversy, but they wrongly preserve silence when it is their duty to “earnestly contend [yet not bitterly] for the faith” (Jude :3). The wisdom which is from above is “first *pure*, then peaceable” (Jam 3:17). Peace, like gold, may be bought too dearly. That unity which is bought by the sacrifice of any part of the truth is worthless.

None boasts so loudly of her unity, such as it is, as Rome, yet it is a product of *selling the truth*: taking the Bible away from the people, prohibiting the right of private judgment. While no real Christian will sell the truth in the absolute sense, yet he is prone to sacrifice “the *present* truth” (2Pe 1:12). There is some particular aspect of truth which the enemy more especially assails in each generation; and it is those controverted portions of it, those articles of the faith which are being opposed, that we most need to be on our guard against selling or renouncing. Again, any professing Christian who continues knowingly to listen to false doctrine is guilty of selling the truth and of disobeying its Author, for He expressly bids him, “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge” (Pro 19:27). He who is indifferent to what he hears from the pulpit places no value on the truth! Then “take heed *what* ye hear” (Mar 4:24). Thus, “sell it not” includes that we “henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:13); but rather that we “ask for the *old* paths, where is the *good way*, and walk therein,” and then “shall [we] find rest for our souls” (Jer 6:16).

It remains to point out that the negative implies the positive: thus, when it is said of Christ, “a bruised reed shall he not break” (Isa 42:3), it also intimates the tender care with which He supports and nourishes it. The sword of the Spirit is *two-edged*: where any evil is forbidden, the opposite good is to be understood as being enjoined; as on the other hand, where a duty is commanded, everything contrary to it is virtually forbidden. Hence, “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain” (Exo 20:7; Deu 5:11) also imports, Thou shalt hold it in the utmost honour and reverence. And “Thou shalt not kill” (Exo 20:13; Deu 5:17) comprehends, Thou shalt do all in thy power to preserve life. Consequently, “Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Pro 23:23) signifies “*stand fast*, and hold the traditions [oral ministry] which ye have been taught, whether by word [of mouth], or our [first] epistle” (2Th 2:15). “*Continue* in the faith grounded and settled” (Col 1:23). No matter what be the temptation to compromise, to be cowardly, or to act from selfish ends, “that which ye have already *hold fast* till I come” (Rev 2:25).

In conclusion, let us offer a few comments upon our text as a whole: “Buy the truth, and sell it not.” Go to some pains in making sure that what you obtain *is* “the truth,” and that involves our praying with David, “Teach me thy statutes” (Psa 119:12), and an emulating of the noble Bereans who searched the Scriptures daily to ascertain whether what they heard accorded with that holy Standard (Act 17:11). One reason why God permits so much error and confusion in the religious world is to *test souls*, and make it evident who are the ones who honestly desire, highly value, and diligently seek the truth. “Truth is that with which the heart must be girded and governed, for without it, there can be no good works”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714). It is those who acquire truth *cheaply*—second-hand, from others—who part with it *readily*; as the old adage says: “Lightly come, lightly go.” In reality, we possess no more truth than that which actually possesses *us*, which has become part of our experience and practice, our “shield

and buckler” (Psa 91:4). Those who suffered martyrdom rather than deny the faith refused to sell the truth! “*Prove* all things; *hold fast* that which is good” (1Th 5:21) supplies a parallel with our text.

The Prayers of the Apostles

2 Peter 1:2-3

This lengthy series of articles on prayer would be lacking in completeness if we took no notice of the benedictions with which the apostles (James excepted) prefaced their epistles. Those opening salutations were very different from a mere act of politeness, as when the chief captain of the Roman soldiers at Jerusalem wrote a letter after this manner: “Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting” (Act 23:26). Far more than a courteous formality were their introductory addresses, yea, even than the expressions of a kindly wish. Their “Grace be [to] you...and peace” (2Jo 1:3) was a *prayer*, an act of worship, in which Christ was always addressed in union with the Father. It signifies that a request for these blessings had been made before the Throne. Such evinced the warm affection in which the apostle held those to whom he wrote, and breathed forth his spiritual desires in their behalf. By putting this at the forefront, it made manifest how powerfully his own heart was affected by the goodness of God unto them.

That which is now to engage our attention may be considered under the following heads: First, the *matter* of the prayer: “Grace and peace”—those were the blessings besought of God. Second, the *measure* of their bestowment: “be multiplied unto you.” Third, the *medium* of their conveyance: “through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.” Fourth, the *motive* prompting the request: “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2Pe 1:2-3). Before filling in that outline or giving an exposition of those verses, let us point out (especially for the benefit of young preachers, *how* a verse should be pondered) what is *implied and imported* by this prayer.

In the apostle’s seeking from God such blessings as these for the saints, we are taught: First, that none can merit anything at the hands of God, for grace and merits are opposites. Second, that there can be no real peace apart from grace: “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isa 57:21). Third, that even the regenerate stand in need, constant need, of grace from God. Fourth, therefore they should be vile in their own eyes. If we would receive more from God, then we must present our hearts to Him as empty vessels. When Abraham was about to make request of the Lord, he demeaned himself as “dust and ashes” (Gen 18:27), and Jacob acknowledged that he was “not worthy of the least of [His] mercies” (Gen 32:10). Fifth, such a request as that was a tacit confession of the utter dependence of believers upon God’s bounty, that He alone could supply their need. Sixth, in asking for grace and peace to be “multiplied” unto them, acknowledgment was made that not only the beginning and continuance of them, but also their increase, proceeded from the good pleasure of God. Seventh, intimation was hereby given that we may “open [our] mouth wide” (Psa 81:10) unto God. Yea, it is an ill sign to be contented with a little grace. “He was never good that doth not desire to grow better”—Thomas Manton (1620-1677).

A word needs also to be said upon the character of the book in which this particular prayer is found. Like all *second* epistles, this one treats of a state of affairs where false teaching and apostasy had a more or less prominent place. One of the principal differences between his two epistles is that whereas in his first, Peter’s main design was to strengthen and comfort his brethren amid the suffering to which they were exposed from the profane (heathen) world (see our February article), he now graciously warns (2Pe 2:1, 3:1-3) and confirms (2Pe 1:5, 10, 3:14) them against a worse peril from the professing world, from those *within* Christendom who menaced them. In his first epistle, Peter had represented their great “adversary the devil, as a roaring lion” (1Pe 5:8); but here, without directly naming him, he appears as an angel of light, but in reality, the subtle serpent: no longer persecuting, but seeking to corrupt and poison them through false teaching. In the second chapter, those false teachers are denounced as men who denied the Lord that bought them (2Pe 2:1), and as licentious (verses 10-14, 19), giving free play to their carnal appetites.

Those whom the apostle addressed are described as “them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 1:1). By “faith” is here meant that act of the

soul whereby the truth is savingly apprehended. Their faith is declared to be “precious,” for it is one of God’s choicest gifts and the immediate fruit of His Spirit’s regenerating power. This is emphasized in the expression “have obtained,” which is the same Greek word as in Luke 1:9: “his *lot* was to burn incense,” and again in John 19:24, “let us...*cast lots* for it.” Thus, these saints were reminded that they owed their saving faith not to any superior sagacity of theirs, but solely to the allotments of grace. It had been with them as with Peter himself: a *revelation* had been made to them, not by flesh and blood, but by the heavenly Father (Mat 16:17). In the dispensing of God’s favours, a blessed portion had fallen to their share, even “the faith of [His] elect” (Ti 1:1). The “them” were Gentiles, and the “us” Jews. Their faith had for its *object* the perfect righteousness of Christ their Surety, for “through the righteousness of” is literally “*in* the righteousness of” the divine Saviour.

Having thus described his readers by their spiritual standing, Peter added his apostolic benediction, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you.” It has not been sufficiently recognized that there is in these salutations a beautiful *blending* of the western and eastern forms of greeting: “Peace” was the more distinctive Hebrew blessing, and “grace” the more prominent Greek one. Those who have read the Old Testament attentively will remember how frequently and how uniformly “peace be unto thee” is found: see Genesis 43:23; Judges 6:23; 18:6, etc. “Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces” (Psa 122:7) shows it was a general term to denote *welfare*. From its use by the risen Saviour in John 20:19, we gather it was an all-inclusive summary of blessing. In contrast with the “Peace be unto you” of the Old Testament is the “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (Rom 16:20; and compare 1Co 16:23; Gal 6:18; Rev 22:21), as the one commonly found in the New Testament. Hence, in this apostolic benediction, we see believing Jews and believing Gentiles are united in sharing the full blessing of God.

Having an earnest desire for their welfare, Peter sought for the saints the choicest bounties which could be conferred upon them, that they might be morally and spiritually enriched, both inwardly and outwardly. “Grace and peace” contain the sum of Gospel bestowments and the supply of our every need. Together they include all manner of blessings, and therefore, they are the most comprehensive things which can be requested of God. They are the choicest favours we can desire for ourselves, *and for our brethren!* They are to be sought by faith from God our Father, in reliance upon the mediation and merits of our Lord Jesus Christ; both being communicated by the Holy Spirit—which is the reason why He is not here mentioned. “Grace and peace” are the very essence, as well as the whole of a believer’s true happiness in this life—hence the apostle’s longing that his brethren in Christ might abundantly partake of them.

“Grace” is not to be understood here in the sense of God’s favour, for these saints were already the objects thereof; nor of grace as an inward spiritual principle or “nature,” for that was imparted to them at the new birth. Rather was it a greater degree and manifestation of it, as in 2 Corinthians 12:9. It was a request that there should be further exercises and discoveries of God’s benignity unto them. Scripture distinguishes between “the grace of God, and the gift by grace” (Rom 5:15), as it also informs us that “he giveth more grace” (Jam 4:6). Though the fundamental meaning and reference of “grace” be to the free favour of God, the term is often used in a wider sense to include all those blessings which flow from His sovereign kindness; and it is to be so understood in the apostolic benedictions—a prayer for the continued and increased expression and manifestation of the same. “And peace.” The two benefits are fitly joined together, for the one is never found without the other—without grace, there can be no solid and durable peace. The former is God’s good will unto us; the latter is His grand work in us. In proportion as grace is communicated, peace is enjoyed. Grace to sanctify the heart; peace to comfort the soul.

“Peace” is one of the principal fruits of the Gospel as it is received into a believing heart, being that tranquility of mind which arises from the sense of our acceptance with God. It is not an objective but a subjective peace which is here in view. “Peace *with* God” (Rom 5:1) is *judicial*, being what Christ made for His people (Col 1:20), but faith conveys a reflex in the conscience of our amity with God. In proportion as faith rests upon the peace made with God by the blood of Christ and of our acceptance in Him will be our rest of soul. In and through Christ, God is at peace with believers, and the fruit or effect of this is “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom 14:17). But we are not in a capacity to receive and enjoy those blessings until we have surrendered to Christ’s Lordship and taken His yoke upon us. It is therefore “the peace of God [ruling] in [our] hearts” (Col 3:15) for which the apostles prayed, and *that* is the result of a Scriptural assurance of God’s favour and the maintaining of communion with Him by an obedient walk. It is also peace with *ourselves*. We are at peace with ourselves when conscience ceases to accuse us and our affections and wills submit themselves unto an enlightened mind. Furthermore, it includes concord and amity with our fellow Christians (Rom 15:5-6)—“The multitude of them that believed were of *one heart* and of one soul” (Act 4:32).

“Grace and peace” are the heritage of God’s people, and of them, Peter desired that they should enjoy very much more than a mere “sip” or taste. As 2 Peter 3:18 intimates, he longed that they should “grow in grace,” and that they might be filled with peace (compare Rom 15:13), and made request accordingly. His “be multiplied unto you” signified that larger and still more lavish displays of God’s goodness might be made unto them, both in its manifestations and in their apprehensions of the same; that an abundant supply of grace and peace should be conferred upon them. They were already the favoured partakers of those divine benefits, but request was made for a plentiful increase of them. Spiritual things (unlike material) do not cloy in the enjoyment of them, and therefore, we cannot have too much of the same. “Peace be multiplied” intimates there are degrees of assurance, and that we never cease to be dependent upon free grace. The dimensions of this request teach us that it is our privilege to ask God not only for more grace and peace, but for an amplitude thereof. God is most honoured when we make the largest demands upon His bounty. If there is straitness, it is in ourselves, and never in Him.

“Through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.” The careful reader, who is not too dilatory to compare passage with passage, will have observed a variation from the salutation used by Peter in his first epistle (1Pe 1:2). There he prayed, “Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied”; the addition (“through the knowledge of God,” etc.) made here being a significant one, in keeping with his altered design, and appropriate to his present aim. The student will also have noted that “knowledge” is one of the prominent words of this epistle (see 2Pe 1:2, 3, 5, 6, 8; 2:20, 21; 3:18). We should also consider how frequently the Saviour is designated “our Lord” (2Pe 1:11, 14, 16, etc.), in contrast with the graceless professors who submitted not unto His scepter. That “knowledge of God” is not a natural, but a spiritual one, not a speculative, but an experiential; nor is it simply of the God of creation and providence, but as a covenant God in Christ. This is evident from its being joined to or connected with “Jesus our Lord.” It is therefore an evangelical knowledge of God which is here in view. He cannot be savingly known except in and through Christ: “Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” (Mat 11:27).

In as much as this prayer was for grace and peace to be “multiplied” unto the saints “through [or more literally *in*] the knowledge of God,” there was a tacit intimation that they would both abide and advance in that knowledge. “The more one advances in the knowledge of God, every kind of blessing increases also”—John Calvin (1509-1564) on this verse. A spiritual and experiential knowledge of God is the grand *means* by which all the influences of grace and peace are conveyed to us. God works upon us as rational creatures, agreeably to our intellectual and moral nature—knowledge preceding all else. As there is no real “peace” apart from grace, so there is no grace and peace without a saving knowledge of God, and no such knowledge of Him is possible but in and through “Jesus our Lord,” for Christ is the channel by which every blessing is transmitted to the members of His mystical body. As the more windows a house has, the more light enters it, so the greater our knowledge of God, the greater our measure of grace and peace. But the evangelical knowledge of the most mature saint is only fragmentary and feeble, and admits of continual augmentation by the divine blessing upon those means which have been appointed to that end.

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2Pe 1:3). Therein the apostle found his *motive* for making the above request. It was because God *had* already wrought so wondrously for these saints that he was moved to ask Him to continue dealing lavishly with them. We may also regard this third verse as being brought in to encourage *the faith* of these Christians: that, since God had done such great things for them, they should expect further liberal supplies from Him. It will be noted that the inspiring motive was a purely evangelical one, and not a legal or mercenary. God had bestowed upon them everything needful for the production and preservation of spirituality in their souls, and the apostle longed to see them maintained in a healthy and vigorous condition. Divine power is the foundation of spiritual life, grace is what supports it, and peace is the element in which it thrives. “All things that pertain unto life and godliness” may also be understood as referring to life in glory: a right unto it, a meetness for it, and an earnest of it, had already been bestowed upon them. Finally, as the contents of verse 3 may also be regarded as the *ground* of the exhortation in verses 5 to 7...so the supply asked for in verse 3 should be regarded as the necessary *equipment* for the same.

The Life and Times of Joshua

48. Victory, Part 2

Lack of space obliged us to conclude our July article abruptly—in the middle of indicating something of the typical teaching of the eighth chapter. We raised the query, What contribution does this incident of the capturing and destroying of Ai—following upon Israel’s earlier repulse there—make to the principal theme of this book? Wherein does it contain valuable instruction for the Christian concerning his spiritual warfare? We pointed out the twofold difficulty involved in arriving at an answer: the fact that Israel had *missed God’s* best, and because it is the human side of things, which is the more prominent—each of which renders it less easy to perceive the principles of operation. Because Israel were here enjoying only God’s second best, His efforts on their behalf were curtailed: though He gave them victory, yet He wrought no open miracle for them—as He did both at the Jordan and Jericho. Because Israel had yielded to a spirit of pride and self-sufficiency (Jos 7:3), they were required to resort to humiliating tactics in order to conquer a weaker foe. When the human side of things has a larger place, it is harder to discern its inter-relation with the divine.

Taking the three leading events together, we see that God does not act uniformly, nor does He require His people mechanically to adopt the same line of procedure on all occasions. Entirely different tasks were assigned Israel in regard to the crossing of Jordan, the capturing of Jericho, and the conquest of Ai. This teaches us that we are to employ a variety of means and methods in the prosecution of our spiritual warfare. Different foes are to be tackled and overcome in different ways; yet in each case, there must be an entire submission to the revealed will of God, and full dependence upon Him for His blessing of our efforts—obeying His precepts and relying on His promises. Taking them in their broadest sense, Israel’s crossing of the Jordan may be regarded as showing us how the most formidable *natural obstacles* may be overcome. The capturing of Jericho reveals the sufficiency of the *Gospel*, under God, to demolish the most powerful of the enemy’s strongholds. The conquering of Ai indicates how *error* is to be vanquished.

In regard to the crossing of the Jordan, Israel were required to proceed along the path of duty so long as it was clear before them (Jos 3:2-3, 14-16); and then count upon God to remove that which impeded them, or make a way through it. They were bidden to advance with their eyes on the ark, in which were deposited the two tables of stone on which were inscribed the Ten Commandments. Because of their honouring His Law, God wrought a miracle for them. In connection with the capture of Jericho, Israel were ordered to carry the ark of the covenant before the congregation—to intimate that victory was to be looked for only from Jehovah. It adumbrated the triumphs of the Gospel—when faithfully preached and the power of an ungrieved Spirit attends the same (2Co 10:4). It was when the trumpets were sounded that the walls fell (Jos 6:20; and compare Joe 2:15 and 1Co 14:8). In keeping with what we have said above, when we seek its spiritual application to the Christian’s warfare, Joshua 8 presents more difficulty, particularly in determining what Ai itself *stands for*. It may have more than one symbolical significance, but that which appears most likely to us is the destruction of error.

Among the considerations or reasons which have led us to regard Ai as standing for error are the following: First, because deviation from and opposition to the truth is one of the most powerful forces against which the minister of the Gospel has to contend; and therefore, it is to be expected that there should be some prefiguration of the same in the book of Joshua. Second, because “Ai” signifies “a heap of ruins,” which aptly describes Satan’s perversions of the truth. Third, because of the *strategy* there appointed. Ai was not overthrown by a frontal assault, but by an ambush which seized it from the rear. And error is overthrown not by a direct attack upon it, but by an indirect. Would that this were more widely recognized and heeded today. The way to dispel the darkness is to turn on the light! Souls are delivered from the snares of the devil not by attempting to refute his lies, but by giving them the truth. Christ gave His apostles no commission to expose the sophistries of paganism, but commanded them to preach the Gospel to every creature. When they complained that the Pharisees were offended at His teaching, He said, “Let them alone” (Mat 15:12-14). Their business was not to pluck up “tares,” but to sow the Word. The only divinely appointed method of fighting Russelism, Romanism, and any other -ism, is by fully declaring “all the counsel of God” (Act 20:27)!

Turning from the corporate bearing of this incident to the *individual application*, the following are inculcated: 1. Do not attempt to meet Satan on his own ground, but draw him out into the open—the Light. 2. Previous defeats may be turned into successes if we humble ourselves before God and submit to His directions, particularly mortifying the spirit of self-confidence and self-reliance. 3. Certain of our enemies are not conquered by a direct attack on

them, but rather by an indirect: that is to say, some of our lusts are best overcome by developing the contrary graces—as timidity by cultivating a spirit of boldness, impatience by fostering a spirit of perseverance. 4. Beware of underestimating the strength of the enemy and imagining that a half-hearted effort on your part will suffice: it was through doing this that Israel met with defeat in their original venture against Ai. 5. Ever be seeking to turn to your advantage a knowledge of how the enemy will act. 6. Be alert and swift to seize a favourable opportunity (Jos 8:19). 7. The pastor cannot secure your inheritance: *you* have to fight for it—“all” (Jos 8:1). Yet the pastor has no right to expect his members to succeed, unless he has given them full instructions how to act.

There is also much comfort here, as well as instruction for the soldiers of Christ: 1. When we have suffered a serious setback (Jos 7:4-5) and have contritely humbled ourselves before the LORD (verses 6-9), His Word unto us is “fear not, neither be thou dismayed” (Jos 8:1); and thus, we may return to the conflict with renewed confidence. 2. We are divinely assured of final victory from the outset (verse 7), so that no matter what repulses may be met with, we must not lose heart. 3. We have the advantage of knowing beforehand how the enemy will act (verses 5-6), and should therefore conduct ourselves accordingly. 4. The antitypical Joshua is with His people by night (verse 9), as well as day; and consequently, He not only “giveth his beloved sleep” (Psa 127:2), but *guards* them, so that He makes them “dwell in safety” (Psa 4:8). 5. God exerts both a restraining (Jos 8:14) and an impelling power (verse 16) upon our enemies, which is greatly to our advantage. 6. God can be absolutely relied upon to make good His promises (verses 18, 26), and this should be the stay of our hearts in the darkest hours. 7. He rewards our obedience (verse 27) both in this life and in that which is to come.

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that is in thy hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand” (Jos 8:18). The next verse makes it clear that the LORD had previously instructed His servant so to do; and thus, He now only renewed the order, indicating thereby that the moment had arrived for him to start the actual engagement. And thus it ever is: the Lord will not fail any who are truly submissive unto and dependent upon Him, but will give the needful word of direction and assurance just when it is required. But why should the LORD now say unto Joshua, “For I *will give* it into thine hand,” when He had previously declared, “I *have given* into thy hand the king of Ai,” etc. (verse 1)? There is nothing inconsistent between the two statements: the former respected His decree; and the latter referred to the execution of the same. Likewise, Christ spoke of those whom the Father *had* given Him (Joh 17:9, 11) by electing grace; and also, “All that the Father *giveth* me [by actual regeneration] shall come to me” (Joh 6:37). “And Joshua stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city” (Jos 8:18), complying promptly with the divine injunction.

“And the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand: and they entered into the city, and took it, and hasted and set the city on fire” (Jos 8:19). The outstretching of Joshua’s spear was evidently the pre-arranged signal for this part of his army to act, for upon his so doing, they immediately arose from the place of their concealment. It shows that they had kept their eyes fixed steadfastly upon their leader, as we also are bidden to do (Heb 12:2). It was in that way they had responded to his original injunction, “Be ye all ready” (Jos 8:4). They carried out their appointed task with the utmost dispatch. Observe how the Holy Spirit has recorded the promptitude of their actions, making mention of their alacrity no less than three times in this verse; thereby indicating the pleasure which God takes in the saints running in “the way of [His] commandments” (Psa 119:32). This was clearly a case where speed was called for. They had waited long, and now was the moment to make themselves masters of the city. When the course of duty is clear, we must not be guilty of delay or tardiness.

Not only is the promptitude of these men of the ambush emphasized, but the preciseness and completeness of their obedience is chronicled too. No sooner did they capture Ai than they set the city on fire, just as they had been ordered to do (Jos 8:8). Having met with no opposition or difficulty in occupying Ai, they did not then sit down and take things easily, but paused not until they had carried out the whole of Joshua’s instructions. That too points an important lesson for us. When God has graciously granted our efforts a measure of success, there must be no slackening in the good fight of faith: rather should gratitude unto Him stir us to strive after yet fuller conformity to His revealed will. Especially does this apply to the veterans in Christ’s army, who, because of advancing years and increased infirmities, are tempted to rest on their oars. There is no such thing as remaining stationary in the spiritual life: if we do not continue going forward, we inevitably slide backward. Let elderly pilgrims prayerfully ponder the example of the aged apostle in Philippians 3:12-14.

“And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and, behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way: and the people that fled to the wilderness turned back upon the pursuers” (Jos 8:20). Now that it was too late to remedy their previous carelessness (“wist not”—verse 14), they gave some attention to their rear, only to discover that their homes were blazing. What they now beheld filled them with consternation, for they realized the hopelessness of their plight. So panic-stricken were they, their

spirits sank—“they had no power to flee.” That too was “of the LORD,” though He used such means as the horror evoked by seeing their houses alight and the turning round of Joshua and his men. In like manner, the lost sinner is reduced to a similar state of impotence, anguish, and despair, when, with nothing but a mis-spent life to look back upon—now reduced to smoke—the hour of divine Judgment falls upon him.

“And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city, and that the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again, and slew the men of Ai” (Jos 8:21). This is both an amplification and explanation of the last clause of the preceding verse. The smoking houses of Ai made it plain to Joshua and the force that was with him that the ambush had made themselves masters of the city, and that they would now be able to advance and attack the Canaanites from their rear. Accordingly, Joshua and his men ceased their flight toward the wilderness, turned around, and fell upon their pursuers. As the former contingent had delayed not in performing the task allotted them, so the main body of Israel’s army acted with celerity. Thus, we observe again that the success of this strategy turned upon the co-operation and exact timing of the two forces. Had the ambush been tardy, Joshua and his men had been held up. So it is in the corporate warfare of Christians: one church needs to act in fellowship with and support of another. Until there is more unity among the Lord’s own people and concerted evangelical effort by them, there is no prospect of any improvement in moral, social, or international conditions.

“And the other issued out of the city against them; so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side: and they smote them, so that they let none of them remain or escape” (Jos 8:22). The Canaanites were now “between two fires” or forces, so that they could not flee backward or forward. As there was no way of escape left them, so they had no spirit to resist (verse 20). “See how quickly, how easily, the scale turns against those who have not God on their side!”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714). What a solemn illustration is here seen of that divine declaration: “For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them” (Ecc 9:12). No quarter was shown the Canaanites (Jos 8:24): “God the righteous Judge had passed this sentence upon them for their wickedness, so that the Israelites were only the ministers of His justice and the executioners of His decree”—M. Henry. The indiscriminate destruction of male and female—young and old, at the flood, in Sodom, and here—demonstrated the universality of sin and guilt, that *all* are equally under the wrath of God, and that “*whosoever* was not found written in the book of life” will be “cast into the lake of fire” (Rev 20:15).

Joshua’s men had evidently received instructions not to slay the king of Ai, for a more ignominious death was reserved for him. Accordingly, he was taken alive and brought to Joshua (Jos 8:23). Concerning him, we are told, “And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, that remaineth unto this day” (verse 29). Thus, he fell not upon the field of battle while fighting valiantly, but met with the shameful end of a malefactor. Deuteronomy 21:23 solemnly explains this detail: “For he that is hanged is accursed of God” (compare Gal 3:13), so that this death of Ai’s king testified to his being the enemy of God and His people. His carcass being cast “at the entering of the gate of the city” added to his disgrace, for it was there that he had exercised his judicial authority (Ru 4:1; Dan 2:49; Amo 5:12). Verily, the “triumphing of the wicked is short” (Job 20:5).

In conclusion, let us point out to young preachers that the above incident may be used for a sermon to the unsaved, entitling it, “The Doom of the Reckless.” In the introduction, show that as Esau exemplified the doom awaiting the carnal and self-indulgent; Pharaoh, the obdurate defier of God; Balaam, the lover of money—so Ai’s king, the *reckless*. The following points concerning the king of Ai should be developed: 1. He belonged to a race under the condemnation of God (Gen 9:25). 2. He resided in a city which signifies “a heap of ruins”—such is this world as the result of the fall. 3. He dwelt in a place marked out for destruction (Jos 8:1-2; 2Pe 3:10). 4. At first, he appeared to be successful in fighting against God and His people (Jos 7:5; Ecc 8:11-12). 5. This gave him false confidence (Jos 8:6). 6. He failed to take the most elementary precautions—see last paragraph of our June article. 7. He was blind to his own interest and immediate danger (verse 14). 8. He influenced others to act rashly (verse 16). 9. He took no precautions against the supreme crisis (verse 17). 10. He died the death of the accursed. Application: there was no way of escape for him (verse 20); but there is for *you*—by heeding Jeremiah 29:13, and sheltering in Him who was made a curse for believers.

The Doctrine of Revelation

32. In Glory, Part 5

Though God has not given us the Scriptures in order to gratify an idle or carnal curiosity, yet it has pleased Him graciously to reveal sufficient in them to satisfy the spiritual aspirations and expectations of His people concerning the life to come; nevertheless, it is neither the prayerless nor the indolent who apprehend and enjoy much therein. In our previous studies, we have shown from the Word of truth that the saint dies in union and communion with the Lord, that an angelic guard of protection and honour conducts him to the Father's House on high, that he is there greeted by those believers whom he had befriended upon earth and who have entered before him into their inheritance, and that Christ Himself receives him and presents him faultless before the Throne of His glory with exceeding joy. We have seen that the company of the redeemed and our fellowship with them—yes, and with the holy angels also—constitutes a part of heaven's blessedness; yet that such privileges are entirely subordinate to the blissful communion we shall have with Christ Himself. The supreme and climacteric joy will be found in that One who occupies both the central and supreme Throne in heaven. Nor would any saint have it otherwise. *Christ* is the One who loved him and gave Himself for him; and therefore, He is not only his Saviour, his Beloved, but his "all" (Col 3:11).

Well might the Psalmist, under the Spirit of inspiration, exclaim: "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee" (Psa 31:19). A part of that which God, in His eternal purpose, designed for His people, is entered into and enjoyed by them during their earthly pilgrimage; but far more is "laid up for them" for their eternal felicity. The good or best wine is reserved for the end—for the marriage feast (Joh 2:10)—and its inexpressible excellence is indicated by the "Oh how great"! Then it is that we shall participate in the consummation of God's "so great salvation" (Heb 2:3): we shall be as happy and blessed as it is possible for creatures to be. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Psa 36:8-9). It is blessed to note that in the Hebrew word for "pleasures," there is the plural of "Eden." As Horne said: "In heaven alone, the thirst of an immortal soul after happiness can be satisfied. There the streams of Eden will flow again." To *drink of* that "river" (compare Rev 22:1), we understand to signify to be favoured with an unclouded knowledge of God and a pure affection to Him.

There are two of the divine titles which ought to appeal particularly unto believers: "The God of all grace" (1Pe 5:10) and "the God of glory" (Psa 29:3). The former is much the better known one, yet it is the latter which receives the most prominence in Scripture. There we read of "the Father of glory" (Eph 1:17), while the Son is styled, "the King of glory" (Psa 24:7) and "the Lord of glory" (1Co 2:8); and the Comforter is termed "the spirit of glory" (1Pe 4:14). Those appellations speak not only of what God is in Himself essentially, but also of what He is in His relations and acts unto His dear people. As Samuel E. Pierce (b. 1827) pointed out, "The God of glory expresses what He hath prepared for us, what He will bestow upon us, and what He will be to us in the house eternal in the heavens." "Glory" imports an excellency (Mat 4:8), yea, a height of excellency (2Pe 1:17); and therefore, that place and state of blessedness into which believers enter immediately after death, and into which their Forerunner was "received," is designated "glory" (1Ti 3:16). It is striking to note that the Hebrew word (*tabod*) means both "weight" and "glory," as though to tell us that what seems so nebulous unto men is that which alone possesses substance and solidity—explaining the apostle's expression, "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" in 2 Corinthians 4:17.

"Glory" is connected with that which is exceedingly lovely to look upon, for when we read of "the *glory* of his countenance" (2Co 3:7), we know it was no ordinary beauty and radiance which illumined the face of Moses when he came down from the mount, but one that was too dazzling for the beholders to gaze upon, so that he had to cover it with a veil (Exo 34:35). So, too, Paul tells us that when the Saviour appeared to him on the way to Damascus, "there shone from heaven a great light round about me." No ordinary light was it, for he added: "I could not see for the *glory of that light*" (Act 22:6, 11). Thus it is in a heaven itself: the celestial city "had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev 21:23). What then must be "the *riches of his glory*" (Eph 3:16)! During their sojourn here, believers are made partakers of "the riches of his *grace*" (Eph 1:7); but in the life to come, God will "make known the riches of his *glory* on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory" (Rom 9:23)—and *they* are "his riches in glory by *Christ Jesus*" (Phi 4:19).

That a revelation of God in Christ unto His saints in glory will satisfy every longing of the renewed heart is implied in the request of Philip: “Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us” (Joh 14:8)—for that is an indirect acknowledgment that there is such a sufficiency in viewing Him, as will be enough to completely content all the insatiable desires of the soul. Three tenses are used in connection with the saint’s absorption with Christ’s excellency: First, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we *beheld* his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (Joh 1:14), which is realized at our conversion, when a supernatural revelation of Christ is made to the heart. Second, “But we all, with open face *beholding* as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:18), which is a progressive experience in the Christian’s life, as by the exercise of faith upon the personal and official perfections of Christ; and as they are set forth in the written Word and under the gracious agency of the Spirit, we are transformed, being assimilated to His holy image. Third, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they *may behold* my glory” (Joh 17:24), which is realized when they are removed from earth to heaven.

We are from our regeneration to our glorification, taking in Christ into our renewed understanding. It is but little that we now apprehend of Him, yet the least degree of spiritual apprehension of Him received into our hearts from the Word of truth renders Him more precious to us than the gold of Ophir. Imperfect though it be, yet even in this life, the genuine Christian has a real and solid, convincing and affecting knowledge of Christ. By the gracious operations of the Spirit, his faith is called into exercise in such a manner that it obtains both evidence and subsistence of the things of God in the soul (Heb 11:1). As the eye of the body conveys to the mind an image of the object beheld, so faith (which is the eye of the soul) takes in a true knowledge of Christ, so that He is “formed [within]” him (Gal 4:19). Thereby he procures as accurate a knowledge of His person as he ever will in heaven. When the believer shall see Christ “face to face” (1Co 13:12), it will be identically the same Person he formerly beheld by faith, through a mirror obscurely. It will be no stranger to whom he needs an introduction that the believer will meet with on high, but One whom he savingly knew here below, and with whom he enjoyed an all-too-brief, yet real and precious, fellowship.

Let there be no mistake upon this point: in *this* life, every born-again person experiences the truth of those words, “But whosoever drinketh of 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). That does not mean he will not desire a more complete knowledge of Christ, deeper draughts of His love, and sensible enjoyments of Him; but that a satisfying portion is now his. He “thirsts” indeed, yet not for any other portion, but for larger measures of it. He will never more be without that which will abundantly meet his every longing. The saints in heaven know *more* of Christ, but they do not know Him *more truly* than they did on earth. By the Spirit, the mind is enlightened to receive the true and saving knowledge of Christ, and we are brought to believe on Him with all our hearts. By Him, we are “given...an understanding, that we may know him that is true” (1Jo 5:20). The Spirit is graciously pleased to reveal Christ to us as He is set forth in the Word; nevertheless, each of us yearns with Paul “that I may know him”—more perfectly (Phi 3:10).

Further and grander manifestations of God will be enjoyed by saints in heaven than on earth, yet this will be different only in degree, and not in kind, from that which is vouchsafed His people in this life. It will indeed immeasurably exceed in fullness and clarity anything which they are now capable of enjoying, but for *substance*, it will be the same. Grace is glory in the bud; glory is grace in full fruition. The good wine of the kingdom is sampled by them now, but their cup of bliss will then be full to overflowing. Even here, the Spirit shows us “things to come” (Joh 16:13); but there, we shall enter into the full possession of them. That communion with Christ in glory which the redeemed enjoy at present, those refreshings in which they participate from the fountain of His love, are termed “the firstfruits of the Spirit” (Rom 8:23)—samples of the harvest of blessedness awaiting them: as a cluster of the luscious grapes of Canaan was brought to Israel before they entered the Land (Num 13:23). Such experiences are also termed “the *earnest* of the Spirit in our hearts” (2Co 1:22). An “earnest” is a small token of the whole yet to come, a part payment of the thing itself; what we now enjoy is a foretaste of the coming feast.

“The fullness of the felicity of heaven may appear if we compare with it the *present* joys and comforts of the Holy Spirit. Such are they as that the Scripture styles them strong consolation (Heb 6:17), full joy (Joh 15:11), joy unspeakable and full of glory (1Pe 1:8), and abounding consolation (2Co 1:5). And yet, all the joy and peace that believers are partakers of in this life is but as a drop to the ocean, as a single cluster to the whole vintage, as the thyme or honey upon the thigh of a bee to the whole hive fully fraught with it; or as the break and peep of day to the bright noontide. And yet these tastes of the water, wine, and honey of this celestial Canaan, with which the Holy Spirit makes glad the hearts of believers, are far more desirable and satisfactory than the overflowing streams of all earthly felicities. And there are none who have once tasted of them, but say as the Samaritan woman did: ‘Lord,

give me that water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.’ (Joh 4:15). So also the first and early dawns of the heavenly light fill the soul with more serenity, and ravish it with more pure joy, than the brightest sunshine of all worldly splendour can ever do”—William Spurstow (1605?–1666), 1656.

To see God in His Word and works is the happiness of saints on earth; but to see Him in Christ face to face will be the fullness of their blessedness in heaven. None can doubt that the apostle Paul was favoured with the most intimate, exalted, and frequent communion with Christ down here; yet he declared that to depart and be with Him is “*far better*” (Phi 1:23). He did not say “to depart, and to be in paradise,” but “to be with Christ”! So again, “absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2Co 5:8)—not “safe at home in heaven.” From the earliest times, it was announced “*unto him shall the gathering of the people be*” (Gen 49:10). That receives a threefold fulfillment at least: at conversion, when they are drawn to Him by the power of the Father (Joh 6:44); in the assembly, to worship Him by the power of the Spirit (Mat 18:20); and at death or His return, when He brings them to Himself on high. “*My beloved is gone down into his garden, ...to gather lilies*” (Song 6:2). Christ comes into His “garden” (the local church) sometimes to plant new lilies; at others, to crop; and also, to gather old ones to remove them into His paradise (“garden”) above. “Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice” (Psa 50:5).

“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me” (Joh 8:24). Too many of our moderns would postpone the realization of that request until the “Eternal State,” but there is nothing in Scripture which intimates that the saints will have to await the resurrection morning ere they shall gaze upon their glorified Lord. It should be quite clear to the reader from all that we have set before him that the obscure, partial, and transient enjoyment of Christ which is his in this life is turned into a clear, full, perfect, and permanent enjoyment of Him immediately after death. The beatific vision will then be his—designated such because, having been freed from all the darkness and limitation which indwelling sin places upon the soul, he will then be able to take in his full measure of bliss. At first, his vision of Christ will be wholly spiritual and intellectual: after the resurrection, it will be corporeal also. In heaven, the Son will be seen in all the surpassing dignity and splendour of His person, His perfections shining forth in cloudless lustre. “Then how should believers long to be with Him! Most men need patience to *die*; a believer should need patience to *live*!”—John Flavel (1627-1691).

On high, the Christian will have an immediate, uninterrupted, and satisfying view of the Lord of glory. In Him, the Incomprehensible Three will be manifested in the uttermost display of Their excellencies, before all the holy angels and saints. It is *that* which will be the supreme blessedness of heaven, and which each believer shall for ever behold, filling him with such concepts of the divine glory as he can never express. He will be eternally admiring the same, rejoicing in it, having communion with God over it, praising Him for it. The heart will then be everlastingly fixed upon Christ as its Centre. The glory of Christ is very dear unto the saints. They have a spiritual perception of it now, but a far greater apprehension of it will be theirs when they are removed from this vale of tears and are “present with the Lord” (2Co 5:8). Then shall they behold the King in His beauty, and that supernatural sight shall be theirs for ever. Paul could go no higher than “so shall we ever be with the Lord.” Not merely beholding His glory as spectators, but taken into intimate fellowship with the same.

How overwhelming must be the first open sight of Christ! What will be our feelings when, without any intervening medium, we shall behold the Son of God? Who can fitly visualize our first meeting with the eternal Lover of our souls? What stretch of imagination can comprehend the experience of soul as we behold Him who is “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16)? No doubt the Christian reader has, like this scribe, attempted to anticipate those moments when he will first gaze upon that blessed One whose visage was (through pain and suffering) more marred than any other’s, but which now shines with a splendour exceeding that of the midday sun, and which will beam with love as He welcomes to Himself another of His redeemed. Doubtless, when we behold His glorified humanity, which is personally united to the divine nature, and is exalted far above all principalities and powers, we shall be lost in wonder, love, and praise. If the wise men fell down and worshipped Him when they saw Him in the house as a “young child with Mary his mother” (Mat 2:11), what will be our feelings when we see Him seated upon the Father’s Throne? Such views shall we then have of His excellency as will satiate our souls with holy admiration and joy inexpressible.

Our efforts to anticipate that blissful experience will be aided somewhat if we bear in mind that we shall then be completely rid of sin and of selfishness of character, which mars even the regenerate in this life. “Every thing we now enjoy, though even of a spiritual nature, is tinged with *self*. If we contemplate the glories of God in His Trinity of Persons, as revealed to us in Christ; if we feel our souls going forth under the divine leadings of the Holy Spirit in sweet communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ; if the soul be led to bless God, when at any

time receiving love-tokens of pardon, consolation, strength, or any of the ten thousand times ten thousand marks of grace, like the dew from heaven, coming to us from the Lord; in all these, self and self interest is mingled. But there is an infinitely higher source of pure unmixed felicity, which the disembodied spirit will immediately enter upon when all selfishness is lost in the love of God”—Robert Hawker (1753-1827). There the soul will be lifted up above itself, absorbed entirely with God in Christ, independent of what He is *to* us and all that He has done *for* us.

Christ, the God-man Mediator, is the grand Centre of heaven’s blessedness and the all-ingrossing Object of its inhabitants. “In the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain” (Rev 5:6), and the hosts surrounding Him sing: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (verses 11-12). It is the contemplation of this most glorious Christ which will constitute the holiness and happiness of the saints for all eternity. To behold His beauty will be infinitely more than all the benefits we derive from Him. Our refined and enlarged intellectual and spiritual faculties will be so engaged with and exercised upon Him that it will be impossible for us to fall again into sin. In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead personally. In and through Him, the Triune God is displayed before elect angels and saints, reflecting on them the full blaze of the divine perfections. It is a Christ “who [is] the brightness [effulgence] of [God’s] glory” (Heb 1:3) that we shall for ever enjoy. Christ is the Medium and Mirror in which the redeemed shall see God. “In Him we shall behold the manifestation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as far as the invisibility of the divine essence can admit of revelation” (R. Hawker)—and so far as finite creatures will be capable of apprehending it.

As all the glory of the sun is inherent in itself and is only apparently in the object it shines upon, so all the glory of heaven centres in Christ and is treasured up in Him for them—as all grace is (2Ti 2:1)—and He imparts it unto them. Our blessedness in heaven will not be independent of the Lord, but conveyed to us out of His fullness. “Christ’s glory, as the God-man, is that of the Godhead dwelling personally in Him. That glory is founded upon the union of the human nature with the nature of God. This glory breaks forth and shines through His human nature, as if the sun were encompassed with a case of clear crystal: how glorious would that crystal be!”—Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680). Christ’s glory is so inherently and essentially in Himself that He is designated “the Lord of glory” (1Co 2:8), and His ineffable beauty will be so beheld by us as to be reflected upon us, as the countenance of Moses shone with a more-than-natural light after his communion with Jehovah. Christ has indeed an incommunicable glory, yet according to our capacity, *we* shall be partakers of the glory which the Father has “given” Him (Joh 17:22).

Glorious Sinai

Part 8

We must now consider more definitely the *ceremonial* law, which was also given at Sinai by Jehovah unto Moses, and which consisted of the rites and ritual which were to govern Israel’s religious life—or, as it is often designated, the Levitical code of worship. In the statutory “Judgments” of Exodus 21 to 23, very little mention was made of religious ordinances and ceremonies. The erecting of the altar (Exo 20:24-26) signified that sacrifices would form an essential part of their worship; and the appointing of the three great annual feasts, when all of Israel’s males must appear before the LORD (Exo 13:14-16), announced God’s claims upon them—but nothing more was said about the moral and spiritual side of life. Not until *after* the national covenant had been formally confirmed were instructions given concerning the tabernacle and all that pertained to its services. It is essential that *this* should be duly noted, for therein was a plain intimation given that the Levitical system was only of *secondary* importance in the theocracy. It had indeed a real and necessary place in connection with the constitution of the divine kingdom in Israel, yet certainly not that foremost and paramount one which many have erroneously supposed.

“God had already redeemed Israel for His peculiar people, called them to occupy a near relation to Himself, and proclaimed to them the great principles of truth and duty which were to regulate their procedure, so that they might be the true witnesses of His glory and the inheritors of His blessing. And for the purpose of enabling them more readily to apprehend the nature of this relation, and more distinctly realize the things belonging to it, the LORD instituted a visible bond of fellowship by planting in the midst of their dwellings a dwelling for Himself, and ordering everything in the structure of the dwelling, the services to be performed at it, and the access of the people to its

courts, after such a manner as to keep up right impressions in their minds of the character of their divine Head, and of what became them as sojourners with Him in the land that was to be emphatically His own. In such a case, it was indispensable that all should be done under the express directions of God's hand; for it was as truly a revelation of His will to the members of the covenant as the direct utterances of His mouth: it must be made and ordered throughout according to the view of Moses; while the people, on their part, were to show their disposition to fall in with the design by contributing the requisite materials"—Patrick Fairbairn (1805-1874).

As the most helpful, Fairbairn went on to show the relation of the ceremonial law to the moral, or of the use of the tabernacle in connection with the prior revelation of law in its strictest sense, which appears clearly in Exodus 25. After mentioning the different kinds of materials to be provided, instructions were given for the making of *the ark of the covenant*—it taking precedence over all the holy vessels. It was to be the depository of the Decalogue, being a coffer in which were placed the two tables of the Law. Upon it Jehovah took His seat or Throne, there manifesting His presence and glory in Israel's midst (Exo 25:21-22). It was therefore the most important and the most sacred piece of furniture in the house of the LORD. It was the centre from which all relating to Israel's fellowship with God was to proceed, and from which it derived its essential character. Those who, in a practical way, refused subjection to the duties which the Decalogue enjoined, at the same time repudiated Jehovah's kingship, and cut themselves off from all communion with Him—His law being the foundation of His Throne. Those who rendered submission to that Law could own no other throne, no other God.

The institutions and services of the tabernacle supplied further proof not only of the intimate relation which existed between the Decalogue and the Levitical code, but also of the dependence of the latter upon the former, being a consequence of the Sinaitic covenant. It was on the basis thereof that Jehovah took up His abode in Israel's midst, and the central design of the ceremonial law was to make known what was necessary in order for Israel's intercourse with Him. Since sin indwelt them, and was constantly producing its defiling effects and works, they could not have immediate access to or direct fellowship with the Holy One; and therefore, what took place at Sinai must be ever repeating itself. First, in order to meet with Jehovah, Israel must sanctify themselves (Exo 19:10-11)—provision for which was made in the ceremonial of purifications. Second, when ceremonially clean, they could not approach unto God in any manner *they* pleased, but only as He ordered (Exo 19:17)—inculcated in the limitation unto "the outer court." Third, approach unto Him, whose very glory is "like [a] devouring [consuming] fire" (Exo 24:17), could only be through those representatives selected by Himself (Exo 19:24)—hence, the appointment of the priesthood.

The great truth borne witness to by the Levitical rites was that only the clean and righteous could have fellowship with the LORD and enjoy His blessing; all others being excluded therefrom. But if that code be examined in order to find out *who* pertained to that class, disappointing will be the result, for it treats only of the natural and external, and tells us not what is good or evil essentially and spiritually. Nor should we be surprised at this: rather should it be expected, since the ceremonial law was only of secondary importance. Israel must look to the character of God as revealed in the Ten Commandments if they would ascertain the vital distinctions of right and wrong, and learn their moral duty. The divers washings and ever-recurring atonements by the blood of the Levitical code testified to existing impurities, which were such because they were at variance with the law of righteousness promulgated in the Decalogue. It was *there* God had made known what was holy and unholy in His sight, and the ceremonial institutions presupposed that standard and ever called Israel's attention thereto by its numerous prescriptions of defilement and purification, and emphasized the solemn fact that corruptions still cleaved to them and that they fell far short of God's holy demands.

"The law of fleshly ordinances was a great teaching institution—not by itself, but when taken (according to its true intent) as an auxiliary of the Law of the two tables. Isolated from *those*, and placed in an independent position, as having an end of its own to reach, its teaching would have been at variance with the truth of things; for it would have led men to make account of mere outward distinctions, and rest in corporeal observances. In such a case, it would have been the antithesis rather than the complement of the Law from Sinai, which gave to the *moral* element the supreme place, alike in God's character and the homage and obedience He requires from His people. But, kept in its proper relation to that Law, the Levitical code was for the members of the old covenant an important means of instruction. It plied them with warnings and admonitions respecting sin as being defilement in the sight of God, and thereby excluding from His fellowship. That such, however, was the real design of this class of Levitical ordinances—that they had such a subsidiary aim, and derived all their importance and value from the connection in which they stood with the moral precepts of the Decalogue—is evident"—P. Fairbairn.

The relative importance of the Decalogue and the ceremonial law comes out plainly in such passages as these: "Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD?" (1Sa

15:22). “To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice” (Pro 21:3). “For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But *this* thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people” (Jer 7:22-23). “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings” (Hos 6:6). “Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?”—No, rather, “he hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic 6:6-8).

Further proof of the subordination of the ceremonial law to the moral is seen in the fact that whenever the LORD denounced special judgments upon the covenant people, it was never for their neglect of the ceremonial observances, but always for palpable breaches of the precepts of the Decalogue. “He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol.” Why so?—Because “they have chosen their *own* ways...because when I called, none did answer” (Isa 66:3-4). “Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it...your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me” (Jer 6:19-20). “Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the LORD” (Amo 2:4). Because Israel's magistrates were unjust in the discharge of their duties, Jehovah declared, “I hate, I despise your feast days...Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them” (Amo 5:12, 21-22).

There was a threefold failure of Israel in connection with the Law: First—and worst of all—those who were disloyal to Jehovah, forsaking Him and paying homage to the false gods of the Gentiles. *That* was a violation of the most fundamental part of the Decalogue and a horrible repudiation of the covenant relationship. The devout and pure worship of Jehovah lay at the very foundation of Judaism, and any flagrant departure from it was a sin which He ever visited with sore judgment. A man who truly loves his wife will bear with her infirmities, but infidelity he will not tolerate. So with Jehovah: He was longsuffering unto many things in Israel, but when their hearts lusted after the idols of the heathen, His wrath waxed hot against them. The idolatry of the surrounding nations possessed an attraction for their corrupt hearts, being less exacting and more sensuous. It pandered to the proclivities of fallen human nature and gratified its depraved inclinations. What the worship of Jehovah repressed and condemned, that of heathendom fostered and indulged. Much of the earlier history of Israel consisted of such apostatizings from the LORD.

Second, an exalting of the ceremonial law above the moral. This was far more insidious than open idolatry, yet none the less fatal in its outcome; for while there were those who abandoned the vanities of the heathen and kept solely to the worship of God, yet He had not their hearts, and their ways were a reproach unto Him. Though they were strict and zealous in worshipping the true God, their minds were occupied only with outward forms and ceremonies, and those they esteemed far more highly than the precepts of the Law—and thereby the grand purpose of the covenant was despised by them. When we are not surrendered to God's authority and our lives are not ordered by His statutes, our attachment to external ordinances is only a species of “will worship,” and means are given the place of those ends they are intended to promote. This grievous failure became characteristic of the great bulk of the nation in its later generations, so that while they were very punctilious in the ceremonial washing of pots and pans, and the tithing of mint, anise, and cumin, yet they “have omitted the weightier matters of the law”: that is, “judgment [righteousness], mercy, and faith” (Mat 23:23)—whom our Lord denounced as hypocrites.

The writings of Israel's prophets contain many passages in which the LORD took the people to task for their lamentable failure to put first things first, and because they supposed they had discharged their full duty by observing the ceremonial ordinances, and presenting the appointed offerings. Isaiah was particularly severe in reproving and denouncing such a state of affairs in his day. While oppressing the widows and fatherless, they nevertheless frequented the courts of the temple and heaped sacrifices upon the altar, but the servant of the LORD told them that their oblations were “vain”—or, literally, “lying sacrifices.” Though their hands were stained with blood, yet they spread them forth unto the LORD—but He would not hear their prayers (Isa 1:10-17). Though they sought God daily and took “delight in approaching [him]”—yea, “fasted” and “afflicted” their souls—God bade Isaiah, “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression” (Isa 58:1-7). Unto those who entered the sacred courts to worship Jehovah, Jeremiah cried, “Amend your ways” (Jer 7:3). Ezekiel, too, sternly condemned the hypocrisy which so widely obtained in his generation (Eze 33:30-33).

At a later date, a third evil became prevalent among the covenant people. When the fires of divine judgment had at last purged out from among them the more heinous and abominable forms of transgression, Israel abandoned their previous idolatries and, after their return from the Babylonian captivity, rigidly maintained the worship of the one true and living God. But soon they went to another extreme: instead of using the Decalogue for the grand purpose for which it was designed, they perverted it into the means of life and salvation. From dislike for the Law, they now exalted it into a place it was never intended to occupy—a place completely at variance with both the revealed character of God and their own sinful condition. Though corrupt in nature, depraved in their conduct, unregenerate, and unholy, yet they trusted in their own endeavours to keep the Law for their acceptance with God—making their good works the ground of their justification before Him. It was among such a people that the Saviour was born, and by whom He was despised and rejected. It was against this flagrant and fatal error that His apostles had chiefly to contend.

Such a fundamental error consisted in isolating the covenant of *Law* at Sinai from the prior covenant of *promise* with Abraham, and in elevating the ceremonial law to the same level as the moral. This necessarily involved a *lowering* of the strictness and spirituality of the Decalogue, a closing of their eyes to both its depth and breadth, a substituting of external compliance with its precepts in the stead of that heart conformity which it required. We say “necessarily,” for it is only when men lose sight of the fact that the holy standard demands nothing less than perfect and perpetual obedience in thought, word, and deed, that they can entertain any hope of winning the favour of its Author by their vain attempts to measure up to it. The consequence of giving place to this error was the production of a spirit of bondage, for such an obedience could be only a servile one—instead of being prompted by love and gratitude. And the inevitable outcome of the same was that those who succumbed thereto were utterly deceived as to their real condition before God, and ignorant of their dire need of a Saviour. Fancying that they had already attained to righteousness, they perceived not the necessity of looking for righteousness unto Another.

Space will not allow us to elaborate, nor should that be necessary, for it ought to be quite apparent to any discerning eye that those three principal failures of Israel under Judaism are, alas, exactly duplicated in the outstanding anomalies which characterize a corrupt Christendom today. In some quarters, there has been a grievous disloyalty both to God and His Christ, by a setting up of imaginary gods and unscriptural “saviours.” In others, there has been a woeful displacement of the spiritual and practical by an undue prominence and fictitious value being accorded to rites and ceremonies. There has also been a fatal rejection of the Gospel and a supplanting of it by a perversion of the moral law, so that human merits are substituted for divine grace, and salvation by works is openly taught rather than justification by faith.

Welcome Tidings

“O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come” (Psa 65:2). Those words are not an expression of desire—“O that thou *wouldst* hear prayer”—but a thankful acknowledgment that God *does so*. It is a testimony unto His goodness that is freely made by all His people. They know from personal experience that prayer-answering is to be as truly ascribed unto the One with whom they have to do as are mercy, wisdom, faithfulness, and power. “Thou that hearest prayer” is one of the lesser-known titles of Deity, but surely, it is one of the most blessed! The previous verse (rarely understood) is interesting and significant: “Praise *waiteth* for thee, O God, in Sion” (Psa 65:1). That was a prophecy, and in verse 2, the Psalmist declared his confident faith in its fulfillment: “O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee *shall* all flesh come.” Observe that verse 1 speaks of “God, in Sion” (compare Heb 12:22)—God in Christ, on the mercy-seat. “Unto thee shall *all flesh* [compare Act 2:16-17] come,” which explains the “waiteth” of the previous verse: when the *Gentiles* shall be called, Zion shall indeed ring with praise.

“Thou that hearest prayer.” The Majesty of heaven deigns to grant an audience unto worms of the earth! The ear of the Almighty is open to the cries of His creatures! But *who* are the ones He hears? Those whom the world regards as the great ones of the earth? Only those of high spiritual attainments? What saith the Scriptures? Let the following passages from the Psalms give answer: “LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the *humble*” (Psa 10:17). “For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the *afflicted*...when he cried unto him, he heard” (Psa 22:24). “This *poor* man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles” (Psa 34:6). “For he

shall deliver *the needy* when he crieth” (Psa 72:12). “He will regard the prayer of *the destitute*” (Psa 102:17). “They fell down, and there was *none to help*. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses” (Psa 107:12b-13). “They draw near unto the gates of death...and are at their *wit’s end*. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses” (Psa 107:18, 27-28). “He will fulfil the desire of them that *fear* him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them” (Psa 145:19).

Those who are accustomed to remember this written ministry at the Throne of Grace will see from the following testimonies that God *does* answer prayer; and we trust they will greatly encourage our fellow helpers to engage yet more definitely and earnestly in interceding for God’s blessing on this magazine, especially that *many more* hungry souls will be reached by it.

“I have read your Studies for twenty-four years, and enjoy the reading of them more than ever. I often stop to give thanks for such reading. May He sustain you for many years to come” (Australia). “The expository teaching contained in them is all too rare these days, as also its practical application” (Australia). “Once again, I express gratitude for your faithful ministry of the Word. May it be abundantly blest for His glory and the advancement of His kingdom” (New Zealand). “Studies are very much appreciated, as their depth and detail are in such contrast to many of the present-day publications. I must confess to having drawn largely on — in preparing an address to a young people’s gathering” (New Zealand). “In this town (of over 17,000), there is no Gospel ministry. It is very wonderful to get a magazine like yours. I usually read them more than once” (New Zealand).

“I have received the beautiful magazine regularly. Thank you very much. I get many blessings. Praise the Lord. May God reward you abundantly” (Syria). “Your Studies are in truth a feast of fat things, especially to those who feel they cannot conscientiously join in with any church, and who worship God in their own home on the Lord’s Day. It is almost impossible to tell which articles are the best: they have all been so helpful, especially the ‘Prayers of the Apostles’” (Canada). “May I take this opportunity of expressing my sincere thanks for the blessing and benefit that I have received from reading and studying your magazine” (Canadian pastor). “Many thanks for the Studies. I sure need them, as my ‘fight’ is a solitary one in a household of opposition. But there is One whose help is always available, and largely through the medium of the Studies” (Aged pilgrim in Canada). “Especially received much encouragement and real soul-searching while pondering your article, ‘Identification of the Godly’” (Canada).

“They are excellent indeed, and I thank God for the talents He has so graciously bestowed on you. May He bless you and your good wife, and spare your lives for many more years of service unto Him” (Preacher in South Dakota). “We cherish your magazine so much. The food we get in our churches is mostly baby diet, and no strong meat” (California). “My copies of the Studies are so valuable to me that no amount of money could ever purchase them. As I have repeatedly stated, they have (under Him) been the greatest blessing in my life” (Pastor in Texas). “Thank you again for your labours for us, who depend to a large extent upon the Studies for our food and satisfaction. There is little from our pulpits that meets our souls’ needs” (Illinois). “Day after day, year after year (over twenty!), I say ‘Thank you, Lord, for the Studies’” (Washington). “I read my own experience in your articles” (Florida). “I have enjoyed the Studies through another year: have been encouraged, strengthened, and blest by them” (North Carolina). “Your paper has once again brought untold blessing to my soul. I agree with many of your readers who state there are so very few periodicals that give the deeper truths of God’s holy Word” (Pennsylvania). “Your ministry has meant so much to me, and I trust our God shall keep speaking to us through you” (Preacher in U.S.A.). “I have carefully read your article on ‘Evangelism’ and rejoice in your clear statement of the privilege and responsibility of evangelistic ministry. By the grace of God, I shall endeavour to honour Him, realizing the truth that it is of more importance that God should be glorified than that sinners should be saved” (Evangelist in Kentucky).

“When the Studies arrive, I cannot read them quick enough, for to me they are a real feast. I cannot express to you the inward feeling I had when reading your article on the revelation of God in the soul in the November issue” (Ireland). “I thank you as the servant of the Lord for instruction and much blessing” (Penrith). “I have received much instruction, correction, rebuke” (Lancs). “I cannot tell you how much pleasure and profit I obtain from the Studies. It is a great blessing that, at such a time as this, you should have been raised up and equipped for their fearless and faithful testimony” (English preacher). “I would thankfully testify to the help received again and again in turning over the pages of past volumes” (English preacher). “Have been much helped by your Studies and always look forward to receiving them” (London pastor). “You strike the right note when you constantly emphasize practical holiness and separation from the world” (Blackburn). “What rich food our heavenly Father provides for us through the Studies!” (Berks). “I do feel the perusal of them has been my main sustenance through the past year” (Manchester).

“I thank God for your work and labour of love, and for all the grace given you in your insight into the Scriptures. I feel like a thief sometimes, because I have reproduced so much of your material in my pulpit, but I believe it is your desire that the seed should be multiplied [Yes, indeed!]. Sorry we cannot meet and discuss things together, but for both of us, there are more important things to do than *talk*” (Pastor). “At different times during the past year when I have had a problem, your Studies came just at the right moment” (Edinburgh). “I value and appreciate them more with the passing years” (Dalry). “I am looking forward so much to your ministry” (Glasgow pastor). “The spiritual help received as the result of my reading and re-reading your articles, no words of mine could convey” (Wales).—“Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Rev 19:6)!



SEPTEMBER

Hurry!

When man fell, sin disjointed the balance and moral poise of his being; and consequently, he is now prone to go to extremes. The depravity of human nature evinces itself in many ways, causing us to act tardily when speed is called for, and to rush recklessly ahead when consideration and circumspection are required. Some are constitutionally impulsive and rash, and need to be reminded of the old adage, “Look before you leap”; others are ultra-cautious, and require to be told that one may look so long—yet he may never leap at all. Some are naturally sluggish and indolent, and have to be prodded into activity; others are so vigorous and zealous as to need a brake on their energies. But spiritually speaking, all are by nature ready unto sin: “Their feet *run* to evil” (Isa 59:7), they “make haste to shed blood” (Pro 1:16; Rom 3:15); but unto that which is good, they are averse—hating God (Joh 15:23), they abhor holiness. We have to be divinely drawn before we come to Christ, powerfully wrought upon by the Spirit ere we “flee from the wrath to come.” Here are seven things where hurry is called for:

1. *To hearken unto God*: “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jam 1:19). Nature itself inculcates that lesson, for we hear before we learn to talk. Moreover, the Creator has given us two ears, but only one tongue—and that, behind two rows of teeth; and they, protected by the lips. Alas, most of us have but one ear, yet half a dozen tongues. God has spoken, and it becomes us to hearken to what He says. His Word is not for our amusement, but instruction and submission; and woe be unto us if we disregard the same. Nowhere but in the Holy Scriptures can we learn the true source of our being, the purpose for which we are made, the destiny awaiting us, and how to be saved. Then how attentive we should be to its counsels, admonitions, and warnings! God also speaks loudly to us by His providences, and we are greatly the losers if we ignore its messages. He speaks also through our consciences, and to slight His voice is perilous. “*To day* if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart” (Psa 95:7-8). None are nearer destruction than those who promise themselves a long time in sin.

2. *To escape the eternal burnings*. God’s Word to the careless is, “Haste thee, escape thither” (Gen 19:22). That injunction was originally given to Lot by a divine messenger when the cities of the plain were on the point of being destroyed by fire and brimstone from heaven. The matter was an urgent one, calling for prompt action: his very life was in imminent danger, and therefore, to procrastinate would be madness. In precisely the same situation were his sons-in-law, and to them he said, “Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city” (Gen 19:14). Instead of appreciating the warning and responding promptly, we are told, “But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.” Such is the case with the vast majority of our fellows: beneath the condemnation of a holy God, with their faces hellward, yet so bewitched by sin as to be unconcerned about their peril. Even if momentarily

aroused, as was Felix when Paul preached of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, yet—like that Roman governor—they avoid the issue and postpone the decision until “a [more] convenient season” (Act 24:25).

3. *To respond to the call of Christ*, who says, “Make haste, and come down” (Luk 19:5). Descend from your perch of self-love and self-esteem, and take your place in the dust as a self-condemned sinner. Climb down from the branch of self-righteousness, and present yourself before Me as a penitent pauper. Linger not, for “*now* is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2Co 6:2). You need no other warrant than the free offer of the Gospel: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1Ti 1:15); and He will save *you* this very moment—even though you be the chief of sinners—if you surrender to His lordship, and cast yourself upon His grace as a drowning man upon a floating spar. Then *flee* “for refuge” unto Him, and “lay hold upon the hope set before us” in the Gospel (Heb 6:18). Perform this supreme business of your soul’s eternal interests with dispatch. The wings of time are flying with the utmost speed. Your day of opportunity will soon be over. Death is already on the way to seize you. Of Zaccheus we are told, “And he made haste, and came down, and received him [Christ] joyfully” (Luk 19:6). Do thou the same.

4. *To offer unto God His dues*. “Thou shalt *not* delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me” (Exo 22:29). The claims of God are paramount, and He requires that they be recognized by us. But there is something which takes precedence of bringing to God our substance: first and foremost is His clamant call, “My son, give me thine heart” (Pro 23:26). We fully agree with Thomas Scott (1747-1821): “The Law demands love to God with the whole heart and soul, but sin and the world have possession of it in fallen creatures. The express design of the Gospel is to bring us—by faith and repentance—to give our hearts to the Saviour, and to God through Him, that He may there set up His kingdom, write His Law, and reign the undisputed LORD of all our affections. And unless this call be obeyed, all else will be decidedly rejected.” Nothing else that we offer Him will be accepted till we give Him our hearts—no, not even our worship. Then delay not, but “yield yourselves unto the LORD” (2Ch 30:8).

5. *To render obedience unto God*. Thereby we supply proof that we *have* given our hearts unto the LORD: Jesus said, “If a man love me, he will keep my words” (Joh 14:23). “I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments” (Psa 119:60). This readiness in the work of obedience is doubly expressed—affirmatively and negatively. Such doubling of terms is used for the purpose of emphasis, as in “I shall not die, but live” (Psa 118:17). It signifies, “I hesitated not a moment.” Where there is only slight conviction, we stand debating the matter, and resort to reasoning instead of acting. When the path of duty is clear, it should be instantly followed: “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood” (Gal 1:16). Let no time be lost between forming and performing a good resolution. Tardiness in obedience is a sure sign that the heart has grown cold. Let promptness mark every response to your apprehension of God’s will. By yielding to the Spirit’s motions, work which is hard today becomes easy tomorrow.

“I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart” (Psa 119:32). David was not content simply to *walk* in the path of obedience, but desired to *run* therein; but he realized that in order thereto, the LORD must deepen His work of grace in him. Enlargement of heart consists of its being freed from the straits of legality, fear, unbelief, and the things which sap our strength and dampen our joy in God’s service. If we be sincere in praying thus, we shall diligently seek to avoid those things which cramp the heart—such as ignorance, love of the world, pride, etc. The language of Psalm 119:60 expresses the longing of one whose heart has been won by Christ and is in fellowship with Him. It is the urge of love, which desires to follow Him more closely and swiftly. “Running” expresses the readiness and cheerfulness of our obedience, its vigour and earnestness. When the affections are aroused and eagerly set upon things, our actions are swift and full of delight. Alas, how many need to bewail their *lameness*.

6. *To avoid temptation*. All inducements unto evil should be feared and shunned like a deadly plague. To trifle with that which invites unto sin is to play with fire. How emphatic is the repetition in the dehortation, “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away” (Pro 4:14-15). There is still that in the Christian which responds to evil from without; and therefore, it is the part of wisdom to give it a wide berth, so far as that lies in our power. To pray unto God, “Lead [me] not into temptation” (Mat 6:13; Luk 11:4), and then—deliberately—to enter those places where such abounds, is to mock Him. Even the minister of the Gospel is exhorted, “But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness,” etc. (1Ti 6:11). And again, “Flee also youthful lusts” (2Ti 2:22). Earnestly seek grace to emulate Joseph, who, when he was solicited by Potiphar’s wife, “*fled*” the temptress (Gen 39:13).

7. *To fly to God for protection*. “Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me” (Psa 143:9). Our foes are both numerous and powerful; and we can neither evade, nor vanquish them: but God will pro-

tect us if we take shelter in Him. When sorely beset by those who seek to destroy our spiritual life, we should—as the man-slayer fled to the city of refuge—seek asylum in God by prayer, in faith and hope of deliverance. Such flight is not cowardice, but wisdom; and the sooner we betake ourselves to God, the better for us. In verse 7, David had prayed, “Hear me speedily, O LORD”; now he declares, “I flee unto thee to hide me”—there he made request, “Hide not thy face from me”; here, “hide me.” A sense of urgency possessed him. Jacob fled to Laban, Saul to the witch, and Asa to the physicians; but the hard-pressed believer, unto his God. “The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous *runneth* into it, and is safe” (Pro 18:10). So the saints, of all generations, have proved.

The Prayers of the Apostles

69. Jude: 24-25

The prayer which is now to engage our attention is a particularly arresting one, but its beauty and blessedness appear even more conspicuously if it be examined in connection with its somber *background*. It concludes the most solemn epistle in the New Testament, one which is to be put down with thanksgiving and praise. It contains a most awful description of graceless professors, of those who appeared to give much promise of fruit to God’s glory, but whose leaves soon dropped off and whose trees quickly withered away. Its theme is apostasy—or, more specifically, the corrupting and corruption of Christendom. It presents a picture which all-too-tragically depicts things as they now are in the religious realm—in the “churches” at large. It informs us how the process of declension began, how the evil leaven was introduced into the three measures of meal (the Roman church, the Greek church, and Protestantism), and will work until the whole thereof is corrupted. It delineates the characters of those who should be engaged in this vile work. It makes known the sure doom awaiting both leaders and those who are led. It closes with a glorious contrast.

The Lord Jesus gave warning that the sowing of the good seed by Himself and His apostles would be followed with the sowing of tares in the same field by Satan and his agents. Paul also announced that—notwithstanding the widespread successes of the Gospel during his lifetime—there would be “a falling away” before the man of sin was revealed (2Th 2:3). That “falling away”—or the apostasy of Christendom corporately considered—is depicted by the Spirit in some detail through the pen of Jude. As Christ Himself had intimated, the initial work of corruption would be done stealthily, “while men slept” (Mat 13:25); and Jude represents the evil-doers as having “crept in unawares” (Jude :4). They are spoken of as men who were “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” That is to say, while pretending to *magnify* “free grace,” they *perverted* it by failing to enforce the balancing truth of holiness; and while professing to believe in Christ as a *Saviour*, they refused to surrender to His *Lordship*. Thus, they were lustful and lawless. In view of this horrible menace, the saints were exhorted to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (verse 3)—i.e. all the counsel of God.

That exhortation is enforced by a reminder of three fearful and solemn examples of the punishment visited by God upon those who had apostatized. The first was that of the children of Israel, whom the LORD saved out of Egypt, but who still lusted after its fleshpots; and because of their unbelief at Kadesh-Barnea, were destroyed in the wilderness (Jude :5). The second was the case of the angels, who apostatized from their privileged position, and are now “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (verse 6). The third was Sodom and Gomorrah, which, because of gross lasciviousness, were destroyed by fire from heaven (verse 7). To which the apostle added that the corruptors of Christendom “defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities,” being less respectful to their superiors than the archangel was to his inferior (verse 8). He solemnly pronounced the divine “Woe unto them!”; and likened them and their works unto three characters of evil notoriety: By “the way of Cain,” we are to understand a natural religion which is acceptable to the unregenerate; by “the error of Baalam for reward,” a mercenary ministry; and by “the gainsaying of Core [Korah],” despising of authority and discipline (verse 11)—an effort to obliterate the distinctions which God has made (Num 16:3-7).

Other characteristics of these religious evil-doers are given in figurative terms in Jude, verses 12 and 13; and it should be particularly noted that they are said to “feast *with you*” (the saints), which supplies further evidence that they are *inside* the churches. In the second half of verse 13 to that of 15, their doom is pronounced: for backsliders,

there is a way of recovery; but for apostates, none. Verse 16 details other features, which are sadly conspicuous in our own day. Then Jude bade God's people to remember that the apostles of Christ had predicted there should be "scoffers [or 'mockers'—Jude :18]" (2Pe 3:3) "in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts" (verses 17 and 18). By "the last time," this Christian or final dispensation is meant (see 1Pe 4:7; 1Jo 2:18), with possibly a reference to the climacteric culmination of evil at its end. Next, Jude appeals to those unto whom he was writing, addressing to them a number of needful and salutary exhortations (verses 21 and 23). He ends with the prayer which we are now to ponder, concluding the most solemn of all the epistles with a more glorious outburst of praise than is elsewhere to be found in them.

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (verses 24 and 25). We propose to attend to five things in our study of this prayer: First, its general *background*. Second, its more immediate *connection*. Third, its *nature*—a doxology. Fourth, its *Object*—"God our Saviour." Fifth, its *reasons* or motives—who is able to preserve, and who presents His people faultless before the Throne. We have already said something above, in a general way, upon the background of this prayer, and shall now add something more to the point.

It seems to us that, in view of what had been engaging the mind of the apostle in the previous verses, he could not restrain himself from giving vent to this paean³ of praise. After viewing the solemn case of a whole generation of Israel perishing in the wilderness because of their unbelief, he was moved to cry out in gladness, "Now unto him that is able to keep *you*" (verse 24). As he contemplated the experience of the sinless angels who fell from their first estate, he could not but tremble; but when he thought of the Saviour and Protector of His Church, he burst forth into a strain of adoration. Jude found great comfort and assurance in the blessed fact that the One who begins a work of grace within those given unto Him by the Father will never cease it till He has perfected the same (compare Phi 1:6). He knew that were it not for everlasting love and infinite power, *our case* would yet be the same as that of the angels who fell: that but for an Almighty Redeemer, we too must enter everlasting darkness and endure the suffering of eternal fire; and, realizing that, the apostle could not but bless the One whose protecting hand covers each of His blood-bought ones.

After making mention of those fearful examples of falling, it is highly probable that the thoughts of the penman of this epistle turned to another one much more recent, and which had come beneath his own immediate notice. It is surely of deep significance that, when our Lord sent forth the twelve, "Judas [Jude] the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor," were paired together (Luk 6:16)—the arch-apostate with the one who was to write at length upon the great apostasy! It scarcely admits of doubt that as Jude's mind reverted to the traitor, it made him exclaim with added emphasis: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling,...be glory...both now and ever" (Jude :24-25). Jude had probably respected Iscariot as his fellow apostles had done, and heard him, as he sat at the table with them, say, "Master, is it I?" (Mat 26:25). Jude must have been very surprised when he saw him take the sop and dip it in the dish with the Saviour; and then when he [Judas Iscariot] went out, would scarcely believe his own ears when Christ announced that the one who should betray Him had gone forth. He could not but be aware that, in remorse, the traitor had hanged himself; and we believe that the shadow of his awful doom fell upon Jude as he penned this epistle.

But Jude did not suffer these sad contemplations to sink him into a state of dejection. He knew that his omniscient Master had foretold that a rising tide of evil would spread over the whole of Christendom, and that however mysterious such a phenomenon might be, there was a wise reason for it in the divine economy. He knew that however fiercely the storm might rage, there was no occasion to fear, for Christ Himself was in the ship, and had declared, "Lo, I am with you alway" (Mat 28:20). He knew that the gates of hell could not and would not prevail against the Church; and therefore, he lifted up his eyes above this scene, and gazed by faith upon its enthroned Head and Preserver, and offered worship unto Him. *That* is the all-important lesson to be drawn from the background of this prayer, and why we have dwelt the longer upon the same. Fellow Christians, let us duly *heed* it. Instead of being so much occupied with conditions in the world, with the menace of the atom bomb, and with the deepening apostasy, let our hearts be increasingly engaged with our beloved Lord, and find our peace and joy in Him.

A word next upon the more immediate *connection* of our prayer. On former occasions, we have seen how helpful it was to attend closely unto the context. It is necessary to do so here, if the balance of truth is to be maintained, and a proneness to antinomianism is to be checked. It is not honest to lay hold of this verse—"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling" (verse 24)—unless we have first given heed to the "*Keep yourselves*" of verse 21!

³ **paean** – a fervent expression of joy or praise.

The precepts and promises may be distinguished, yet they are not to be separated. The former make known our duty; the latter are for encouragement, while genuinely and earnestly seeking to perform the same; but one who neglects his duty is entitled to no comfort. After describing at length the beginning, the course, and the end of the apostasy of Christendom, the apostle added seven brief exhortations to the saints in verses 20 to 23—which call for the exercise of faith, prayer, love, hope, compassion, fear, and godly hatred. Those exhortations are *means* to preserve from apostasy. John Calvin (1509-1564) began his comments on them by saying, “He shows the way in which they could overcome all the devices of Satan: that is, by having love connected with faith, and by standing on their guard as it were in the watch-tower, until the coming of Christ.”

“There is a one-sided and unscriptural forgetfulness of the actual position of the believer (or professing believer) as a man who is still on the road, in the battle; who has still the responsibility of trading with the talent entrusted, of watching for the return of the Master. Now there are many by-paths, dangers, precipices on the road; and we must persevere to the end. Only they who overcome and are faithful to death shall be crowned. It is not spiritual, but carnal, to take the blessed and solemn doctrines of our election in Christ and of the perseverance of the saints—given us as a cordial for fainting hours, and as the inmost and ultimate secret of the soul in its dealings with God—and place them on the common and daily road of our duties and trials, *instead* of the precepts and warnings of the divine Word. It is not merely that God keeps us through these warnings and commandments, but the attitude of soul which neglects and hurries over these portions of Scripture is not childlike, humble, and sincere. The attempts to explain away the fearful warnings of Scripture against apostasy are rooted in a very morbid and dangerous state of mind. A precipice is a precipice, and it is folly to deny it. ‘If [we] live after the flesh,’ says the apostle, ‘[we] shall die’ (Rom 8:13). Now, to keep people from falling over a precipice, we do not put up a slender and graceful hedge of flowers, but the strongest barrier we can; and piercing spikes on cutting pieces of glass to prevent calamities. But even this is only the surface of the matter. Our walk with God and our perseverance to the end are great and solemn realities. We are dealing with the living God, and only life with God, and in God, and unto God, can be of any avail here. He who brought us out of Egypt is now guiding us; and if we follow Him, and follow Him to the end, we shall enter into the final rest”—Adolph Saphir (1831-1891).

It is outside our present scope to give here a full exposition of the precepts found in Jude :20-23, yet a few remarks are needed if we are to be faithful in observing the inseparable link between them and our text. Duty and privilege must not be divorced, nor the latter allowed to oust the former. If it be the Christian’s privilege to have his heart engaged with Christ in glory, it must be while treading the path He has appointed, and while engaged in those tasks He has assigned him. Though Christ be the One who keeps him from making shipwreck of the faith, it is not apart from his own earnest endeavours that He does so. Christ deals with His redeemed as responsible creatures, and requires them to conduct themselves as moral agents, putting forth every effort to overcome the evils which menace them. Though entirely dependent upon Him, they are not to remain passive. Man is of an active nature, and therefore, must grow either better or worse. Before regeneration, he is indeed spiritually dead; but at the new birth, he receives divine life; and motion and exercise follow life—and those motions are to be *directed* by the divine precepts.

“But ye, beloved [in contrast with the apostates of the previous verse], building up yourselves on your most holy faith” (verse 20). The foundation of God indeed stands sure; nevertheless, we are called upon to the concurrence of our own endeavours. We are to be solicitous about our growth, and exercise care both over ourselves and our fellow believers. It is not sufficient to be grounded in the faith; we must daily increase therein more and more. To grow in faith is one of the appointed *means* of our preservation. We “[build] up [ourselves] on [our] most holy faith” by a deepened knowledge thereof: “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning” (Pro 1:5). We “[build] up [ourselves] on [our] most holy faith” by meditating upon its substance or contents (Psa 1:2; Luk 2:19), by believing and appropriating it, by applying it unto ourselves, by being governed by it. Observe that it is a “most holy faith,” for it both requires and promotes personal holiness; and thereby do we distinguish ourselves from carnal professors and apostates. “Praying in the Holy Ghost” (verse 20)—fervently and constantly seeking His assistance for and in complying with these precepts.

“Keep yourselves in the love of God” (verse 21). See to it that your love for Him be preserved in a pure, healthy, and vigorous condition. See to it that your love to Christ be in constant exercise, by rendering obedience to Him: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (Joh 14:15). “Keep thy *heart* with all diligence” (Pro 4:23), for if your affections wane, your communion with Him will deteriorate, and your witness for Him be marred. Only as you keep yourselves in the love of God will you be distinguished from the carnal professors all around you. This exhortation is no needless one. The Christian is living in a world whose icy blasts will soon chill his love for God, unless he guards it as the apple of his eye. A malicious devil will do all he can to pour cold water upon it. Remember the solemn warning of Revelation 2:4. Oh that Christ may never have to complain of you, of me, “Nevertheless I have

somewhat against thee, because thou hast *left* thy first love.” Rather, may our love “abound yet more and more” (Phi 1:9). In order thereto, *hope* must be in exercise “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life” (verse 21). Verses 22 and 23 make known our duty and attitude unto those of our brethren who have fallen by the way: some we must pity; others deliver with fear, “hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.”

The Life and Times of Joshua

49. Mount Ebal

“And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, that remaineth unto this day. Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal...an altar of whole stones” (Jos 8:29-31). It can scarcely be doubted that there is a designed contrast between those two events. In the former, we see the ignominy of Ai’s king; here, we behold the worship of the King of kings. The one marked the grave of a malefactor; the other recognized the claims of the Holy One. Great indeed is the contrast between the dead body *under* the stones, and the accepted sacrifice *upon* the altar of stones. That bore witness to the carrying out of the curse of the Law; on this was inscribed its precepts. The former was at “the gate” of Ai (the place of judgment—Amo 5:10); the latter was in a mount. That was intended as a solemn warning unto evil-doers; this was for the instruction of those who desired to do well.

“Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal.” Everything connected with the incident prefaced by that statement is of deep importance and interest, calling for our closest attention. A further word upon the Spirit’s time-mark: This act of worship followed immediately upon the destruction of Ai and all its inhabitants. We should naturally expect that after Israel’s capturing of Jericho and Ai, they had continued to advance, proceeding to the further occupying of Canaan. Now that they had made themselves masters of its frontier towns, it would appear the only sound policy is to forge ahead, while their terror was upon the foe, and penetrate into the very heart of his country. Instead, a long and difficult journey was taken unto mount Ebal, that a solemn religious ordinance might be observed. In the midst of their military campaign, a lengthy pause was made in order that Jehovah might be honoured: “The camp of Israel was drawn out into the land not to engage the enemy, but to offer sacrifice, to hear the Law read, and to say Amen to the blessings and curses. It is a remarkable instance of the zeal of Israel for the service of God and for His glory”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714).

The offering of burnt offerings and peace offerings to Jehovah upon this occasion was an acknowledgment of His blessing upon their arms, and a rejoicing before Him in the successes which His power and goodness had vouchsafed them. At Rephidim, Israel had been taught that victory over Amalek was obtained by the hands of Moses being lifted up toward the Throne of heaven, and as a monument thereto, he erected an altar, naming it “Jehovah-nissi” (Exo 17:15), which signifies “the LORD my banner.” So here, as the captain of their salvation, Joshua had not only “stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city” (Jos 8:18), but had kept it raised and extended until victory was complete (verse 26); and now he expressed his gratitude by erecting this altar to mark the same. That is clearly evident from the opening “Then” of verse 30. Yet his act on this occasion imported something more. As yet, Israel had conquered but a very small section of Canaan; and here, they journeyed upwards of another hundred miles; then upon reaching mount Ebal, Joshua built this altar. It was therefore a remarkable act of *faith*, a claiming of the whole land for the Lord—men only *build* on land which is their own! Thus, instead of waiting until Israel’s victory was complete, Joshua anticipated the same in a sure and certain hope!

This is the first time that any “altar” is mentioned in the book of Joshua; and there are some very striking parallels between it and the one mentioned in Exodus 20:24. Both were erected upon a mount; both of them at the express command of the LORD, and not merely by the spiritual impulses and promptings of Moses and Joshua. Both of them were designed to magnify the divine Law, and to exemplify the grand fact that grace reigns through righteousness. On both of them were sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings (Exo 24:5). The one was shortly after Israel’s supernatural exodus from the house of bondage and crossing of the Red Sea; the other, soon after their miraculous crossing of the Jordan and entrance into the Promised Land. In the course of these articles, we have frequently emphasized the fact that in his actions, Joshua (as one of the outstanding types of Christ) was constantly

regulated by the written Word of God. That had again received illustration in Joshua 8:29, for the taking down of the carcase of the king of Ai was required in Deuteronomy 21:23. Equally so was that principle exemplified here in Joshua 8:30, for the building of this altar was in compliance with the injunctions given through Moses.

In the book of Deuteronomy, many instructions were given the children of Israel near the close of their sojourn in the wilderness as to how they must conduct themselves upon their entrance into the Land of Promise. Therein we find that which explains the incident recorded in the closing verses of Joshua 8. It had been said unto them, “Therefore it shall be when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaister them with plaister. And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them. Thou shalt build the altar of the LORD thy God of whole stones: and thou shalt offer burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD thy God: And thou shalt offer peace offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before the LORD thy God...These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people...And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse” (Deu 27:4-7, 12-13).

The “altar” was *the meeting-place* between God and men. In its construction, it was of the most simple and unpretending character, no place being allowed for the exercise of human art. This may appear strange when we remember that both rich materials and elaborate skill *were* expended upon the tabernacle and its internal furnishings—the outer-court vessels alone excepted. But when we call to mind the purpose of the altar and its leading object, the difficulty vanishes, and the propriety of its extreme plainness at once appears. It was there the Holy One and the fallen creature transacted concerning sin and salvation: that the alien might be reconciled, the guilty pardoned, and the cleansed one have fellowship with the LORD. Therefore did He appoint that man should there be reminded of his utter unworthiness and impotency as he came before the One who deigned to meet with him. His curse rested on the ground for man’s sake (Gen 3:17), and by no effort of his can man remove it. For the altar to be made of ornamented plates of costly metal would have misrepresented the object for which it was designed, and disposed man to forget his vile condition. So, in the general direction for the formation of altars, God ordained it should be a rude mound of earth, or of unpolished stones (Exo 20:24-25; and compare 1Ki 18:31-32).

The altar, then, must be of *God’s* workmanship—unbeautified by man’s skill, so that he could not glory in his own production. That chosen meeting place of God with man as a sinner must be such as would convey the impression of a direct contact between the God of heaven and the earth which He had made—on a “mount,” but the altar naked, simple, unadorned; thereby emphasizing His own condescension and the poverty of the sinner. The leading idea designed to be set forth by the materials of the altar was confirmed by its *name*. Departing from the common usage of antiquity, Scripture employs a term which vividly enunciates both the humbling element on man’s side and the grace on God’s side. That name is *misbeach*, which means *place of slaughter*, for it was thither the victim was brought and slain. And thus, from the beginning, God taught His people the solemn fact that there could be no communion between Himself and fallen creatures save by the shedding of blood; that the sentence of death must be executed upon the guilty. Later, when a stationary altar was appointed for the sanctuary, it was ordered to be made not of gold and silver, but of wood overlaid with brass.

“Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal, As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lift up any iron: and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings” (Jos 8:30-31). In addition to what has been said above, it should be pointed out that the “altar” prefigured our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the sole meeting place between the thrice holy God and guilty sinners. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Act 4:12). None comes unto the Father but by Him (Joh 14:6). They who look to the merits of the apostles or the mediation of Mary to give them access to God, and their prayers and works acceptance before Him, are miserably deluded—and it is but charity to tell them so. Christ Himself is at once the antitypical Altar, Sacrifice for sin, and acceptable Offerer. While those three things may be distinguished, both in shadow and substance, they must not be separated, for they all meet in Him. As it is “the altar that sanctifieth the gift” (Mat 23:19), so the dignity of Christ’s person gives infinite value to His offering. Furthermore, He is our “Altar” (Heb 13:10) to whom we bring our sacrifices of praise (Heb 13:15), and presents the same, perfumed by His merits, unto God (Rev 8:3-4).

The pile of stones on mount Ebal was not gathered to be thrown in judgment *at* sinners, but for an altar on which was to be offered a sacrifice *for* sinners. Very express was the prohibition concerning the stones of the altar: “Thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them. Thou shalt build the altar of the LORD thy God of whole stones” (Deu 27:5-6). Those unpolished but whole stones set forth both the humiliation and perfection of the Saviour, as He appeared respectively to men and to God. To the natural eyes of Israel, He possessed “no form nor comeliness” (Isa 53:2); and when they saw Him, they perceived no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. But in the sight of the

Father, He was “a precious corner stone” (Isa 28:16); and in Him, He delighted. Nothing was to be hewn off the life of Christ, for it was perfect. None of His actions needed any modification. Yea, as Exodus 20:25, declared, “For if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast *polluted it*.” Not a single deed of Christ’s could be bettered; and if one had been missing from His entire life, the whole had been spoilt. Much the same thing was borne witness to here, as was symbolically shadowed forth in our Lord’s coat, which was “*without seam, woven from the top throughout*” (Joh 19:23).

More noteworthy than either the time when the altar was erected, or the materials of which it was composed, was the place where it was set up—namely mount Ebal. There were two mountains to which Israel were now brought—Gerizim and Ebal—and we should naturally have expected to find the altar on the former, for it was there the blessings of the Law upon the obedient were pronounced (Deu 11:29); whereas it was on the latter that its curses were published. But “as for God, his way is perfect” (2Sa 22:31), and everything was ordered here so as to foreshadow the most terrible yet most blessed event of all history. The vicarious offering sacrificed on Ebal prefigured the Head of the Church entering the place of the curse, yea, being made a curse for His members. So that what we have here is very similar to—and equally unexpected and precious as—the altar on mount Sinai (Exo 24:4) (see our “Glorious Sinai” article in the April issue). A reference to Deuteronomy 27:4-7 shows the analogy between the two is yet more complete: the LORD gave orders that after the offering of sacrifice, they should “*eat there* [of the peace offering], and *rejoice* before the LORD thy God,” as their fathers before them had done on Sinai (Exo 24:11). How remarkably did divine grace shine forth there! Who had thought of *rejoicing* on the mount of the curse!

“And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel” (Jos 8:32). That also was in obedience to Deuteronomy 27:8, and was equally remarkable. That altar was built as a monument of the divine mercy to Israel’s victories, yet it was not an account of their triumphs, but a copy of the Ten Commandments that was inscribed upon it! The grand practical lesson for us therein is that the best way to remember God’s mercies is not to forget His Law. As William Gurnall (1617-1679) well said, “God counts those mercies forgotten which are not written in legible characters in our lives.” For Israel, that writing of the Decalogue upon the stones of the altar was a reminder to them that they were taking possession of Canaan not only on the ground of the promise to Abraham, but also according to the terms of that Law which they solemnly covenanted themselves to keep (Deu 11:29-32). The two things must not be separated: in presenting their offerings upon the altar, they spoke to God; in the writing of the Law upon its stones, He spoke to them, enforcing His holy claims upon them. Christ died to deliver His people from the penalty of the Law, but not from obedience to its precepts.

On Deuteronomy 27:8, John Gill (1697-1771) rightly said, “The Law being written on stones denotes *the duration* of it, which continued not only during the times of the Old Testament dispensation, and to the times of John, and had its fulfillment in Christ, but *still continues*; for though Christ has redeemed His people from the curse and condemnation of it, yet it is in His hands as a rule of direction to them, as to their walk and conversation. Nor is it made void by any doctrine of the Gospel; and nothing more strongly enforces obedience to it than the Gospel. The moral Law is immutable, invariable, and eternal in its nature, and it is in the matter of it.” Alas, that so many of Mr. Gill’s admirers have departed so far from his teaching thereon. Thomas Scott (1747-1821) also said, “We must rest our hope on the atonement of the great Redeemer, and keep the holy Law of God continually before us as the rule of our grateful obedience.” We only deceive ourselves if we suppose that our praise unto God is sincere for the gift of His Son, unless we also delight in His Law and serve the same (Rom 7:22, 25). God will not be bribed by the worship of rebels (see 1Sa 15:22; Psalms 106:12-13).

Ere giving a brief exposition of the verses that follow, let us further admire the striking and blessed prefiguration of Christ in what has been before us. No less than three times has the Holy Spirit recorded the divine prohibition that the altar must be built of unhewn and unadorned stones—in Exodus 20:25; Deuteronomy 27:5; Joshua 8:31—so carefully did He guard the glory of Christ. In sharp contrast with us—who, though “lively [living] stones” (1Pe 2:5), yet need much shaping—there were no rough or sharp edges in the character of Christ; no polishing of His life was required to render it well pleasing to the Father. So much did He resent anything which *marred* a type that when the sons of Aaron offered “strange fire” upon the altar, they were immediately consumed by fire from heaven (Lev 10), and when the ark was set upon a cart instead of on the shoulders of the priests, judgment fell upon Uzzah (2Sa 6). God was exceedingly jealous of the honour of His beloved Son, bidding Moses, again and again, to make all things in the tabernacle according to “the pattern” which He showed him (Exo 25:9, etc.)—for everything therein pointed to, and set forth, the person and perfections of the Mediator. The writing of the Law on the stones of the altar tells of Christ’s sustaining the honour of the Law, that in Him alone is it established (Rom 3:31).

“And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well the stranger, as he that was born

among them; half of them over against mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel” (Jos 8:33). A most solemn and auspicious assembly was this, when the whole nation, with their responsible heads, were gathered before the LORD. The “*ark of the covenant*”—mentioned here for the last time in Joshua—was brought out of the tabernacle on this momentous occasion. The original tables of the Law were preserved therein, and now its statutes had been written on the stones of the altar. That which here took place is to be regarded as a solemn ratification—by the *new generation* of Israel—of the covenant entered into by their fathers at Sinai. The sanctions of the Law were now proclaimed in the hearing of the whole congregation, and by their repeated “Amen” (Deu 27:15-26, etc.), all Israel consented to the terms of the covenant. The mention of “the stranger” (verse 19) here anticipated the gathering of the Gentiles into the Church.

It must have been an exceedingly impressive sight as the entire congregation of Israel assembled in the valley between those two mountains. There had been nothing like it since their solemn gathering on Sinai forty years previously: in fact, what took place here was virtually a repetition of what had occurred there—Israel solemnly *covenanting* to keep God’s Law. As the former had been preceded by wondrous displays of God’s grace and power on their behalf, so it had been here; and thus, in each instance, submission and obedience to Him was to be an expression of their love to Him and gratitude for His favours. Such is precisely the place which the Law is to have with the Christian. Because the Lord Jesus has borne his sins and reconciled him to God, he is to express his thankfulness by receiving God’s Law at His hand, and thereby respond to His injunction: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (Joh 14:15).

The Doctrine of Revelation

33. In Glory, Part 6

The glorification of the saint commences upon his departure from this world; but it is not consummated until the morning of the Resurrection, when his body shall be “raised in glory” (1Co 15:43). Then will he be fully “conformed to the image of his [God’s] Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29). It is observable that in the process of conforming, the members of Christ’s mystical body partake of the experiences of their Head. As He suffered on this earth before He entered into His glory, so do they, for the rule holds good here that the servant is not above his Master, who purchased all that the servant is to enjoy. As His glorification was in distinct stages, so is theirs. His glorification began in His victory over sin and death, when He came forth triumphant from the grave. It was greatly advanced when He ascended and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Yet that did not complete it, for He is awaiting a more thorough conquest of His enemies (Heb 10:13) and the completion of the Church, which is His “fullness” or “complement” (Eph 1:23): “When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe” (2Th 1:10). Ours begins at regeneration, when we receive “the spirit of glory” as an earnest of our inheritance. It will be greatly augmented at death, for the soul is then purged of all defilement, and enters the Father’s House. But our complete glorification will not be until our bodies are raised, reunited to our souls, and “fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Phi 3:21).

As Christ Himself is not in every way complete (Eph 1:23) until the entire company of His redeemed are about Him and fully conformed to Him—for not till then shall He fully “see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isa 53:11)—neither is the glorification of Christians complete until their souls and bodies are united together again, for Christ redeemed the body as well as the soul (Rom 8:23); and if the Old Testament saints were not perfect without New Testament believers (Heb 11:40), then by the same reason, the soul will be imperfect without the body. The charge God gave to Christ was not only to lose none of “them” given to Him by the Father (Joh 18:9), but also that He should lose “none” of them; but should “raise *it* up again at the last day” (Joh 6:39). As Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) pointed out: “God hath the soul of Abraham with Him above, yet still He reckons to have not Abraham, that is the whole of him, until the Resurrection; from thence, Christ argued that Abraham must rise, because God is called ‘the God of Abraham’ (Mat 22:32).” The hope of Christ Himself, while His body lay in the grave—although His soul was in paradise (Luk 23:43)—was fixed upon the resurrection of His body. “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell

[Sheol—the unseen world]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life” (Psa 16:9, 11).

That expectation of the Saviour’s was also shared by the Old Testament saints. This is evident from the language of Job: “And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another” (Job 19:26-27). And again from the words of David: “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psa 17:15). As the death of the body is likened unto “sleep,” so the figure of “awaking” is used of its resurrection. Not until then will entire satisfaction (of spirit and soul and body) be the saint’s, for only then will the eternal purpose of God concerning him be fully realized. Note how comprehensive and sublime was this expectation—to “behold *thy face*”—which proves that Old Testament believers possessed as much light on the subject as we are now favoured with, for the New Testament contains nothing higher than “they shall see his face” (Rev 22:4). Not only so, but they turned it to practical use, and lived in the blessed power and enjoyment of the same. In the preceding verse, David makes mention of the “men of the world” who flourished like a green bay tree and had all their carnal hearts could desire of natural things. But so far was he from envying them or being discontented with his lot that he realized they had “*their* portion in this life,” and said, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness” (Psa 17:14-15)—*he* anticipated the joy of the life to come!

To behold God’s face by faith is both our duty and comfort in this life, yet that can only be as we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and as we maintain practical righteousness by obedience to God’s revealed will. To behold the LORD by open vision will be our occupation and enjoyment in the next life. But what is meant by “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psa 17:15)? Not a few have experienced a difficulty in supplying answer. Their spiritual instincts told them those words cannot mean that the soul will find its contentment in God’s image then being perfectly stamped upon itself; yet at first glance, that is what they seem to signify. Thomas Manton (1620-1677) appears to have given the true interpretation when he said: “In heaven we look for such a vision as makes way for assimilation, and such assimilation to God as maketh for complete satisfaction and blessedness.” There will be no *self*-satisfaction there, but rather entire absorption with and satisfaction in Christ. “That blessedness consists of three things: 1. The open vision of God and His glory: the knowledge of God will then be perfect, and the enlarged intellect filled with it. 2. The participation of His likeness: our holiness will there be perfect: this results from the former—‘we shall be like him; *for* we shall see him as he is’ (1Jo 3:2). 3. A complete and full satisfaction resulting from all this. There is no satisfaction for a soul but in God: in His face and likeness, His good will toward us, and His good work in us”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714).

It is solemnly true that the wicked will also yet behold the face of God in Christ, for it is written, “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and *every* eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him” (Rev 1:7): yet how vastly different will be their case! They will look upon Him but briefly, and not perpetually; with shame and sorrow, and not with confidence and joy; upon their Judge, and not their Saviour. So far from such a sight filling them with satisfaction, “all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him”; yea, they shall say to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Rev 6:16-17). None—be he king or subject, rich or poor—save those who “have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 7:14). These latter are “before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more...For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters” (Rev 7:15-17), finding His joy in ministering to them, as theirs will be in such ministry.

“At the resurrection, there will be a glory upon the body as well as upon the soul: a glory equal to that of the sun, moon, and stars. The body which is sown in the earth in corruption—a vile body, corrupted by sin, and now by death—shall be raised in incorruption, no more to be corrupted by sin, disease or death. What is sown in dishonor, and has lost all its beauty and glory, and become nauseous and fit only to be the companion of worms, shall be raised in glory—in the utmost perfection and comeliness, fashioned like to the glorious body of Christ—and shine like the sun in the firmament of heaven. What is sown in weakness, having lost all its strength, and carried by others to the grave, shall be raised in power—strong and hale, able to move itself from place to place—and will attend the service of God and the Lamb without weakness and weariness—there will be no more complaint of this kind: ‘the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak’ (Mat 26:41). What is sown a natural body—or an animal one, which while it lived was supported with animal food—shall be raised a spiritual body: not turned into a spirit, for then it would not have flesh and bones, as it will have; but it will subsist as spirits do, without food, and no more die; then it will be no incumbrance to the soul, as now, in spiritual services, but assisting to it; and befitted for spiritual employments, and to converse with spiritual objects”—John Gill (1697-1771).

When the glorified soul and the glorified body are united, there will then be a full accession of glory to the whole man; and his enjoyments will then be entered into in a larger and more sensible manner. Let us now consider the various features of a saint's glorification, or those things which constitute his eternal bliss. First, a perfection of *knowledge*. This is clear from "now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1Co 13:12). This does not mean we shall become omniscient, or possessed of infinite knowledge, but that our knowledge will be free from all doubt and error, and as full as our finite faculties will permit. We shall not only enjoy a greater means of knowledge, but our capacity to take in will be immeasurably increased. That sight of God in Christ which will be ours will not only irradiate our minds, but enlarge our understandings. We shall perceive the glory of God with the eyes of our mind fully enlightened. The rays of that glory will shine into our souls so that they will be filled with the knowledge of God, and with the whole good pleasure of His will, in all His vast designs of grace unto us. That which is revealed in Scripture—and upon which we now exercise faith and hope—shall then be fully experienced by us.

Second, a perfection of *union and communion*—both with Christ and fellow believers. Henceforth, there will be no more differences of opinion, cooling of affections, or breaches between Christians. Then will be fully realized that prayer: "That they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (Joh 17:22-23). The very reading of those words should fill our hearts with holy amazement, and the actualization of them will fill us with adoration. The oneness between the Father and the Son is such that they partake of the same ineffable blessedness, each enjoying it equally with the other. And *that* is the likeness, by way of similitude, of the final union between the Redeemer and the redeemed—ours will be like theirs! As the union between the Father and the Son is a real, spiritual, holy, indestructible, and inexpressibly glorious one, such will be that between Christ and His Church in heaven. There is a *grace union* between them here, but it is the *glory union* which is referred to in the above verses. "He will be theirs, and will bless them for ever. He will be all around them and within them; the light of their understandings, the joy of their hearts, the object of their perpetual praise"—Professor John Dick (1764-1833). Christ will remain the everlasting bond of union between God and the saints.

Third, a perfection of *love*. Even now, Christ has the first place in their hearts (otherwise they would not be real Christians); yet how often their affection toward Him wanes. Real need has each of us to pray, "O may no earth-born cloud arise, to hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes." But, blessed be God, such a thing will be unknown there. It will be impossible constantly to contemplate the excellencies of God without continually loving Him. "In this world, the saints prefer Him to their chief joy; and there are seasons when their hearts go out to Him with an ardour which no created object can excite, with desire for the closest union and the most intimate fellowship. But this flame will glow more ardently in the pure atmosphere of heaven....The fervor of his affection will never abate, nor will anything occur to suspend it, or turn it into a different channel. God will always maintain the pre-eminence and appear infinitely greater and better than all other beings"—Professor J. Dick. There will be a perpetual cleaving of heart to Him without change or weariness, a love that never ceases working communion with God.

Fourth, a perfection of *holiness*. "Now they are in part made 'partakers of the divine nature' (2Pe 1:4), but then they shall perfectly partake of it. That is to say, God will communicate to them His own image, making all His goodness not only pass before them, but pass into them, and stamp the image of all His own perfections upon them, so far as the creature is capable of receiving the same; from whence shall result a perfect likeness to Him, in all things in and about them"—Thomas Boston (1676-1732). "If our view of the glory of Christ by faith is assimilating now, and '[changes] into the same image from glory to glory' (2Co 3:18), what will a full view—a clear sight—of Him do? Then will the great end of predestination—to be conformed to the image of the Son of God—be completely answered. The soul, with all its powers and faculties, will bear a resemblance to Christ. Its understanding will have a clear and unobscured discernment of Him, the bias of the mind will be wholly toward Him, the will will be entirely subject to Him, the affections will be in the strongest manner set upon Him, and the memory will be fully stored with spiritual and heavenly things"—J. Gill.

Fifth, a perfection of *glory*. Of old, it was promised that "the LORD will give grace and glory" (Psa 84:11): as surely as He has given us the one, so will He the other. "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of *the glory* of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Th 2:13-14). *That* was what God had in mind for His people in eternity past: nothing less would satisfy His heart. Observe well that it is "the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Our glory cannot be independent of Him, but the glory which the Father hath given Him, He gives us (Joh 17:22), so that we share His very Throne (Rev 3:21)! As He is the Head of grace, ministering to our every need, so He is the Head of glory and will communicate the same to us in heaven. He will shine forth in all His glory so that His bride will reflect the splen-

dour of it. Angels will be spectators of it, but not the sharers. It will be a glory revealed in the saints, which is beyond all comparison (Rom 8:18; 2Th 1:10); and a glory put *upon* them, which is inconceivable (Psa 45:13; Rev 21:11); so that “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col 3:4), in shining robes of ineffable purity and beauty.

Sixth, a perfection of *joy*. “Joy sometimes enters into us now, but it has much to do to get access while we are encompassed with sorrows; but then, joy shall not only enter into us, but we shall enter into it, and swim for ever in an ocean of joy; where we shall see nothing but joy wherever we turn our eyes”—Thomas Boston (1676-1732). Our joy will be pure and unmixed, without any dregs of sorrow. “In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psa 16:11). The object of our happiness will not be a creature, but God Himself. The presence and communion of the Lamb will afford us everlasting delight. All that the spouse is represented in the Son as longing for she will then have, and a thousand times more. Christ will then say, “Enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Mat 25:21), sharing with us His own joy. Perfect serenity of mind, complete satisfaction of heart, will be ours, without interruption for ever. As we are told that in that day, the “LORD thy God...will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing” (Zep 3:17), so will it be with His people.

Seventh, a perfection of *praise*. In Revelation 15:2, the heavenly saints are seen “having the harps of God”—the emblem of praise. At present, our best worship is faulty—for both our knowledge of God and our love to Him are sadly defective—but when we come into His presence and are “filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:19), we shall render to Him that which is His due. Then shall we fully realize our infinite indebtedness to His grace, and our hearts will overflow with gratitude. A glorified soul will be far better capacitated to estimate and appreciate the wondrous riches of His grace, than it can be in its present state; and therefore, our adoring homage will be immeasurably more fervent and raised to a higher pitch. The infinite perfections of the Triune Jehovah, His love unto the Church collectively and to each of its members individually, the revelation and manifestation of His glory in Christ, and the salvation which He provided for them at such fearful cost to Himself, contain an all-sufficiency for perpetual praise and thanksgiving throughout the endless ages. His praises can never be exhausted: for all eternity, we shall find fresh matter in Him for thanksgiving.

“And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads” (Rev 22:3-4). That is not only the final, but the ultimate, word on this glorious subject. In the beatific vision, it is not upon His “back parts” we shall look, as did Moses upon the mount (Exo 33:23), but we shall “see *his face*”! We shall not be limited to touching the hem of His garment, nor to embracing His feet, but shall actually and personally feast our eyes upon His peerless countenance. That sacred head which once was crowned with thorns is now adorned with diadem resplendent; and that blessed face which was covered with the vile spittle of men will for ever beam with love upon His own. Oh, what an ineffable sight! No longer will our eyes be clouded by sin or dimmed by old age. Nor will such bliss be ours for a brief season only, but for ever more. There will be a perfect and perpetual influx of delight as we view Him in the inconceivable radiance of His manifested glory.

“And they shall see *his face*” (verse 4). There will be many other objects to behold, but nothing in comparison with Him! Those mansions which Christ has gone to prepare for His beloved must be indescribably lovely. The holy angels—the cherubim and seraphim—will be present to our sight. The patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and martyrs, and some of our own dear kindred who were washed in the blood of the Lamb. But chief and foremost, claiming our notice and absorbing our attention will be our best Beloved. Then it is we shall receive the fullest and grandest answer to our oft-repeated prayer, “God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to *shine upon us*” (Psa 67:1). To see the King’s face is to enjoy His favour (2Sa 14:24, 32). But it also signifies to have the most intimate and immediate communion with Him, that we shall then be the recipients of the fullest and most lavish discoveries of His love, beholding Him with both the eyes of our understandings and of our glorified bodies. All distance will then be removed. Every veil will then be done away. All we longed for perfectly realized.

Nothing will then be lacking to the absolute completeness of our happiness; and, what is far better, nothing will be lacking to complete the happiness of *Christ*. That “joy” which He “set before him” or held in view, as He “endured the cross” (Heb 12:2), will then be fully His; for we shall not only be with Him, but like Him, conformed to His image. “His name shall be in their foreheads” (Rev 22:4). Then will it openly appear to all beholders that they belong to Him and bear His holy image, since they shall perfectly reflect Him. As the “name” represents the *person*, so we shall bear His likeness, giving expression to those who see us *who* and *what* He is. We shall be publicly acknowledged as His (compare Rev 14:1).

Christ will everlastingly delight in the Church, and the Church will everlastingly delight in Him. There will be mutual intercourse, an unrestrained opening of the heart one to another. In communion, *communications* are made

by *both* parties. One party bestows favour upon another, and the recipient reciprocates by giving back to the donor grateful acknowledgment, according to the benefit received; those communications, from both sides, flowing from love and union. Thus we read, “Now ye Philippians know also, that...no church *communicated* with me as concerning giving *and* receiving, but ye only” (Phi 4:15). Paul and the Philippian saints were united in heart and had spiritual fellowship together in the Gospel (Phi 1:5). Out of love to him, they communicated in a temporal way: they being the active givers, and he the passive receiver. Then, in return for their kindness, the apostle communicated by acknowledging their beneficence, thanking them for it. This may help us a little to form some idea of what our communion with Christ in heaven will be like. As the vine conveys sap to the branch, so the branch *responds* by bearing leaves and fruit. Christ will continue to be *the Giver*, and we the receivers; yet this will issue in the overflowing of our love; and in *return*, we shall pour out praise and thanksgiving, adoration and worship.

*“He and I in one bright glory
Endless bliss shall share;
Mine, to be for ever with Him;
His, that I am there.”*

Glorious Sinai

Part 9

The fatal mistake of the Jews in looking to their imperfect obedience of the terms of the Sinaitic covenant lay in their regarding that august transaction as a thing apart, instead of as a wise and necessary supplement to the prior covenant with Abraham. This is evident from the line of Paul’s reasoning in Galatians 3 and 4, where he was contending with those who trusted to their righteousness for acceptance with God, and as giving title to an eternal inheritance. First, he lays down the general principle in “Though it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto” (Gal 3:15). That is to say, where a definite agreement has been entered into by two parties and has been solemnly sworn to and ratified, it is held to be sacred and inviolable. How much more so must that obtain in regard to a divine compact! Next, Paul appealed to the covenant promises which God made unto Abraham: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (verse 16). Though those promises received an earthly and temporary accomplishment to his natural descendants, yet the ultimate fulfillment was to be a heavenly and eternal one unto his spiritual seed (see verses 7, 9, 29).

The force of the term “seed” is not to be sought in its dictionary meaning, but rather in the scriptural *idea* which it embodies; in the spiritual concept, and not merely its literal signification; in an individual person who should sum up in Himself the covenant people, as well as (for them) the covenant blessings—just as the term ‘christ’ means an anointed one, but is employed as the special title of the Saviour; and is given to Him not as a private, but as a public person, including both the Head and the members of His Church (see 1 Corinthians 12:12). Abraham had two entirely different “seeds”—one by human procreation, the other by divine regeneration—and the promises made to him respecting his “seed” (in the primary and ultimate reference) regarded the latter, namely the mystical “Christ”—the Redeemer—and all who were federally and vitally united to Him. Thus the antithesis drawn in Galatians 3:16 is between the *unity* of the “seed” and the diversity of the “seeds.” This had been strikingly shadowed forth on the earth plane. Abraham had two sons, but Ishmael was excluded from the highest privileges: “In Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Gen 21:12; Rom 9:7)—not all of *his* natural descendants, for Esau and his line were also debarred; but the Messiah Himself and all the Father had given Him in the everlasting covenant.

“To thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal 3:16)—i.e. Christ *mystical*, as in 1 Corinthians 12:12; and Colossians 1:24—Christ and all who are one with Him by faith. To them alone did the *spiritual* contents of the promises (recorded in Genesis 12:2-3, 7, etc.) pertain, the carnal seed being expressly excluded in the “He saith not, And to seeds, as of many.” Then the apostle went on to point out, “And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect” (Gal 3:17). God’s covenant with Abraham was permanent and immutable, and none of His subsequent acts set it aside, but rather subserved and promoted it; nor will that covenant ever expire through

want of a “seed.” Therefore, the Law given at Sinai must be regarded as subordinate to the Abrahamic promises and interpreted consistently therewith. The “four hundred and thirty years” preclude any reference to God’s *eternal* covenant with Christ; and the *eis Christion* signifies “concerning Christ” as in Ephesians 5:32, and “concerning him” as the *eis auton* of Acts 2:25: a further proof that God’s covenant with Abraham concerned Christ, that is, Christ *mystical*—Abraham’s “seed.”

The special point which the apostle was laboring in Galatians 3 was that the promises given by God to Abraham (solemnly “confirmed” by His covenant oath—Genesis 26:3) were made centuries before the Sinaitic economy was established; and that, inasmuch as God is faithful so that His Word cannot be broken (verse 15), there could not possibly be anything in connection with the Law which would in the least neutralize or set aside that which He had pledged Himself freely to bestow: “The law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect” (verse 17). Had the later generations of the Jews but clearly grasped that self-evident fact, they had not fallen into such grievous error; and had many Christian expositors apprehended the same, they too had not been guilty of such glaring mistakes when they sought the antitypical signification and application. It is to be noted that Paul changed from the plural number in verse 16 to the singular in verse 17, because he was about to confine himself to one particular “promise,” namely that which respected the *Inheritance*.

“For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise” (verse 18). If due attention be paid to the whole of the context, there will be no difficulty in determining exactly what is here meant by “the inheritance,” though it may be expressed in more ways than one. In the foregoing verses, the apostle was treating of the grand truth of justification by faith (verses 6-9, 11-14), and concludes the chapter by saying, “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (verse 29). Thus the “inheritance” here is the same as “the blessing of Abraham” in verse 14, namely the blessing of *justification*, promised in the covenant to Abraham and his spiritual seed, even the Gentiles, and which is inherited by them; that justification which consists of being pronounced righteous by God and entitled to the reward or the spiritual and heavenly blessings connected therewith, and of which Israel’s possession of Canaan was the type. The “covenant,” the “promise,” and the “inheritance” of verses 17 and 18 all point to substantially the same thing. It is termed “the inheritance,” because it is as the spiritual descendants or children of Abraham that believers come to enjoy it. It would be equally correct to say “the inheritance” is our everlasting bliss in heaven, of which Canaan was a figure, and was known to be such by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the heirs with him of the same promise (see Hebrews 11:8-11, 13-16).

“For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise” (verse 18). The Jews insisted that the favour of God was obtained by works of righteousness, and the Judaizers of the apostle’s day were contending that justification and salvation could only be attained by a strict observance of the Mosaic Law, telling the Gentiles, “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Act 15:1); and let it not be overlooked that anyone thus circumcised became “a debtor to do the whole law” (Gal 5:3). Paul here shows how absurd and unscriptural such teaching was, being at complete variance with God’s dealings with their forebears from the beginning. The earthly Canaan was not conveyed to Israel in return for their law-keeping, but rather as a free donation from their gracious God; and so it is with the heavenly inheritance. Paul’s argument was irrefutable: if the inheritance was obtained on the ground of obedience to the Mosaic Law, then it could not become theirs by virtue of the Abrahamic promise; it could not be secured by two totally different methods—it could not be by merit and by mercy, or by works and by grace too. “But God *gave* it to Abraham by promise” (verse 18): that settled the matter—both the temporal and the eternal inheritance, the earthly and the heavenly Canaan, proceeded from God’s free favour and not as a bargain whose terms men must meet, as a gratuity and not as something earned by law-obedience.

“Wherefore then serveth the law?” (verse 19). The apostle now anticipated and answered an objection. “The law” here is to be limited to neither the moral nor the ceremonial, but understood as including the Sinaitic constitution as a whole, the entire order of things under which the nation of Israel was there placed. The objection amounts to this: If the Law could not be the means of admission into the favour and blessing of God, then why was it given—what purpose was it intended to serve? That question is not to be regarded as an inquiry into the designs and uses of the Mosaic Law generally, but (as the answer intimates) with particular reference to the ordination of God that justification was to be by faith through the Messiah, and especially that such justification was to be extended to the Gentiles. *History* itself supplied a clear and full answer to the question. God had announced in Eden that deliverance from the serpent was to be secured by the promised “seed” (Gen 3:15), and made known the way of a sinner’s acceptance by Him as far back as the days of Abel (Heb 11:4). But through the prevalence of human depravity, during the course of time, those divine revelations were almost entirely forgotten: “For all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth” (Gen 6:12), and the deluge swept away all the inhabitants of the ancient world, with the exception of one family, among whom the knowledge of God was to be preserved.

It was not long before the descendants of Noah—the inhabitants of the new world—became idolaters. In order to prevent the utter extinction among mankind of the knowledge of God and the way of reconciliation to Him, God called Abraham, and made to him a plain discovery of the divine designs of mercy; and his descendants by Isaac and Jacob were chosen to be the custodians of the revelation, until He should come to whom those discoveries of mercies chiefly referred. But after the descendants of Jacob had sojourned for some generations in Egypt, they so learned “the [ways] of the heathen” (Jer 10:2), and became so corrupted by their idolatries that such declension had soon issued in the complete loss of the revelation made to their fathers, and their own assimilation by the Gentiles. To obviate such a calamity, God called Moses, and the need for His doing so is made very evident in the early chapters of Exodus. So sadly had the Hebrews deteriorated religiously, that when Jehovah appeared unto Moses at the burning bush and commissioned him to return to Egypt and lead His people out from that land, he said, “Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, *What is his name?* what shall I say unto them?” (Exo 3:13)! And so low had they sunk socially, they were in abject slavery, groaning under the lash of their taskmasters.

The land of Canaan had been conferred upon Abraham by free grant and was secured by divine covenant to his seed, but while they toiled in the Egyptian brick-kilns, the realization of such a promise appeared a hopeless prospect. But their deliverance from the house of bondage and miraculous passage through the Red Sea were a great step forward; yet much more was still needed in order to fit them for their heritage and to occupy it unto the divine glory. They were still very ignorant of the One with whom they had to do and who had wrought so wondrously for them: ignorant of His character, of His claims upon them, and what became of them as His people. A recollection of *these things* should have made it quite unnecessary for the Jews of Paul’s day to ask, “Wherefore then serveth the law?” (verse 19), which was only an abbreviated form of inquiring, What was the divine intent of the Sinaitic covenant? What ends were meant to be served by the whole revelation which Jehovah vouchsafed there, with the economy instituted? Nor should we have the slightest difficulty in perceiving what is signified by and included in the brief answer made by the apostle: “It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.”

Note well that “the law” was “added to” the previous covenant of promise, neither cancelling or neutralizing it. The Sinaitic constitution was not set up independently, but brought in to serve as a handmaid. Its design was not to render void or effect any alteration in the earlier revelation, but was an appendage to supplement the same. The revelation of justification by faith made to Abel and renewed to Abraham was to be preserved pure and entire by his descendants, till the appearing of Him who was to put away sin and bring in everlasting righteousness. But “because of transgressions” (verse 19), the Law of Sinai was necessary: First and immediately, because of the criminal conduct of Israel in Egypt; and second, because—though they had been divinely redeemed from the house of bondage—sin still indwelt them; and therefore, it was to curb their lusts, prevent the outbreaking of their corruptions, restrain them from idolatry and wickedness, and preserve the knowledge and worship of God among them, until the time when He should grant mankind a yet fuller and final revelation of Himself in the person of His incarnate Son. The moral Law was necessary to convince them of their sinfulness; the ceremonial to make known the way of acceptance and holiness, and to move unto a marveling at the gracious provisions God had made for His wayward people.

Had there been no Law, then Israel had not been accountable for their transgressions; but with a full revelation of the divine will, they were left without excuse. It produced no change in the way of salvation, but it intimated *how* the redeemed were required to walk. The Sinaitic covenant was the charter by which Israel was incorporated as a nation under the immediate and spiritual government of God, for it was at the holy mount that Jehovah took possession of His Throne in their midst (1Sa 8:7): God was revealed there both as the Redeemer and Ruler of His people. The design of the mission and *ministry* of Moses (see the whole book of Deuteronomy, where full instructions were given how they were to conduct themselves in Canaan) was not only to bring the heirs of promise into the actual possession of their blessings, but to equip them for occupying the same in a manner worthy of those who were to be Jehovah’s witnesses before the surrounding nations. He therefore placed them under a special order of things which was admirably adapted to preserve them as a separate people and safeguard the revelation of His mercy in and through the coming Messiah until His actual appearing.

“It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator” (verse 19). That last clause was added in order to heighten the contrast between the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants, and to evince the inferiority of the latter to the former. Though the Law was ordained or established by God as its Author—all its particular injunctions being prefaced with “And the LORD spake unto Moses”—yet it is clear from Acts 7:53 and Hebrews 2:2 that the angels were in some way or other employed in the giving of the Law. That particular detail (see Deuteronomy 33:2; Psalm 68:17) was seized by

the apostle, and mentioned here to point a tacit antithesis as to the manner in which the promise was given. In like manner, he specifies the fact that the Law was also “in the hand of a mediator”—the allusion being to Deuteronomy 5:27. In contradistinction thereto, God conversed with Abraham as with a “Friend” (Jam 2:23). It was obviously the apostle’s intent to exalt the promise above the Law—that being the principal transaction; the other, secondary and subservient. The promise was first, the Law came later. The one spoke of nothing but “blessing”; the other was “added because of transgressions” and denounced transgressors. The promise was for ever; the Law, only “till the seed should come” (verse 19).

The Mosaic Law (in its entirety) was not given with hostile designs, but to minister in an inferior—but still necessary—place to the higher ends and purposes which the Abrahamic covenant had in view; and it being published in grace and mercy, not fury and wrath. Had it been expressly designed to curse and slay, it had *not* been “in the hand of a mediator” (verse 19); but rather, of an executioner! The “mediator” imported that God was *at peace* with Israel! Then the apostle added, “Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God *is one*” (verse 20)—immutable. Let both Antinomians and Dispensationalists weigh thoroughly that statement. God is “in one mind” (Job 23:13), and not like the fickle creature: “With whom is no variableness or shadow of turning” (Jam 1:17). He has precisely the same design in Law and Gospel, namely His own glory and the good of His people. His purpose was identical in both the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants, the Law being proclaimed with a benevolent design. Hence the apostle brings his argument to a point by asking, “Is the law then against the promises of God?”—to which he returns the decisive reply, “God forbid” (verse 21). How radically different is *that* answer to the ideas of many today who boast of their light and orthodoxy!

Those who are at all acquainted with Paul’s mode of writing are aware that his “God forbid” is the language he always used to express a very strong negative: most emphatically, “the law then [is *not*] against the promises of God” (verse 21). On the contrary, it was subservient to the Abrahamic covenant, added to secure the fulfillment of its promised good, and proceeding from Him who is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb 13:8). But what a deplorable tendency is there in fallen human nature to misapprehend the design of God in His gifts and works, and to pervert to our destruction what was meant for our good! No more forcible and solemn example of this can be found than in the great error which the majority of the Jews fell into, and which the Judaizers of Paul’s day were seeking to perpetuate and enforce upon Christians. He therefore continued his expostulation and refutation by pointing out that, “For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law” (verse 21). But this, he meant that if any law had been given which furnished all the means necessary for man’s real and eternal blessing, then in such a case, legal justification—or restoration to the divine favour on the ground of something done by the sinner—*was* possible. Yet in such a case, that had been at direct variance with the gratuitous method of justification by faith, as had been made known in the promises, and exemplified in the case of Abraham himself.

So far from any law being given that men might look to it for “life,” God had “concluded all under sin” (verse 22)—guilt or exposure to punishment—and this, in order that “the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” Hence, “Before faith [Greek—‘the faith’] came [i.e. before the Christian revelation was given] we [Jews] were kept under the law, shut unto [i.e. until] the faith” (verse 23)—confined by its statutes, preserved as a separate people. “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ” (verse 24), which gives the positive answer to the question of verse 19. Judaism was designed to instruct, constrain and chasten; and thereby, prepare the Jews for a superior order of things. “But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (verse 25): the Mosaic economy has served its purpose, and the middle wall of partition may be broken down.

A final word on verse 19. Note its qualifying “till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.” Here, as everywhere, it was *Christ* whom God had before Him—primarily and ultimately—at Sinai! *He* is the grand Centre of all the divine counsels; and the divine providences are ever ordered for His glory. The Mosaic constitution was not only designed for Israel’s good, but there was another and higher end which God had in view therein, namely, that the appointed channel through which the Seed was to come should be *kept pure*. He was to be of the Abrahamic stock and of the tribe of Judah; and therefore, God put Israel under a dispensation by which they were compelled to dwell alone (Lev 20:26) with their tribal distinctions preserved (Num 36:7). Despite their sins and failures, God’s purpose was accomplished, for when the Messiah was born, Israel was still a holy or separate nation, and the tribe of Judah was distinguishable from the others. The Levitical economy had then served its purpose (Heb 8:13), and the “old covenant” gave way to the “new.”



OCTOBER

Go Slow!

“He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa 28:16). The writer has often had occasion to be thankful that this text was frequently quoted to him by a wise and godly father—in the years of his impetuous youth, and also during the early days of his Christian life—and hesitates not to say that had he heeded its prohibition more constantly and strictly, he had avoided both trouble and repinings. There is indeed a haste which is commendable, but there is also one that is censurable—one that is irrational and injurious, yea, very often fatal. One of the characteristics of the present generation is their craze for speed; and they are paying dearly for the increased tempo of their ways and their frenzied living, as witnessed to not only by the mounting toll of casualties on the highways, but by the multiplying of asylums. Only by definite prayer, constant watchfulness, and strict self-discipline will the child of God be preserved from the evil spirit which is now driving his fellows to destruction. Let him daily recall our opening text.

Those who act hastily usually find they have to repent at their leisure. As a general rule for action, it is wise to remember: “More haste, less good speed”; and the more important be the project, the greater need to carefully ponder its pros and cons. To act by impulse or passion is unworthy of a rational creature. God bids us, “Ponder the path of thy feet” (Pro 4:26): failure to do so occasions many a fall. Every step of life’s journey is beset with snares and dangers, and therefore, should be critically examined. “*Consider* your ways” (Hag 1:5) is the voice of wisdom; and to disregard the same is to invite trouble. “The prudent man looketh well to his going” (Pro 14:15)—alas, how few such are now left in this mad world! Especially is careful reflection and circumspect action called for where our spiritual and eternal interests are concerned. Scripture contains many illustrations of the folly and disaster of acting hastily. It was through doing so that Joshua was beguiled (Jos 9:14-15). Saul’s impetuosity cost him his kingdom (1Sa 13:12, 14), and David’s precipitation was the occasion of great injury (2Sa 16:1-4). Particularly, we should be slow:

1. *In addressing the Throne of Grace.* Many who disdain pre-composed forms of prayer have erred sadly in their extempore ones. Nothing is more unseemly than for a creature to rush thoughtlessly into the presence of God and chatter like a crane. Certainly, nothing is more impious and reprehensible than for a sinner to affront the Holy One by babbling forth the first things entering his mind. “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few” (Ecc 5:2). If Scripture requires us to think before we speak unto our fellows, how much more so ere addressing *God*—lest we too be among those of whom it is said, “And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul” (Psa 106:15). Let not filial boldness degenerate into unholy familiarity. Come before the LORD with awe and reverence. Take time to quieten your carnal passions and compose your mind.

2. *In preaching to others.* “Be swift to hear; slow to speak” (Jam 1:19) has reference to the Word—verses 18, 21-24. Alas, how many—in this age of “broadcasting” and “loudspeakers”—are rather slow to hear; swift to speak. No sooner do they acquire the merest smattering of the truth than they deem themselves qualified to instruct others. If they do not push themselves to the fore, some silly person will urge them to teach a class or speak in the open air, in complete disregard of the injunction, “Not a novice” (1Ti 3:6)—note why: “Lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.” Those who obtrude the sacred calling do more harm than good. It is not the Spirit of God, but the spirit of vainglory which prompts them. One must severely discipline *himself*, before he is qualified to discipline others (Rom 2:24). But there are many who never take office, yet—despite their utter incompetency—consider themselves well fitted to criticize the minister’s sermons, and argue the deep things of God with those much older than themselves.

3. *In resenting reproofs.* “Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath”—the last item, equally with the former, respects the Word of God, especially the *preaching* of it. First, the spirit in which it is delivered: namely, reverently and with dignity, and not boisterously under the sway of passions—the discerning hearer quickly distinguishes between carnal thunder and spiritual fervor. Still less must such a solemn occasion be employed in

giving utterance to any personal ill will. Some preachers have deserved the taunt that the pulpit is “the coward’s castle,” using it to attack individuals whom they would be afraid to accuse in private. Second, the spirit in which it is *received*: hotly resenting that which comes home too closely to the hearer. Usually, those who are angriest at a rebuke are the ones needing it. It is a bad sign when we are irritated rather than humbled by faithful preaching. The indignation which rises up against the Word *hinders* our attainment of practical “righteousness,” or performing of what God requires, as James 1:20 shows.

4. *In giving vent to an unruly temper.* “He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa 28:16) is a call to *self-discipline*. To act hastily is to act without due deliberation. We should always take time to ask whither such a course will lead, or, better, Will it be to God’s glory? The same applies to the words of our mouths. “He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly” (Pro 14:29). The former makes it manifest that he has a good understanding of himself, his duty, and his interests, as well as the infirmities of his fellows. Spiritual wisdom causes us to govern our passions, moderate our resentments, and adjourn our fury. But the hasty of spirit allows folly to be his master. “The discretion of a man deferreth his anger” (Pro 19:11)—it is a part of the cure to *delay* it. Anger does not grow by degrees as do the other passions, but is strongest at its birth; and therefore, prudent deliberation is the best safeguard. An interval between the inward tumult and the outward manifestation of the “anger” is most important. An open insult is therefore the *test* whether I have “discretion,” or whether I am the slave of my own passion. “Not rendering...railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing” (1Pe 3:9) is the Christian spirit.

5. *In judging our fellows.* “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye...Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye” (Mat 7:3-5). The beholding of motes in our brethren’s eyes indicates a tendency to be more critical of others than of ourselves. “Beholdest” denotes not an occasional observation, but an habitual one. It also shows we are readier to overlook the virtues of others, however excellent, than we are to overlook their minor blemishes. It demonstrates, too, a species of hypocrisy, for if we are quick to discern the infirmities of others, it cannot be through lack of perception—but rather of honesty—that we fail to regard our *own* greater sins. Then seek grace to cultivate the habit of self-judgment. Never allow in yourself what you condemn in another. We are to be neither blind, nor indifferent, to a brother’s failings; yet we cannot help him in meekness (Gal 6:1), till we have learned to judge ourselves unsparingly.

6. “*He that believeth shall not make haste*” in the *pursuit of wealth*. “The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want” (Pro 21:5). The diligent is usually contrasted with the sluggard and slothful (Pro 13:4, etc.); and here, with the *hasty*: the thoughts of each producing their own fruits. The patient, plodding man of industry perseveres in spite of all difficulties, and content to increase his substance by degrees: never relaxing, and never yielding to discouragement. Such exercise of diligence is, under the blessing of God, prospered (Pro 10:22). But as indolence is the opposite of diligence, so “haste” or undisciplined impulse is its excess. The hand acts only too often without the judgment. The hasty man is driven by a worldly spirit into ill-considered projects and rash speculations, only to find it is the sure road to want. Those who are greedy of gain are generally unscrupulous in their methods. (See also Proverbs 28:20, 22; 1 Timothy 6:9-10).

7. *In interpreting God’s providences.* Much caution and wisdom needs to be used in drawing deductions from God’s ordering of our affairs. Jacob is far from being the only one who hastily declared, “All these things are against me” (Gen 42:36), when in reality, God was making them work for his good. We are greatly the losers when we do not possess our souls in patience and quietly wait for God to make things plain to us. When David said in his haste, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul” (1Sa 27:1), he drew an entirely wrong inference from the painful circumstances he was then in, for the hour of Saul’s fall and of his own deliverance was at hand. The LORD was on the point of extricating His servant from his long and sore afflictions, but at the last moment, his faith failed! Again, how often we draw a wrong conclusion from the Lord’s testing of our patience, and, because an answer is not granted speedily, imagine He has turned a deaf ear to our prayers. What a warning against *that* is Psalm 31:22! May both writer and reader earnestly seek grace to guard against these seven sins.

The Prayers of the Apostles

70. Jude :24-25, Part 2

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling” (Jude :24). Who *are* the ones that the Lord Jesus thus preserves? Not every one who professes to believe and be a follower of His, as is clear from the case of Judas Iscariot! Then whom? Why, those who make a genuine effort to respond to the exhortations found in the verses immediately preceding. Those who—so far from being content with their present knowledge and spiritual attainments—sincerely endeavour to build up themselves “on [their] most holy faith” (Jude :20). Those who—so far from being indifferent to the state of their hearts—jealously watch their affections, that their love of God be preserved pure, healthy, vigorous, and in regular exercise. Those who—so far from taking pleasure in flirting with the world and indulging their carnal lusts—are “hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude :23) Those who pray fervently for the assistance of the Holy Spirit therein, and who are deeply solicitous about the welfare of their brethren and sisters in Christ. *Such* are the ones who will be preserved from apostasy—despite all their weakness and frailties.

It is of vital importance to a sound knowledge of Scripture that we observe the *order* in which truth is therein set forth. For example, we find David saying, “Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God” *before* he prayed, “Uphold me according unto thy word” (Psa 119:115-116). There had been no sincerity in praying God to support him, unless he had resolved to obey the divine precepts—it would be horrible mockery for anyone to ask God to sustain him in a course of self-will. First, a holy purpose and resolution on our part, and *then* the seeking of enabling grace. It is of equal importance to a right understanding of Scripture that we do not separate what God has joined together, and detach a sentence from its qualifying context. We often read the quotation, “My sheep...shall never perish,” but while that is substantially correct, they are not the precise words Christ used. Rather, did He say, “And *they* shall never perish,” previously declaring, “My sheep hear [heed!] my voice, and I know [approve] them, and they *follow me* [not their natural inclinations]: And I give unto them eternal life; and *they* [the heedful and obedient ones] shall never perish” (Joh 10:27-28).

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling.” The discerning reader will perceive in the above remarks that we have anticipated and answered the question of *how* Christ preserves His people. He does so in a manner very different from that in which He “keeps” the planets in their courses—by physical energy, namely, by the effectual operations of His grace within their souls. Christ preserves His people not in a course of reckless self-pleasing, but in one of self-denial. He preserves by moving them to heed His warnings and admonitions, to practice His precepts and follow the example which He has left them. He preserves them by enabling them to persevere in faith and holiness. We are “kept by the power of God *through faith*” (1Pe 1:5); and faith respects His commandments (Psa 119:66; Heb 11:8), as well as His promises. Christ indeed does all, yet in us and by us—causing us to concur and respond. He works in us “both to will and to *do* of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13). Not that He preserves His people because of, or as the result of, *their* perseverance—nor irrespective of the same—but rather, *through* or by means of it.

After exhorting the saints as he had done in verses 20-23, the apostle then intimated *where* they must look for their enablement and for the divine blessing on their endeavours: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling.” His readers must place the whole of their dependence for preservation on the Lord Jesus. That was not said to check their industry, but to encourage hope. It is a great relief unto faith to know that “God is able to make him stand” (Rom 14:4). John Gill (1697-1771) began his comments on Jude :24 by saying, “The people of God are *liable* to fall into temptation, into sin, into errors...and even into final and *total apostasy*, were it not for divine power.” Yea, they are painfully sensible both of their evil proclivities and their frailty, and therefore, do they frequently cry unto the LORD, “Hold thou me up” (Psa 119:117). As they read of Adam in a state of innocency being unable to keep himself from falling, and likewise the angels in heaven, they know full well that an imperfect and sinful creature cannot do so of himself. The way to heaven is a “narrow” one (Mat 7:14), and there are precipices on either side. There are foes within and without seeking his destruction; and he has no more strength of his own than had poor Peter when put to the proof by a maid.

Every figure used in the Bible to set forth a child of God emphasizes his weakness and helplessness: a sheep, a branch of the vine, a bruised reed, and a smoking flax. It is only as we experientially discover our weakness that we learn to prize more highly the One who is able to keep us from falling. Does a reader tremblingly say, “I fear that I too may perish in the wilderness”? Not so, if your prayer be sincere when you cry, “Hold up my goings in thy

paths” (Psa 17:5). Christ is able to protect you, because His power is limitless and His grace boundless. What strength this should give the wearied warrior! David comforted himself therewith when he declared, “I will fear no evil: for thou art with me” (Psa 23:4). There is a twofold safeguarding of the elect spoken of in this epistle: the one before regeneration; and the other, after. In the opening verse, they are spoken of as “sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called” (Jude :1). They were set apart unto salvation by the Father in His eternal decree (2Th 2:13), and “preserved” *before* they were effectually called. Wonderful and blessed fact is that. Even while wandering from the fold, yea, when hating Him, His love watched over them (Jer 31:3); and His power delivered them from an untimely grave. Death cannot seize an elect soul, until it has been born again!

What has just been pointed out should make it very evident that there is no question whatever about the Lord’s *willingness* to preserve His people: if He kept them from natural death while in a state of unregeneracy, much more will He deliver them from spiritual death, now that He has made them new creatures (compare Rom 5:9-10). If Christ were not willing to “make all grace abound” unto His people (2Co 9:8), to “keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2Ti 1:12), to “succour them that are tempted” (Heb 2:18), and to “save them to the uttermost [or ‘for evermore’]” (Heb 7:25), He most certainly would not tantalize them by affirming in each passage that “he is able” to do these things. When Christ asked the question, “Believe ye that I am able to do this?” (Mat 9:28) of the two blind men who besought Him to have mercy upon them, He was not raising a doubt in their minds as to His readiness to give them sight, but was challenging their faith—as the next verse makes evident. Let the reader compare our remarks on Ephesians 3:20, at the close of previous articles. “Unto him that is *able* to keep you from falling” was a general term to include not only His might and willingness, but His goodness and munificence.

It is indeed true that the power of Christ is far greater than what He actually exercises, for it is infinite; and were He so disposed, He could keep His people altogether from sin—but for wise and holy reasons, He does not. As His forerunner reminded the Pharisees, “God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham” (Mat 3:9), so Christ could have commanded legions of angels to deliver Him from His enemies (Mat 26:53)—but He would not. The exercise of His power was and is regulated by God’s eternal purpose: He puts it forth only so far as He has stipulated to do so by covenant engagement. Thus, “Unto him that is able to keep you *from falling*” has reference not to every kind of falling, but to the fatal errors of those mentioned in Jude :4, from being led astray by the sophistries and examples of heretical teachers. As the Shepherd of God’s sheep, Christ has received a charge to preserve them—not from straying, but from destruction. It is the gross sins spoken of in the context, when joined with obstinacy and impenitence, from which Christ delivers His people—the “presumptuous sins” of Psalm 19:13, unpardonable sins, such as suicide. In other words, it is from total and final apostasy that Christ keeps all of “his own.”

It is His office and work thus to keep His people. They were given to Him by the Father with that end in view. He is in every way qualified for the same, both considering His deity and His humanity (Heb 2:18). All power has been given to Him in heaven and earth. He is as willing as He is competent, for it is the Father’s will that He should lose none of them (Joh 6:39), and therein He delights. He has a personal interest in them, for He has bought them for Himself. He is accountable for their custody. He therefore preserves them from being devoured by sin. No feeble Saviour is ours, but rather One that is clothed with omnipotence. That was manifest even during the days of His humiliation, when He cast out demons, healed the sick, and stilled the tempest by His authoritative fiat. It was evidenced when, by a single utterance, He caused those who came to arrest Him to fall backward to the ground (Joh 18:6). It was supremely demonstrated in His personal victory over death and the grave. That almighty power is exercised in ordering all the affairs of His people, and continually directing their wills and actions throughout the whole of their earthly pilgrimage. Of His vineyard, He declares, “I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day” (Isa 27:3).

“And to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude :24). Here is the second reason which prompted this outburst of adoration. Christ not only protects His people here, but has provided for their felicity hereafter. Such is His grace and power that He makes good unto them all that God has purposed, and whatsoever He has promised. The “presentation” of them unto Himself includes both an individual and a corporate one. The former is at death, when He takes the believer unto Himself. Inexpressibly blessed is this: that upon its dismissal from the body, the soul is conducted into the immediate presence of God, and that the Saviour Himself has the admitting of it into heaven and the actual presenting of it. The disembodied soul, rid of all corruption and defilement, is received by Christ to the glory of God. He will set that redeemed soul before Himself with great complacency of heart, so that it will reflect His own perfections. He will advance it to the highest honour, fill it with glory, express to it the uttermost of His love, and behold it with delight. Christ receives each blood-washed soul at death to His everlasting embraces, and presents it before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

Our present passage also looks forward to the time when Christ will publicly present His people corporately unto Himself, when the Head and Saviour who “loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph 5:25) will “present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27). This will be the certain and triumphant result of His love, as it will be the consummation of our redemption. The Greek word for “present” means “to set alongside of.” Having cleansed the Church from all her natural pollution, and prepared and adorned her for her destined place as the companion of His glory, He will—formally and officially—take her unto Himself; and it will be announced, “The marriage of the Lamb is come” (Rev 19:7). Christ will have made the Church comely with His own perfections; and she will be full of beauty and splendour, like a bride adorned for her husband. He will then say, “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee” (Song 4:7). She will be “all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold”; and of her, it is said, “So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty” (Psa 45:11, 13); and He will be for ever the satisfying Portion of her joy.

In addition, 2 Corinthians 4:14 indicates that Christ will also “present” the Church unto God on the resurrection morn, and will then exultantly say, “Behold I and the children which God hath given me” (Heb 2:13)—not one lost, all perfectly conformed to His holy image. He will present us before God for His inspection, acceptance, and approbation. “He will present us in the court of heaven, before the Throne of the eternal Father, as His ransomed people, as recovered from the ruins of the fall, as saved by the merits of His blood. They shall not only be raised from the dead by Him, but publicly and solemnly presented to God as His, as recovered to His service, and as having a title in the covenant of grace to the blessedness of heaven”—Albert Barnes (1798-1870). It is Christ taking His place before God as the triumphant Mediator, owning the “children” as God’s gift to Him, confessing His oneness with them, delighting in the fruits of His work. He presents them “faultless”—justified, sanctified, and glorified. The manner in which He does so will be “with exceeding joy,” for He shall then see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. In Jude :15, we learn of the doom awaiting the apostates; here, the bliss appointed the redeemed—they will for ever shine in Christ’s righteousness; and He will find His complacency in the Church as the partner of His blessedness.

“To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude :25). Seeing that the LORD is arrayed with glory and beauty (Job 40:10), we should continually ascribe these excellencies unto Him (Exo 15:11; 1Ch 29:11). The saints are to publish and proclaim the perfections of their God: “Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious” (Psa 66:2). This is what the apostles did, and we should emulate them. Here, He is adored for His wisdom. This may present a difficulty to young theologians who have learned to distinguish between the incommunicable attributes of God (such as His infinity and immutability), and His communicable—i.e. mercy, wisdom, etc. Seeing that God has endowed some of His creatures with wisdom, how can He be said to be “*only wise*”? First, He is so, *superlatively*. His wisdom is so vastly superior to that of men and angels; theirs is naught. Second, He is so, *essentially*. God’s wisdom is not a quality separate from Himself as ours is—many are men who are far from being wise men, but God would not be God if He were not omniscient. Third, He is so, *originally*—without derivation. All wisdom is *from* God, but He has all *in* Himself. All the wisdom of creatures is but a ray from His light.

Three things call for our careful attention here: the Person praised, the motives prompting the same, and the substance of the adoration or the praise itself. The One here worshipped is the Mediator. The reasons for so honouring Him are the omnipotence and omniscience with which He is possessed, and which are gloriously displayed in His saving of the Church. In view of what is predicated of Him in Jude :24, there should not be the slightest doubt in our minds that “the only wise God” of verse 25 is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, for it is His particular province as the Shepherd to preserve His Church from destruction and to present it in glory to the Father. Furthermore, the added epithet, “God our Saviour,” clinches the matter. Here, absolute deity is ascribed to Him: “the only wise *God*,” as it also is in Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1, etc. Christ the Son is “the only wise God,” though not to the exclusion of the Father and the Spirit (compare Joh 17:3; Rev 15:4). Probably He is here designated such in designed contrast with the false and foolish “gods” of the heretical corruptors of the context: the “God” of the Unitarians, the Arminians, the “Modernists,” is fictitious and puerile.

It is the strength and sufficiency of Christ for all the concerns of His mediation which is here magnified. He is adored as the One who will triumphantly complete the work given Him to do: something which no mere creature—no, not the archangel—could accomplish. None but one who is both God and man could act as mediator. None but a divine person could offer an adequate satisfaction unto divine justice. None but one possessed of infinite merits could provide a sacrifice of infinite value. None but God could preserve the sheep in the midst of wolves. In Proverbs, Christ is denominated “wisdom” and is heard speaking as a distinct person (Pro 8:11-12, 14, 32-33). He was heralded as the “Wonderful, Counsellor” (Isa 9:6). He designated Himself “wisdom” in Luke 7:35. He is expressly called “the wisdom of God” (1Co 1:24), for in Him “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”

(Col 2:3). His wisdom appears in His creating all things (Joh 1:3), in His governing all things (Heb 1:3), and in that the Father “hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (Joh 5:22).

The consummate wisdom of Christ was manifested during the days of His flesh. He opened unto men the secrets of God (Mat 13:11). He declared, “The Son can do nothing of himself [which, in the light of verse 30, means He does nothing independently of the Father’s will], but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever *he* doeth, these also doeth *the Son* likewise” (Joh 5:19)—thereby affirming an equality of competency. He “needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man” (Joh 2:25). Those who heard Him teach “were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?” (Mat 13:54). Christ’s unique wisdom appeared in answering and silencing His enemies: “Never man spake like this man” (Joh 7:46) testified those sent to arrest Him. He so confounded His critics that at the end, “neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions” (Mat 22:46). Since, then, He is endowed with omniscience, let us find no fault with any of His dealings with us, let us take to Him all our problems, and let us confide absolutely in Him—putting ourselves and all our affairs into His hands.

Since He *is* “the only wise God our Saviour”—the sole, sufficient, and successful Saviour—let us laud Him as such. As those in heaven cast their crowns before the Lamb and extol His peerless perfections, so should we who are still upon earth. Since Christ subjected Himself to such unspeakable dishonor and abasement for our sakes, yea, unto death itself—and that the death of the Cross—how readily and heartily should we honour and magnify Him, crying with the apostle unto Him, “Be glory and majesty, dominion and power” (Jude :25)! “Glory” is excellence displayed, with an approbation of the same, and signifies the high honour and esteem which is due unto Christ because of His perfections, whereby He infinitely surpasses all creatures and things. “Majesty” refers to His exalted dignity and greatness, which make Him to be honoured and preferred beyond all, having received a name which is above every name. “Dominion” imports the right of government, because of His imperial authority as “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev 19:16). “Power” is that might by which He does whatsoever He pleases, so that “none can stay his hand” (Dan 4:35).

“To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, *both now* and ever. Amen.” Note well the two words which we have placed in italics. Radically different was the inspired concept of Jude from that of so many “students of prophecy” who postpone Christ’s reign to some future “millennial” era. It is both the present and the endless dignities of the Mediator which are here in view. He has already been “crowned with glory and honour” (Heb 2:9). “Majesty” is His today, for He is exalted “far above all principality, and power,” for God “*hath* [not ‘will’!] put all things under his feet” (Eph 1:21-22). “Dominion” is also exercised by Him now, for all power has been given Him “in heaven *and in earth*” (Mat 28:18). “Power,” too, is put forth by Him in the present, for He is “upholding all things by the word of his power” (Heb 1:3) and “angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1Pe 3:22). So shall He reign, not merely for a thousand years, but *for ever*. Amen. Thus, does Jude conclude the most solemn of all epistles with this paean of holy exultation to the glory of the Lamb.

The Life and Times of Joshua

50. Enemy Reaction

The scene which is set before us in the closing verses of Joshua 8 is equaled only by that which is exhibited in Exodus 24. The events described therein are parallel in every way, the latter being explained by the former. In each, there is a public assembling of the whole congregation of Israel before the LORD. In each, a federal engagement is solemnly entered into. Each was transacted upon a mount, where an altar was erected, the divine Law prominently honoured, and the people ate before JEHOVAH. The difference between them is that in the former, it was the first generation of Israel which had recently emerged from Egypt that was concerned; while in the latter, it was the first generation of those who had shortly before entered Canaan. The claims of JEHOVAH were now made known unto this new generation in a striking and impressive manner, and they were required to aver their recognition of those claims and affirm subjection to the same. First, an altar had been erected and sacrifices offered thereon. Most appropriately had “the peace offerings” a place, for a portion of it was for the LORD; and a portion of it was eaten by

the offerer (Lev 7:32-34)—for a covenant is a *mutual* engagement between two parties, and thus, the LORD and His people here communed together.

Upon the stones of that altar, the Decalogue was written. *Typically*, that set forth the fact that the Law had been magnified by Christ (Isa 42:21). In His teaching, He had fully maintained its authority (Mat 5:17); in His life, He rendered perfect obedience to it; and in His death, He endured its awful penalty. *Practically*, we are there taught that the redeemed are to receive the Law from the Redeemer. Christ did not keep the Law for His people in order that they might be freed from its holy requirements, but to honour God therein and leave them an example that they should follow His steps. In order thereto, He has not only brought them under the deepest possible obligations of gratitude unto Himself, bidding them to express their love unto Him by keeping His commandments, but has also procured for them the priceless gift of the Holy Spirit, who puts His laws into their hearts and writes them upon their minds (Heb 10:16): that is, implanting a *love* for them, and *impressing* them with their importance, authority, and spirituality. And therefore, it is that the truly regenerate delight in the Law of God after the inward man, and with their minds, serve the same (Rom 7:22, 25).

It is to be duly noted that in the Holy Spirit's description of the company convened on that auspicious occasion, express mention is made, as well, of "*the stranger*, as he that was born among them" (Jos 8:33)—which, as previously pointed out, anticipated the time when the Gentiles would also be brought into the congregation of the LORD. The various references made to "the stranger" in the Law of Moses have not received anything like the attention they should by Christian commentators. Provision was made for "the stranger," upon his circumcision, to partake of the Passover feast; yea, it was enacted: "One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you" (Exo 12:48-49); yea, even the cities of refuge were available to him equally with the Israelite (Jos 20:9)! Commandment was given unto Israel that "the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself" (Lev 19:34). As he shared Israel's privileges, so he had to share their obligations also, by entering into covenant with God (Deu 29:11-12); and therefore, if he blasphemed the name of the LORD, the same penalty was inflicted upon him as upon a guilty Hebrew (Lev 24:16).

"And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and *the strangers* that were conversant among them" (Jos 8:34-35). Thus, the entire assembly came under the sound of the just requirements of their Benefactor and Governor. As Deuteronomy 27 informs us, as each of the solemn curses of the Law was uttered by the Levites "with a loud voice"—not an apologetic whisper!—it was required that "all the people shall answer and say, *Amen*" (Deu 27:14-15), thereby solemnly concurring therewith. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) pointed out, "It was (1) a profession of their faith in the truth of them. (2) An acknowledgment of the equity of them. (3) An imprecation upon themselves as strongly obliged them to have nothing to do with those evil practices upon which the curse was here entailed." What an example was this occasion of the importance of the public reading of lengthy sections of God's Word, and that its most unpalatable portions must not be omitted! The reading of the Law to "the strangers" again intimates that *the Gentiles* are under it. No further mention of "the ark" is found in Joshua, for the covenant had now been ratified by the second generation of Israel.

Israel had marched into Canaan led by the written Law of God (Jos 3:11-17), for the ark of the covenant was the divinely appointed chest in which were deposited and preserved the tables on which the LORD's own finger had inscribed that Law which Israel had covenanted to keep. The same Law had been borne around the walls of Jericho (Jos 6:4-5), being the minister of vengeance unto the idolatrous Canaanites. That same Law had now been written on the stones of the altar on Ebal (Jos 8:32), thus becoming *the Law of the Land*. Was not this God's very object in enabling Israel to conquer Canaan: that He should have not only a people in obedience to Him, but a country in which the blessedness of their obedience should be exhibited before the surrounding nations? Beyond question, for Moses declared, "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding *in the sight of the nations*, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (Deu 4:5-6; and compare 1Ki 10:8-9). As JEHOVAH reminded their descendants centuries later, "Ye are my witnesses" (Isa 43:10; and compare Mal 3:12).

"And it came to pass, when all the kings which were on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard thereof; That they gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord" (Jos 9:1-2). At first glance, there appears little pertinency or propriety in mentioning this detail immediately after what was described in the closing verses of chapter 8. But careful readers will observe that this

passage begins with the word “and”; and those who have followed us through the previous articles of this series should know by now what use to make of it. It calls for thoughtful attention to what immediately precedes, so that the force of the connection may be the better perceived by us. And that not merely so as to fix in our minds the order of events, but more especially that we may ascertain the spiritual lessons which are pointed thereby. The book of Joshua contains very much more than a mere historical record of Israel’s conquest and occupation of the land of Canaan, namely, a shadowing forth of that spiritual warfare unto which Christians are called.

Believers in Christ are not only “witnesses” unto Him (Act 1:8)—showing forth His praises, reflecting the moral perfections of His character as disciples and “they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” (Rev 14:4)—but they are also soldiers of Jesus Christ (2Ti 2:3); and as such, it is especially to the book of Joshua that they should turn for instruction, inspiration, warning, and encouragement. What then are the lessons we should draw from that which is recorded in Joshua 9:1-2? Two, according as we recognize the twofold link between those verses and their context: with that which immediately precedes, and with what is rather more remote. In other words, this coming together of the kings of Canaan, and their agreeing to join forces in making a mass attack upon Israel, is to be regarded first as it is related to that which has just been before us in the closing verses of chapter 8—namely, the magnification of the Decalogue on mount Ebal, and the covenant which was made by the new generation of Israel with JEHOVAH; and then with the whole of chapters 6-8, where the overthrow of Jericho and Ai is narrated. The force of the opening “And” is borne out by the “heard thereof” at the close of Joshua 9:1. It is *the enemy’s* reaction to those events which is here in view.

Brief though their record be, those two verses present to our notice that which is of deep importance, and something which should be particularly heeded by ministers who desire to be faithful to their calling. The Holy Spirit’s mention of this federating of Canaan’s kings to fight against Joshua and Israel—immediately after describing what had taken place on the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim—is obviously designed to supply us with a typical illustration and solemn exemplification of man’s hostility to the Law of God. No sooner did it reach the ears of these kings that Joshua had built an altar on Ebal and had inscribed on its stones the divine Decalogue—which was henceforth to be the Law of the Land—than they made common cause against God’s people and determined to use force, as the “heard thereof” (verse 1) plainly intimates. To acknowledge the rights and authority of the Most High, and submit themselves unto His revealed will, is something which the unregenerate both resent and oppose. They desire to be lords of themselves and are resolved to go their own way. The language expressed by the actions of all of them, and by the mouths of many, is that of the self-willed and arrogant Pharaoh: “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?” (Exo 5:2). They are determined to please themselves.

Here is the very essence of human depravity. Sin is a revolt against God, a refusing to be in subjection to Him. Sin is not only a determining to follow our own inclinations, but it is a fighting against our Maker and Governor. The carnal mind is enmity against God. Unspeakably solemn is that declaration, and one which is most repugnant to human susceptibilities. Nevertheless, it is a fact which cannot be gainsaid. Proof thereof is furnished in the clause immediately following: “For it [the mind of the natural man] is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). Nothing more plainly evinces the inveterate hostility of the unregenerate unto God than their insubordination and opposition against the divine Law. Few indeed will openly *admit* that they hate God, and fewer still are *aware* of that awful fact, for sin is very deceitful (Heb 3:13) and blinds the judgment (Eph 4:18). Nowhere is that more clearly demonstrated than throughout the entire realm of idolatry. If men were pleased with the true God, they would not have manufactured so many false ones. They desire a God and a system of religion which are suited to their depraved inclinations. Millions who bow not before an image of wood or stone, nevertheless, believe in a God which their own sentiments and imaginations have devised; and against *him* (or it), they have no enmity!

But let the true and living God be apprehended as His character is set forth in the Scriptures, and that enmity will soon be more evident. Let Him be known as the divine Potentate who shapes “one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour” (Rom 9:21-23), entirely as He pleases; as the ineffably Holy One who cannot look on evil, and hates all workers of iniquity; and as the righteous Judge of all, who will by no means clear the guilty; and the fallen creature’s hatred of such a One will appear in its true colours. Let Him give to such creatures His Law, and require unqualified obedience thereto, and they at once rebel. If God would forgo His sovereign rights, their opposition would be subdued; if He would lay aside His scepter, men would cease fighting against Him. But because He declines to do so, the will of the creature is opposed to the will of the Creator, and he refuses subjection to His Throne. Conclusive proof that the sinner’s nature is diametrically the opposite of God’s is seen in his deadly opposition to the divine government. The moral law is both a revelation of its Author’s character and an expression of His will, and man’s repudiation of it exhibits the contrariety of sin to holiness.

What has just been pointed out was unmistakably and most solemnly demonstrated when the Lawgiver became incarnate and dwelt here upon earth, for the ill will of religious and irreligious alike was active against Him. Not only was He despised and rejected by men, but as He plainly declared, “They hated me without a cause” (Joh 15:25). Nor did they make any attempt to cloak their malice. While He healed the sick and provided the multitude with loaves and fishes, their hostility was held in abeyance; but when He pressed upon them the claims of His lordship, defined the terms of discipleship, and made known the character and requirements of His kingdom, their resentment soon flared up. Not only did He come unto His own and “his own received him not” (Joh 1:11), but “his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luk 19:14). Let it not be forgotten that it was as “*the King of the Jews*” (Joh 19:3, 19) Christ was crucified! “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD [JEHOVAH], and against his anointed [Christ], saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Psa 2:2-3; and compare Act 4:25-27)—chafing at the divine Law, refusing subjection to the divine authority.

Thus, in the gathering of the kings of Canaan “to fight with Joshua and with Israel” (Jos 9:2)—immediately after the promulgation of the divine Law upon the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim—we have both a solemn adumbration of what took place in the hours immediately preceding our Lord’s crucifixion, and an illustration of man’s opposition to the Law. Up to this point, the Canaanites had been on the defensive, but in Joshua 9:1-2, we see them preparing to take the offensive, and make a united attack on God’s people. The kings there mentioned were of varied nationalities and interests, and occupied widely scattered territories; but here, we behold them sinking their differences and federating together “with one accord” (verse 2)! Just as the priests and scribes, and the Pharisees and Sadducees, united in opposing the incarnate Lawgiver. And just as it is today, both “dispensational” Arminians and “antinomian” Calvinists make common cause in repudiating the Decalogue as the Christian’s rule of life. And so will every true servant of Christ discover. Let him give to the Law that place in his ministry which it has in the Scriptures, let him be faithful in discharging his divine commission—and remember, “all the counsel of God” (Act 20:27) includes very much more than what are termed “the doctrines of grace”!—and press upon unbelievers and believers the claims of Christ’s kingship, and the strictness and spirituality of the Decalogue, and *he too* will be despised and reviled.

Glorious Sinai

Part 10

It is a great mistake to suppose that because the constitution given to the nation of Israel at Sinai is now obsolete, it contains nothing of real value for God’s people in this Christian era. Though the economy there instituted was an introductory and preparatory one—paving the way for something better and eternal—yet its basic principles are enduring and of universal application. While there are hints given in the Old Testament that the order of things established under Moses would pass away, yet plain intimation was also made that its moral elements would continue, yea, come into more effectual and general operation. Thus, when Isaiah made promise of the coming Messiah, it was with the assurance that He would issue from the root of David, and would “*magnify the law*, and make it honourable” (Isa 42:21); and he informed the nation that it would be in the “*new heavens and a new earth*” that the grand purpose of the LORD would ultimately be realized (Isa 65:17-18). Jeremiah was even more definite, declaring the LORD would yet make *a new covenant* with the house of Israel, different from the one He made at Sinai—different not in its essential matter, but only in its form and efficient administration—saying: “I will put my law in their *inward* parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer 31:33)—the same Law in substance, but transferred from the external sphere to the internal sphere.

Ezekiel foretold a new and wondrous work of divine grace, such as Israel as a nation had never experienced, when the Spirit of God should change hearts of stone into hearts of flesh—thereby imparting to them a disposition and ability to walk in God’s statutes, and keep and do His judgments (Eze 36:26-27). Joel announced that a time was coming when JEHOVAH would pour out His Spirit “upon all flesh” (Joe 2:28) in such plenitude that spiritual gifts which hitherto had been confined to the few would be bestowed upon many. Micah announced a day when “the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains” (Mic 4:1)—that is, the

seat of the divine kingdom would be morally elevated above all human governments; and that there should be such a manifestation of the LORD's presence that many nations would say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for *the law* shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Mic 4:1-5)—producing the most beneficent effects which would make themselves felt throughout the whole earth. Thus, Old Testament prophecy made it clear that God purposed to give a far grander manifestation of Himself than any granted previously, yet at the same time, *retain* in its integrity *the Law* of divine righteousness.

When the fullness of time was come, and God sent forth His Son made of a woman, it is expressly declared that He was "made under the law" (Gal 4:4). He came to introduce nothing that was absolutely new, but rather to produce what had been foretold, and to exhibit the perfect exemplification of what had been required by the previous revelations. Though repudiating the perverted Judaism of the scribes and Pharisees, the Lord Jesus definitely identified Himself with the Judaism of the Law and the Prophets. At the commencement of His public ministry, in His sermon on the mount, He proclaimed unto His disciples—and in the hearing of a great multitude—the fundamental principles of His kingdom. That discourse stood in much the same relationship to the dawning era, as the promulgation of the Decalogue from Sinai did to the then expiring dispensation; and the links between them are definite and plain. Each was published upon a mount. As the former was prefaced with the divine statement, "I [have] brought you unto myself" (Exo 19:4), and the reminder of His grace in having delivered them from "the house of bondage" (Exo 20:2), so the latter was introduced by a series of "beatitudes" (Mat 5:1-12)—"blessing after blessing pouring itself forth as from a full spring of beneficence," as one beautifully expressed it.

But no sooner had *grace* breathed those endearing beatitudes than the inflexible demands of *righteousness* were announced: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Mat 5:17). Here at the very outset, the Redeemer made known His attitude and relation to the Law of God. Negatively, it was not His design to render it void; positively, it was the grand purpose of His mission to *substantiate* it—to do what the Law required and to make good what the Prophets had foretold. To leave no room for doubt, our Lord added: "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" (verse 18). Nor did He stop short there, going on to declare, "Whosoever therefore shall break [Greek *luo*—dissolve or destroy] one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven" (verse 19). Therein, Christ made it clear that the validity of what was found in the previous communications of God still obtained; and that so far from there being any antagonism between the new order and the old, he who failed to appreciate the righteousness embodied in the minor details of the Law, should be accorded no place of honour in His kingdom.

Finally, He averred with startling plainness, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mat 5:20). In the previous verse, He had given warning that even a comparatively small antagonism to the righteousness of the Law would involve a lower position in His kingdom; but here, He makes it known that if any would-be followers of *His* adopted such a low standard as that maintained by the official religionists of that day, they should be entirely excluded therefrom. Then, to the close of His sermon, Christ went on to expose the errors of those who had toned down the exacting demands of the divine Law, setting over against "it was said *by them* of old time" (Mat 5:21, 27) His "But I say unto you," and restoring the Law to its original purity; and insisting that it required not only external compliance, but *inward* conformity. He so explained and enforced the Ten Commandments as to bring fully under their sway the thoughts and intents of the heart, as well as the actions of the life; and insisted that man's response to the Decalogue would determine their places and destinies in His kingdom.

It is a serious and horrible mistake to suppose that Christ here enunciated a new and superior Law to that which had been given at Sinai: rather, did He *rescue it* from the rubbish of the traditions of the rabbins beneath which it had long been buried. In Matthew 5:20, He enunciated a general principle; and from verse 21 onward, He illustrated by various examples *how and wherein* the righteousness of those He would own as His subjects must exceed that of the Pharisees. Let it be particularly noted that the distinctions Christ proceeded to draw did not respect the real and actual teaching of the Law or the Prophets, but instead, human perversions of the same. Not once did He contrast His Word, "But I say unto you" with what "*the LORD* said" at Sinai, but rather, with "It was said by them of old time" (Mat 5:21, 27). He was refuting the errors the Jews had received from their elders. He pressed upon them the strictness, breadth, and exalted spirituality of the Ten Commandments. All that the Pharisees saw in God's "Thou shalt not kill" (Exo 20:13) was the prohibition of the act of murder; whereas, our Lord declared that it forbade every thought and lust which led up thereto. They restricted God's "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exo 20:14) to "Thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife" (Lev 18:20); but Christ insisted that commandment condemned lustful desires and glances. It was not the Law *per se* that was under consideration, but the rabbins' perver-

sion of it. As if to guard against any wrong impression from what He had said, and to show His teaching was but the enforcement of God's previous revelations, He ended with, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Mat 7:12).

Christ was made under the Law, rendered perfect obedience to it in all His actions, and enforced it in His public ministry. We should therefore expect His apostles to honour the same divine standard of righteousness; and they *did*, as an impartial examination of their writings evinces. True, Paul assures the saints they "are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom 6:14); but he was there treating of the ground of our *acceptance* with God, and not with our walk: "Law" and "grace" there being parallel with "the law of works" and "the law of faith" in Romans 3:27—we are "*not* under the law" for our *justification*, but under God's gratuitous favour. Romans 6:14 must not be made to clash with Paul's assertion in Romans 7:25: "I myself *serve* the law of God." He also told them that they had "become dead to the law" (Rom 7:4), which is to be understood in precisely the same way as "dead to sin," *judicially*—dead to its condemning power, having suffered the penalty of the same in their Substitute. In the same epistle where those misunderstood expressions are found, conformity to the Law's requirements is presented as the sum of excellence (Rom 13:8-10)—"love is the fulfilling of the law," because, seeking the good of its object, it *prompts* unto what the Law requires.

In that very epistle, the apostle gives it as the characteristic of the spiritual mind; that it assents to the Law as "holy, and just, and good" (Rom 7:12)—yea, as delighting in it (verses 21-22)—whereas of the carnal mind, he says, "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom 8:7). In his next epistle, he declares believers are "not without law to God, but *under* the law to Christ" (1Co 9:21). Though in a special manner, the herald of divine grace, Paul repeatedly maintained the honour of the Law. To the Galatians, he said, "Ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Gal 5:13-14)—thereby manifestly *identifying* the love binding on Christians with the love enjoined in the Decalogue. When exhorting young Christians, he said, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right," then enforcing his appeal with "Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)" (Eph 6:1-2)—he had never appealed to it if the Law had been repealed! James declares, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors" (Jam 2:8-9)—one who is "dead to the law" (Rom 7:4) in *every* sense could not be a transgressor of it! John insists Christians should walk "even as he [Christ] walked" (1Jo 2:6)—but how could they unless under the same Law?

Returning to our principal design in these articles, let us point out that the history of Israel is full of most important instruction for us today. Nor is that an arbitrary statement of ours. The pen of inspiration declares, "Now these things [Israel's experiences in the wilderness] were *our examples*...Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for *our* admonition" (1Co 10:6, 11). The key to the same is placed in our hands in an earlier chapter: "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let *us* keep the feast" (1Co 5:7-8). He is the antitypical Lamb whose vicarious blood saves His people and upon whom they are to feed as their spiritual food. Thus, we have divine warrant to regard God's dealings with Israel of old as adumbrating His gracious actings unto the elect in all generations. While there is much in the New Testament which casts light upon the teaching of the Old, it is equally true that much in the antitype is better understood by a study of the types.

In our opening article, we called attention to the *double* appellation given to the Hebrews by God in His opening words to Moses in the mount (Exo 19:3), and pointed out that it supplies more than a hint of the *twofoldness* of what follows, that the transactions at Sinai need to be viewed in their bearing upon both the national Israel and the spiritual "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16). It is the latter we shall now consider. First, in the grand fact: I have "brought you unto myself" (Exo 19:4); so Christ "[brought] us to God" (1Pe 3:18). "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people...a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exo 19:5-6). That is entirely an *evangelical* statement. It was *not* "because ye *have* obeyed my voice" I brought you unto Myself, but instead, *Since* I have done so, realize now your obligation and privilege to be subject to Me; and by your submission, both glorify Me and fulfill the high destiny to which I have called you. The "therefore" of verse 5 is obviously a conclusion drawn from the blessed fact stated in verse 4: because Israel had been taken into a relationship which secured for them an interest in JEHOVAH's faithfulness and love, let them henceforth devote themselves to His honour and service.

To call attention to the "if" of Exodus 19:5, and then affirm—as certain "great (?) Bible teachers" have done—that there is *no* "if" in connection with the Christian's blessedness, betrays the grossest ignorance, as a glance at the following passages will show: John 8:31; Romans 8:13 and 11:22; Colossians 1:23; Hebrews 3:6. Moreover, Exodus 19:5 must be interpreted in full harmony with the divine preface to the Ten Commandments: "I

am the LORD thy God” (Exo 20:2)—not “*I will be so* if ye obey me.” Had it been *that*, it would have been a pure covenant of works—the reward given in a way of pactional debt. But at Sinai, God *inverted* the order of precept and promise from what obtained in the Adamic covenant, and declared Himself to be, in a way of sovereign grace, JEHOVAH—Israel’s God and Redeemer; and *then* gave them the Law to show “what is good and what the LORD required of them.” Rightly did Ebenezer Erskine (1680-1754) declare in his sermon, “A Treasure of Gospel-Grace Digged Out of Mount Sinai” (1722): “It was a covenant of *grace* that was proclaimed at mount Sinai: the Law was added to it because of transgression, and grafted upon it as a rule of obedience.”

“I am the LORD thy God” (Exo 20:2). Thy God on the ground of electing grace. Thy God by redemptive mercy and power. Thy God who hast ransomed thee from the enemy. Thy God who will provide for thee, and defend thee. Thy God to rule over thee—not to destroy, but to bless. Thy God “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Exo 34:6). As E. Erskine so well expressed it: “When He says, ‘I am the LORD thy God,’ He in effect says, All that I have I make over to you.” I am thy God for thee to love and trust, to serve and glorify. Since I *am* the LORD thy God, make Me thine everlasting Portion, thy chief Delight, thy sole End. It is *this* which makes My yoke easy. Remember what I have done for thee, and thou wilt find that My commandments “are not grievous” (1Jo 5:3). They are the precepts of My *love*, and grateful souls will take pleasure in fulfilling them. As that is the fundamental *blessing* of the covenant, so “Thou shalt have no other gods” (Exo 20:3) was the leading *duty* devolving upon them; and so it is upon *us*. “I am the LORD thy God” who redeemed thee from bondage is the sum and substance of His *new* covenant with us; and then He writes His Law upon our hearts (Heb 8:8-10)—i.e. brings our hearts in subjection thereto and causes us to delight therein.

Though Christians are delivered from the curse of the Law, its precepts are still binding upon them. The principle of grace which is communicated to their souls at the new birth inclines them to love God and please Him; but love needs to be *directed*. I may respect and revere my master, but I must know the rules of his house if I am to serve him acceptably. Love is not a “rule,” but a *motive*. Love does not inform me *what* to do, but *how* to do it. Love constrains me to do God’s will; but in order to learn what is His will, I must look elsewhere. The Law is a necessity both for God’s maintenance of His authority over us and as a rule of life for our guidance. Moreover, the servant is not greater than his Lord! Christ did not honour the Law that His people might slight it. There is no higher *privilege* than following the example He has left us. God’s covenant in Christ of grace and promise (adumbrated in the Abrahamic) has for its necessary complement a covenant of gratitude and duty (adumbrated at Sinai) on our part. The divine Decalogue was indeed kept perfectly by our justifying Head; yet, as our sanctifying Head, Christ requires that *we* keep it gratefully—not in order to our acceptance by Him, but that we may be conformed to Him and glorify Him in our daily walk.

Superficial dispensationalists, who have a penchant for drawing contrasts (imaginary or real), delight to set over against the *distance* at which Israel were placed from JEHOVAH upon the holy mount (Exo 19:12) such a verse as, “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Eph 2:13). But they forget that Exodus 19:12 is preceded by 19:4—“brought you unto myself.” Furthermore, they overlook the fact that in the New Testament itself, Deity is represented as “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto” (1Ti 6:16); and that we are bidden to serve Him “with reverence and godly fear” (Heb 12:28). But, what is yet more reprehensible, these dispensationalists fail to tell their gullible followers that Exodus 24 shows us the representative heads of the nation enjoying the most intimate fellowship with the God of Israel, eating and drinking in His immediate presence (verses 9-11)! Nor have they any understanding of the contrast drawn by the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 3 between Judaism and Christianity, and *not* between “Law and Grace.” In Hebrews 12:18, the Judaizers were simply being met on their *own ground* and shown what the Law was when viewed simply in itself, when *detached* from the former covenant of promise—fitted only to inspire terror and horror, and to curse and slay. Not that that was God’s *intent*, but rather, the effects attending it, when viewed as a thing apart.

The Law was not given to Israel at Sinai as a bestower of life, nor as a means for procuring God’s favour—for Israel already had that. Nor was it given so that by their obedience thereto, Israel might obtain Canaan—for that inheritance was theirs by sure promise to Abraham. That it was *not* given for their salvation is clear from the *altar* on Sinai (Exo 20:24; 24:4). Rather was the Law given to a ransomed people: “The LORD thy God *redeemed* thee: *therefore* I command thee this thing to day” (Deu 15:15). It was given as a revelation of that righteousness which God required from them as His favoured and peculiar people. It was given to enforce His claims upon them as their Lord and Governor. Yea, it was given “in the hand of a *mediator*” (Gal 3:19)! Moreover, it was accompanied by the ceremonial law, wherein provision was made for their transgressions of the moral. It was also supplemented by the priesthood, so that their fellowship with the Holy One might be maintained. Once again, we quote that admirable summary of St. Augustine’s (354-430): “The Law was given that grace might be sought; grace was given that the Law might be fulfilled.”

Let it not be forgotten that *Moses* wrote of Christ (Joh 5:46); and that the Law, as well as the Prophets, witnessed to the righteousness which is *by faith* (Rom 3:21). Glorious Sinai! Where there was such an illustrious display of JEHOVAH's holiness and majesty. Where He proclaimed Himself as the covenant God of the children of Abraham. Where He gave them that blessed charter and constitution which distinguished them from all other nations. Where He revealed Himself as the Lover and LORD of His people, and their Redeemer and Ruler. Where He promulgated the perfect rule of righteousness for His saints in all generations. Where He published His *Gospel*, as well as His Law. Where He made full provision to maintain His people in communion with Himself. Where He permitted them to eat and drink in His presence.

Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures

1. Its Nature

During the course of our articles upon the doctrine of divine revelation, we showed that one of the media or means through which God has made Himself known unto men is His written Word; and considerable space was devoted to a presentation of some of the varied and conclusive evidence which demonstrates that Word to be of divine origin. But the subject of the divine authorship of the Scriptures is much too important to dismiss with a consideration of only that single feature: there are other aspects which have an equal claim upon our attention. Not a few of the enemies of the truth will acknowledge that the Bible was written by divine inspiration; but they at once neutralize the worth of such a testimony, by affirming in the next breath that men like John Milton (1608-1674) and Alfred Tennyson, 1st Byron (1809-1898) were also inspired by Him. Thus, it is required of us that we examine other unique characteristics of the Scriptures, and particularly, the *nature* of their inspiration and the *measure* of the same. As we did not wish to cumber our discussion of the fact of inspiration by bringing in its modus and extent, we left them for a separate examination.

Before taking up these other branches of our theme, it should be pointed out that it is by no means to be concluded that during the earliest centuries of human history, God's people were left without any other revelation of the divine character and will than was supplied by the works of creation and the voice of conscience. When we are informed that "by *faith* Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous" (Heb 11:4)—and bear in mind that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17)—it is plain that Abel must have received some oral communication from God. Jude tells us that Enoch "prophesied." So, too, God revealed Himself and made known His will to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and probably much of what He said to them was passed on to their descendants. But after separating the nation of Israel unto Himself, the LORD determined that His Word should be placed on permanent record: that His truth should remain inviolable in the world as a pure and constant source of instruction to all future generations—which His providence has so jealously and amazingly safeguarded, as to constitute nothing short of a miracle.

In His Word, God has laid a foundation—rendered firm and sure by unimpeachable testimony—on which faith may stand unmoved by all the assaults of unbelief and infidelity. True it is that the average believer is not capable of directly refuting the sophistries of his opponents; but let him remember that no objections can invalidate, because they do not affect *the evidence* which has been adduced for the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. Difficulties never alter the nature of things, nor make that which is true to be false. It would be just as logical to reject mathematics as a science, because no man has yet succeeded in squaring the circle, as to spurn the Bible, because there are some things in it which are beyond the reach of reason. Infidels refuse the Bible not through lack of convincing proofs of its authenticity, but because of the enmity of their carnal minds against the holiness of its teaching. They are engrossed with time, and indifferent to eternity; their hearts are set upon things below, and they have no relish for things above. They are wedded to their lusts, and will not receive that which calls upon them to deny the same. They hate the light (Joh 3:19), and therefore, deliberately close their eyes to it.

We are now to consider more directly *how* God's Word was communicated to men; and it is especially for the benefit of young preachers that we do so. Let it be admitted at the outset that we are about to enter the realm of *mystery*. Nor should that statement in the least dismay or surprise the reader—for such is ever the case when we approach the wondrous works of God. Whatever He produces is not only above a man's power to effect, but above

his full comprehension. Particularly is the latter the case, when God operates in the human realm, working in men “both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13), yet without destroying their free agency. As the incarnate Word was both God and man, so His written Word is both divine and human. As it was the deity of Christ which gave infinite value to what He did by and through His humanity, so it was the power of God which precluded the infirmities of the penmen he employed. The problem now before us resolves itself into that which ever obtains where there is the conjuncture of divine operations and the exercise of human agency—the domination of the former, and the concurrence of the latter.

The question we shall seek to resolve is this: How did the Book of books come into existence? What is the true genesis of the Scriptures? We can conceive of three ways in which God could have produced a book to be read by men. First, by His own immediate energy, acting directly and alone—as He did when He wrote the Ten Commandments with His own finger on the tables of stone. Second, He might have employed men as mere automatons, neither conscious nor free, but serving as His mechanical agents. Third, have fitted men by constitutional endowment, spiritual gifts, and providential circumstances, thereby qualifying them to be the recipients of special divine communications; but so fully possessing and controlling them by His Spirit, as to transmit those communications to posterity without any of their infirmities mingling therewith. This third way is the one that God chose: one which is not only fully analogous to all His methods, but which made most for His own glory. He was pleased that the experiences through which David passed should be reflected in the metaphors found in his Psalms, to exhibit truth in its most logical relations by employing the trained mind of Paul, and to use the one who leaned on Jesus’ bosom to write on the subject of divine fellowship.

Thus, while the Bible was written by men, it is at the same time, and in the most absolute sense, the Word of God. The Bible is a thoroughly human book: penned by human agents, addressed to human beings, perfectly adapted to our life in this world—a lamp unto our feet, a light unto our path (Psa 119:105). It is expressed in human thought and language. It contains instructions suited to every situation in which man finds himself. It appeals to every sentiment in the entire gamut of human emotions, and was written by “men of like passions” as ourselves (Act 14:15)—yet it is unmarred by the least blemish. As Christ was true man, “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15), so the Bible is thoroughly human, yet without the slightest error. The parallels between the incarnate and the written Word are many and striking. As Christ was not only man—but God Himself—so the Bible, though truly human, is also divine. As the incarnation of the Son—particularly His partaking of the substance of the virgin birth without being tainted by sin—was a miracle, so the production of the Bible through human media—without their limitations marring it—is a miracle. The plan adopted by God is an additional proof of the divine wisdom in producing the Holy Scriptures.

And is not *this* exactly what we should expect: that if God vouchsafed a revelation of His mind and will unto the world, He would not expose it unto the hazard of being corrupted or mutilated by the instruments through which it was transmitted; nay, that He would put forth His power and work in a supernatural manner to prevent such a thing? To err is human, but He who made man is fully capable of using him to perform a work from which all defects are excluded. He “who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean” (Job 14:4) is fully competent to produce an infallible Book through fallible penmen. The *fact* that God has done so—and our assurance thereof—is of far more consequence than a knowledge of His *method* therein, though that is not without interest and importance. The Bible is the Word of God, because it was composed by His immediate assistance; and because everything in it was inserted by His special direction, so that its instruments could aver, “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (1Co 2:13). “Divine inspiration is the mysterious power put forth by the Spirit of God on the authors of Holy Writ, to make them write it, to guide them even in the employment of the words they use, and thus to preserve them from all error”—François Samuel Robert Louis Gaussen (1790-1863).

Our knowledge of the inspiration of the Scriptures, as of every other doctrine of the Bible, must be collected from itself. That the Holy Spirit spoke through and wrote by men is a fact explicitly attested by Scripture, but how He influenced them is not fully revealed. As the author of that remarkable book, *Theopneustia*, well reminds us, it is “with a faith quite of the same kind that we receive the doctrine of the new birth and sanctification of a soul by the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Spirit enlightens the soul, cleanses it, raises it, comforts it, softens it. We perceive all these effects: we admire and we adore; but we have found it our duty to be content never to know the means by which this is done. Be it the same, then, with regard to divine inspiration.” Yet it is equally our duty and privilege to spare no pains in ascertaining all that God *has been* pleased to tell us thereon. The writers of the Old and New Testament alike claim to speak in the name of God, and to have received their messages from Him. According to their own testimony, the Scriptures affirm that they are a communication from heaven.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine” (2Ti 3:16). Here we have the fact plainly stated, and its unlimited scope declared. But we must first dispose of the sad tampering with and perversion of it by our moderns. The Revised Version has altered it to “every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching”; thereby changing a specific statement into a general proposition, which neither avouches the inspiration of the Scriptures (but leaves the question undecided), nor declares which books are inspired—a proposition as indefinite and superfluous, as it would be to say that the sun gives light. In the previous verse, the apostle had made reference to the Old Testament Scriptures and stated that they were “able to make thee wise unto salvation” (2Ti 3:15), and then made known *why* they were so. As the scholarly Professor John Dick (1764-1833) pointed out, “It is a mistranslation. The conjunction ‘and’ which connects ‘God-inspired’ and ‘profitable’ clearly shows that both adjectives belong to the predicate of the proposition, and that ‘every scripture’ alone is the subject. No example can be produced where two adjectives are thus joined, of which the one belongs to the subject, and the other to the predicate. Had Paul meant to express the idea which these critics attach to his words, he would have left out the conjunction.”

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” Our second remark (for the benefit of young preachers) is that this authoritative affirmation at once excludes the Apocrypha, which was formerly bound up with the Old Testament, and to which the Papists appeal in support of some of their erroneous dogmas. All its books were composed after the cessation of the prophetic spirit in the days of Malachi (1Macc 9:27; 14:41). They were not written in the Hebrew language, in which all the books of the Old Testament were originally penned—with the exception of a few passages in Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezra, and Esther, which were in the Chaldee. Neither Philo nor Josephus, who lived in the first century of this Christian era, makes any reference thereto; nor were those spurious books given any place in the Septuagint version, as made by the translators of the Old Testament under Ptolemy. And, what is far more significant, they never received the attestation of the Lord Jesus and His apostles—neither the One nor the other ever alluding to them. Nor does one of its writers, in direct terms, advance any claim to divine inspiration. Instead, its last one closes by saying, “If I have written well and to the point in my story, this is what I myself desired; but if meanly and indifferently, this is all I could attain unto” (2Macc 15:38). How utterly profane to suppose for a moment that this is the Holy Spirit’s indicting!

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” This specific and comprehensive assertion is made not of the messengers, but of their messages. A “scripture” is *a writing*, made up of letters and words; “inspiration” means *breathing into*. The writing of the page under the hand of Moses or Paul was as truly breathed on and into that page by God as He breathed into Adam his soul (Gen 2:7). Inspiration is therefore entirely different from illumination, not only in degree, but in kind. Spiritual illumination is an ordinary and general operation of the Spirit upon all believers; inspiration was an extraordinary and peculiar work in which God communicated His truth in a unique and miraculous manner. It is most important to observe that 2 Timothy 3:16 says nothing of the writers, but is predicated of their *writings*; and that it includes all of them. Thus, it cannot mean one thing of Genesis, another of Chronicles, and yet another of the Psalms. Each and all were alike inspired of God—not simply the sentiments uttered or the ideas expressed, but the very expressions too. “What is *written*?” asked Christ. “How readest thou?” (Luk 10:26). Each time He personally repulsed the devil’s assaults with an “It is written”!

“This statement admits of no exception and of no restriction. Here, there is no exception: it is ‘all scripture’; it is all that is written: meaning, thereby, the thoughts after they had received the stamp of language. No restriction: ‘all scripture’ is in such wise a work of God, that it is represented to us as uttered by the divine breathing, just as human speech is uttered by the breathing of a man’s mouth. The prophet is the mouth of the Lord”—F. Gaussen. What concerns us, then, is the actual *words recorded*, and not the men who wrote them. So far were the prophecies from being conceived by the prophets themselves, that they often transcended their own comprehension. See an example of that in the one who was, in some senses, the most remarkable of them. Daniel tells us that he was completely overcome (“fainted”) and “*astonished* at the vision” (Dan 8:27), that “I heard, but I understood not” (Dan 12:8). “Of which salvation the prophets have *enquired* and searched diligently” (1Pe 1:10). “What picture can be more impressive than that of the prophet himself hanging over and contemplating in amazement his own autograph—as if it had been left upon the table there, the relic of some strange and supernatural Hand!”—G. S. Bishop.

Nor is this dogmatic and sweeping declaration of 2 Timothy 3:16 to be limited unto the Old Testament; though admittedly, the first reference is thereunto, as the previous verse indicates. While we should inevitably conclude that since the New Testament is in no wise inferior to the Old, it too must be divinely inspired: we are not left to draw inferences of our own, however logical and irresistible. We do not have to go any farther than the two epistles of Timothy in order to find that this “all scripture” certainly includes more than the Old Testament. In 1 Timothy 5:17-18, we read, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For *the scripture* saith, [1] Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. [2] And,

The labourer is worthy of his reward.” Two “proof texts” are there quoted, and *both* are affirmed to be “the scripture.” The first is quoted from Deuteronomy 25:4, but the second is nowhere to be found in the Old Testament! Instead, it is taken from Matthew 10:10 and Luke 10:7, proving that the Gospels are also inspired of God, and are of equal authenticity and authority as the Old Testament! Also, 2 Peter 3:15-16 clearly establishes the fact that all of Paul’s epistles were divinely inspired (as is proved by the “*also the other scriptures*”), and 2 Peter 2:13 does the same for the epistles of the other apostles.

Now let us take the complete statement: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect [or “complete”], throughly furnished unto all good works” (2Ti 3:16-17). Thus, not only are all Scriptures of God’s inbreathing communicated immediately from Himself, but they are all that our souls stand in need of—an infallible rule of faith and practice. We require not to go outside of them for any moral or spiritual instruction or food. They are all-sufficient for us. They never become outdated—for they are the Word of Him who changeth not (Heb 13:8). It will be observed that the Holy Spirit has summarized here—under four heads—the various things for which the Scriptures are profitable, which led an old writer quaintly to say, “Thus the Scriptures are like that river which watered Eden, and from thence it was parted, and ‘became into *four heads*’” (Gen 2:10). First, “doctrine,” to establish us in the truth. Second, “reproof,” to remove error. Third, “correction” of all ill manners. Fourth, “instruction in righteousness,” to build us up in holiness of character and conduct. All of them combined, to fit and furnish us for “every good work.” What but the pen of inspiration could say so much in so few words!

“And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place” (2Pe 1:18-19). The comparison there drawn is between the audible testimony of the Father unto His Son in the hearing of the three apostles at the time of His transfiguration, and that revelation of God’s which we now have in this dark world. The latter is “more sure” than the former: not in itself, but in its *form*—theirs was speedily lost in the air; ours has been placed on permanent and imperishable record. Then the passage goes on to say, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation” (2Pe 1:20), which is quite an unhappy and misleading rendition—for the verse is not treating of the *meaning* of the Scriptures, but their *source*, as the next and explanatory verse proves. The Greek word is never translated “private” elsewhere, but seventy-two times, “his own.” The word for “interpretation” is quite different from that found in John 1:42, etc., and is defined in Young’s concordance as “unloosing”; it is not found again in the New Testament; and its simple form occurs only in 1 Corinthians 7:27, where it is rendered “to be loosed.” Thus, 2 Peter 1:20 signifies, “no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation [*human origination*].”

This statement that “We have also a more sure word” (2Pe 1:19) is indeed a weighty one, especially when the comparison is duly noted. Christians have something more acceptable and reliable than a messenger from the dead (Luk 16:31); yea, than if God Himself dealt with them by personal and audible revelations, for such might easily be mistaken and soon forgotten; whereas we have as an authentic, intelligible, and abiding communication of God’s mind and will. Samuel thought that it was Eli who called to him, when it was the LORD (1Sa 3:1-10). Even when God spake to Peter by vision, and that, three times over, he still “doubted in himself” (Act 10:17). From those cases, we are shown that, while every declaration of God’s be alike trustworthy in itself, they are not so to the recipients thereof. A far more certain ground to rest faith upon is ours; and for it, we cannot be sufficiently thankful. Said Martin Luther (1483-1546), “I indented with the LORD my God that He would never send me dreams and visions; I am well content with the gift of the Scriptures.” And well may *we* be so: “Knowing this: that no Scripture is of human origination,” but instead, of divine revelation.



NOVEMBER

Looking unto the Lord

Looking unto the LORD is an attitude of the soul, an act of the will, and the exercise of faith—a turning away from all that is of the creature and relying solely upon the living God. It is tersely, but graphically, expressed in these words: “But our eyes are upon thee” (2Ch 20:12), and blessed is the one who can really so aver. That is the language of all God’s children when they are in their right minds. At that time, they place no reliance upon self, have no confidence in the flesh, and expect nothing good from the world; but they put all their trust in the Lord. Their hearts are engaged with an almighty God, and, like Moses, they endure “as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). It is this which characterizes those who are members of the Household of Faith: in their need, they look to God for their supplies; in straits, for deliverance; in trouble, for comfort; in weakness, for strength. It is this which distinguishes them from unbelievers, who lean upon the “arm of flesh” (2Ch 32:8) and look to their fellows for help. In proportion, as we maintain this attitude of dependence on and expectation from our heavenly Father, our hearts will be kept in peace, our souls made to rejoice, and our every want will be supplied. For the sake of young preachers, we will topicalize our subject.

1. The look of *salvation*. “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Isa 45:22). Look not to the Law, the priest, nor to your baptism, nor church attendance. Look not to your sincerity and good intentions, nor to your prayers and good deeds; nor even to your convictions of sin. None but *Christ* can save you. This is very humbling to the proud creature: to have to look away from self, and be wholly indebted to Another. It is not a matter of what we are—how good or bad—but of what He is: namely, an all-sufficient Saviour, freely offered in the Gospel to every hearer. If you look unto Him, as the serpent-bitten Israelites looked upon the divinely appointed object (Joh 3:14)—with simple but confident faith—He will save you. No qualifications are needed to entitle you to do so: the command of God and the invitation of the Gospel supply sufficient authorization. The viler you feel yourself to be, the more suited to Christ’s cleansing blood. He is the great Physician and can heal the foulest leper. Do you say, “But I am blind”? True, yet you are not bidden to “See,” but “Look”—and sight comes by looking!

2. The look of *illumination*. “They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed” (Psa 34:5). Faith’s looking unto Christ is the grand means of blessing appointed by God: pardon and peace, light and liberty, are obtained thereby. Of old, Job said, “Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living” (Job 33:29-30). He does so by the power of His Spirit working faith in us upon Christ. God announced concerning His beloved Son, “I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles” (Isa 49:6). And in due time, the Sun of righteousness arose “with healing in his wings” (Mal 4:2), putting an end to the night of darkness for many a soul. By His Gospel, He declares, “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness” (Joh 12:46). Then look unto Him, and you too shall be divinely illumined: your faith shall not be confounded, nor your face covered with confusion.

3. The look of *supplication*. “But our eyes are upon thee” (2Ch 20:12). The setting of those words is very striking. A great army of the heathen had gathered together to do battle against Judah. When their king was informed, he “set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast” (verse 3). Then, in the hearing of the congregation, he addressed himself unto the God of their fathers, saying, “O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee” (verse 12). It was an earnest appeal unto the omnipotent One by those in the place of conscious weakness and helplessness. It was likewise an expression of humble but confident faith. It was also an expectation of help from the Almighty. Nor was this simple but affecting supplication in vain. Of course it was not! JEHOVAH made answer: “Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God’s” (verse 15). He caused the enemy to fall upon themselves, “and none escaped” (verse 24). *There* is the grand remedy for every

strait. No matter how desperate the situation, nothing is too hard for the LORD. Turn unto Him the eyes of faith, of dependence, of reliance, of confident expectation, and you will not be mocked.

4. The look of *transformation*. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass [mirror] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:18). This “beholding” is not simply one of faith, but especially of holy ambition and resolve. As the believer contemplates the moral perfection and character of Christ as they are set forth in the Word, there is born within him a deep yearning to be conformed to His likeness and to “walk, even as he walked” (1Jo 2:6). As that yearning persists and is accompanied by earnest prayer, the Holy Spirit works in him a deeper spirit of obedience, causing him to be increasingly regulated by Christ’s example and precepts, and thereby “changes” him, little by little, unto the same image. The Greek verb for “change” here is rendered “transformed” in Romans 12:2, and “transfigured” in Matthew 17:2. As the will is brought into subjection to Christ, we drink into His Spirit and become partakers of His holiness. This lifelong process will be completed when “we shall see him as he is” (1Jo 3:2), “face to face” (1Co 13:12).

5. The look of *inspiration*. “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher [better, “Leader and Captain”] of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2). In Hebrews 10:32, the apostle began to set before suffering, tried, and persecuted saints a number of considerations calculated to nerve them for the conflict and stimulate unto the continued performance of duty. Throughout chapter 11, he showed how faith was what animated the Old Testament worthies. As a climax, he reminded them of the Saviour, who supplied the perfect example of faith and fortitude under unparalleled suffering. When, then, you grow weary of running the race set before you, look unto your Leader and draw inspiration from Him—see Hebrews 12:3-4. Do as He did: look beyond the present sorrows to “the joy” awaiting you; see above the painful Cross an eternal crown prepared for him who “endureth to the end” (Mat 10:22). It is by so looking unto our great Exemplar, by devoutly contemplating His spirit of self-sacrifice and steadfastness, that we obtain strength to bear the hardships of the way.

6. The look of *expectation*. “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Ti 2:13). That is a very different thing from having the mind engaged with signs of the times or charmed with the study of prophecy; or even being on the *qui vive* (alert) for the next appointed item on the divine programme. It is concerned not so much with an event as with the advent of a Person. The second coming of Christ is ridiculed by the infidel (2Pe 3:2-4) and dreaded by the world (2Th 1:8); but it is regarded by the saints with great delight, for then will be the perfecting of their salvation (Heb 9:26). Titus 2:13 describes a spiritual attitude of heart. It is an attitude of *faith*—and faith is not influenced by sensational items taken from the newspapers! It is an attitude of *hope*—joyous anticipation of our being rid of sin. It is an attitude of *love*, so that we cry, “Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices” (Song 8:14). *Such* looking weans the heart from the world (Heb 11:9-10), produces patience in trials (Jam 5:6-8), and purifies the heart (1Jo 3:3). Therein we may behold the *practical* side of our blessed hope. Such an expectation of the returning Saviour works in us a careful attention to our conduct, that we may “not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1Jo 2:28).

7. The look of *consummation*. “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness” (Psa 17:15). That is the ultimate longing of every believer: to behold the King in His beauty and for ever gaze upon His blessed features. Such too is *His* desire: to have us with Him, beholding His glory (Joh 17:24)—nothing less will satisfy the eternal Lover of our souls. In a real sense, believers discern something of the glory of Christ even now, but oh, how feebly and faintly! But hereafter, we shall look upon Him without hindrance or interruption. That will be the fruition of our hope: to have immediate communion with Him. That will fill us with joy, and make us overflow with praise. Oh, how altogether lovely will He appear, when we see Him no longer “through a glass, darkly [obscurely]”—but “face to face” (1Co 13:12)!

The Prayers of the Apostles

71. Revelation 1:5-6

Our present prayer really forms the closing part of the salutation and benediction of Revelation 1, verse 4, where “grace” and “peace” are sought from the Triune God in His distinct persons. First, from “him which is, and which was, and which is to come”: that is, from JEHOVAH as the self-existing and immutable One—He is addressed by His memorial name (Exo 6:3). Second, from “the seven Spirits which are before his throne”: that is, from the Holy Spirit in the fullness of His power and diversity of His operations (Isa 11:1-2). Third, from “Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:5), who is mentioned last as the connecting Link between God and His people. A threefold appellation is here accorded the Saviour: 1) “The faithful witness,” which contemplates and covers the whole of His virtuous life from the manger to the Cross. 2) “The first begotten [better, “Firstborn”] of the dead,” which celebrates His victory over the tomb. It is a title of dignity (Gen 49:3), and signifies priority of *rank* rather than time. 3) “And the prince of the kings of the earth,” which announces His regal majesty and dominion, and views the Conqueror as exalted “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” He is the One upon whose shoulder the government of the universe has been laid (Isa 9:6), who is even now “upholding all things by the word of his power” (Heb 1:3), and before whom every knee shall yet bow (Isa 45:23; Rom 14:11).

That recital of the Redeemer’s perfections and dignities evoked the adoring exclamation, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev 1:5-6). Thus, the *nature* of our prayer is again a doxology. Its *object* is the Son of God incarnate, in His mediatorial character and office. Its *adorers* are the “us” who are the beneficiaries of His mediation. Its inciting *reasons* are our apprehensions of His fathomless love, the cleansing efficacy of His precious blood, and the wondrous dignities He has conferred upon His redeemed. Its *ascription* is “to him be glory and dominion,” not merely for a thousand years, but “for ever and ever”; and closes with the assuring affirmation, “Amen”—it shall be so. For the benefit of young preachers, we will add a few more remarks to those made in a previous article on doxologies in general.

The doxologies of Scripture reveal our need of forming more exalted conceptions of the divine persons, and, in order thereto, more frequent and devout meditations on their ineffable attributes. How little do our thoughts dwell upon the display of them in the material creation. Divinity is “clearly seen” in the things which He has made, and even the heathen are charged with inexcusable guilt because of their failure to glorify God for His handiwork (Rom 1:19-21). Not only should our senses be regaled by the lovely colourings of the trees and perfumes of the flowers, but our minds ought to dwell upon the motions and instincts of animals, admiring the divine hand which so equipped them. How little do we reflect upon the marvels of our own bodies: the structure, convenience, and perfect adaptedness of each member. How few unite with the Psalmist in exclaiming, “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works” (Psa 139:14). How much more wonderful are the faculties of our souls, raising us high above all irrational creatures. How better can our reason be employed than in extolling the One who has so richly endowed us? Yet how little grateful acknowledgment is made unto the beneficent Donor of our beings.

How little do we consider the wisdom and power of God as manifested in the *government* of the world. For example: in the balance preserved between the sexes, and in the relative number of births and deaths, so that the population of the earth is maintained from generation to generation without any human contriving. Or in the various temperaments and talents given to men, so that some are wise for counsels and contrivances, some are better qualified for hard manual labour, and others to serve at the desk. Or in curbing the baser passions of men, so that such a measure of law and order obtains generally in society that the weak are not destroyed by the strong, nor the good unable to live in a world which lieth in the wicked one. Or in setting bounds to the success of rapacious dictators, so that when it appears they are on the very point of carrying all before them, they are suddenly stopped by the One who has decreed they shall go “no further.” Or in His application of the law of retribution, so that individuals and nations are made to reap as they sow, whether it be good or evil. It is because we pay so little attention to this and a hundred other similar phenomena that we are so rarely moved to cry, “Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Rev 19:6).

But it is the wondrous works of God in the realm of *grace*—rather than in creation and providence—which are most calculated to draw out the hearts of God’s people in adoring homage, and more particularly those wherein the

Darling of His own heart is more immediately concerned. Thus it is in the verses we are now pondering: no sooner are the peerless person and perfections of the eternal Lover of their souls set before them, than the saints exultant cry, “To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev 1:6). It is the spontaneous response and outgoings of their souls unto Him. And that leads us to point out that one thing which is common to all the doxologies is that praise is ever offered unto Deity, and never concerns anything of or by the saints themselves. Self-occupation and self-gratulation have no place whatever in them. Far different than from the low level of spirituality generally prevailing in the churches today. This writer was once present at a service where a hymn was sung, the chorus of which ran, “Oh, how I love Jesus,” but we could not join in it. None in heaven are guilty of lauding themselves or magnifying their graces, nor should any Christians do so here upon earth.

The *Object* of this adoration and thanksgiving is that Blessed One who undertook—with the Father and the Spirit—to save His people from all their sins and miseries by the price of His blood and the arm of His power. In His essential person, He is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit—“who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen” (Rom 9:5). He is the uncreated Sun of righteousness. In Him, all the glory of the Godhead shines forth; and by Him, all the perfections of Deity have been manifested. In response to this very homage, He declares, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Rev 1:8). Before the worlds were made, He entered into covenant engagement to become incarnate, to be made in the likeness of sin’s flesh, to serve as the Surety of His people, to be the Bridegroom of His Church—its complete and all-sufficient Saviour. As such, He is the Man of “the right hand of God” (Col 3:1; Heb 1:3), the Fellow of “the LORD of hosts” and the “King of glory” (Psa 24:10). His work is honourable, His fullness infinite, His power omnipotent. His Throne is for ever and ever. His name is “above every name” (Phi 2:9). His glory is above the heavens. It is impossible to extol Him too highly, for His glorious name “is exalted *above all* blessing and praise” (Neh 9:5).

In the immediate context, this adorable One is viewed in His theanthropic person, as incarnate, as the God-man Mediator. There He is set forth in His threefold office as Prophet, Priest, and Potentate. His prophetic office is clearly connoted in the title, “the faithful witness” (Rev 1:5)—for in the Old Testament prophecy, the Father announced, “Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people” (Isa 55:4); while Christ Himself declared unto Pilate, “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth” (Joh 18:37). As such, He proclaimed the Gospel unto the poor and confirmed the same by mighty miracles. His sacerdotal office is necessarily implied in the expression, “first begotten [Firstborn] of the dead” (Rev 1:5)—for in death, He offered Himself as a sacrifice unto God to make satisfaction for the transgressions of His people; and then rose again that He might continue to exercise His priesthood by His constant intercession for them. His regal office appears plainly in the designation, “prince of the kings of the earth”—for He has absolute dominion over them: by Him, they reign (Pro 8:15); and to Him, they are commanded to render allegiance (Psa 2:10-12). To Him, we are to hearken; in Him, we are to believe; unto Him, we are to be subject. Singly and collectively, these titles announce that He is to be greatly respected and revered.

While an exile on the isle of Patmos, John was engaged in contemplating Immanuel in the excellencies of His person, offices, and work; and as he did so, his heart was enraptured, and he exclaimed, “Unto him that loved us” (Rev 1:5), which is a preferable rendering (we think) in the passage to the “loveth us” of the Revised Version. The love of Christ is here expressed by the apostle in the *past* tense, not because it is inoperative in the present, but to focus our attention upon its earlier exercises. The love of Christ is the grandest fact and mystery revealed in Holy Writ. That love originated in His heart and was in operation from all eternity, for before the mountains were formed, His “delights were with the sons of men” (Pro 8:31). That wonderful love was put forth by Christ in connection with the everlasting covenant, wherein He agreed to serve as the Sponsor of His people and discharge all their obligations. That He should take complacency in creatures of the dust is the marvel of heaven. That He should set His heart upon them while viewed in their fallen estate is incomprehensible. That love was expressed openly in His incarnation, humiliation, obedience, sufferings, and death.

Scripture itself declares that “the love of Christ...passeth knowledge” (Eph 3:19). It is entirely beyond finite computation or comprehension. That the Son of God should ever deign to *notice* finite creatures was an act of great condescension on His part (Psa 113:6). That He should go so far as to *pity* them is yet more wonderful. That He should *love* us in our pollution entirely transcends our understanding. That the outgoings of His heart unto the Church moved Him to lay aside the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, take “upon him the form of a servant,” and “became obedient unto death” for their sakes—“even the death of the cross” (Phi 2:6-8)—surmounts all thought and is beyond all praise. That the Holy One should be willing to be made sin for His people and endure the curse that endless blessing should be their portion is altogether inconceivable. As Samuel E. Pierce (1746-1849) so ably expressed it, “His love is one perfect and continued act from everlasting to everlasting.

It knows no abatement or decay. It is eternal and immutable love. It exceeds all conception and surpasses all expression. To give the utmost proof of it, 'Christ died for the ungodly' (Rom 5:6). In His life, He fully displayed His love. In His sufferings and death, He stamped it with an everlasting emphasis."

The love of Christ was a *disinterested* one. Entirely so, for it was uninfluenced by any external considerations or any thing in its objects. There was nothing whatever in them, either actual or foreseen, to call it into existence. Nothing actual, for they had rebelled against God, and deliberately chosen as their exemplar and master one who was a liar and murderer from the beginning. Nothing foreseen, for no excellence could they bear, except what His own gracious hand wrought in them. The love of Christ infinitely excelled in purity, in intensity, in its disinterestedness, any that ever moved in a human breast. It was altogether free and spontaneous. He loved us when we were loveless and unlovely. We were entirely unable to render Him any compensation or fit return. His own essential blessedness and glory could neither be diminished by our damnation, nor increased by our salvation. His love was uninvited, unattracted, altogether self-caused and moved. It was that which stirred everything else—His wisdom, power, holiness—to activity: "He delivered me, *because* he delighted in me" (Psa 18:19) is the divine explanation of my redemption.

The love of Christ was a *discriminating* one. "The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works" (Psa 145:9). He is benevolent unto all His creatures, making His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending rain on the just and on the unjust (Mat 5:45). "For he is *kind* unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Luk 6:35). But Christ *loved* the Church and gave Himself for it with a love such as He does not bear all mankind. The Church is the one special and peculiar object of His affections. Thus, He does not love universal creaturehood, or all mankind without exception or difference. Husbands are bidden to love their wives "even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph 5:25). The love of a husband toward his wife is a special and exclusive one: so Christ cherishes for His Church a particular affection. It is set upon His Bride, rather than upon the human race at large. She is His peculiar treasure. "Having loved *his own* which were in the world" (Joh 13:1). Instead of caviling at this truth, let us enjoy its preciousness. Christ's love is also a constant and durable one, exercised upon its objects "unto the end" (Joh 13:1; Mat 28:20); and, as we shall now see, it is a sacrificial and enriching one.

The *manifestations* of Christ's love correspond to our woe and want, its operations being suited to the condition and circumstances of its objects. Our direst need was the putting away of our sins, and that need has been fully met by Him. His love alone could not remove our transgressions "as far as the east is from the west" (Psa 103:12). The claims of God must be met, the penalty of the Law endured. "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb 9:22); and Christ so loved the Church as to shed His precious blood for her. Hence, the saints here are heard exclaiming, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in [or 'by'] his own blood" (Rev 1:5). That is the second inspiring reason or motive of this benediction. It necessarily imports His Deity, for none but God can forgive sins. It is likewise a witness to the vicarious nature and efficacy of His sacrifice—how otherwise could it wash us from our sins? Moreover, it celebrates the supreme proof of His care for His people. "For love is strong as death...Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it" (Song 8:6-7), as was demonstrated at the Cross, where "all [the] waves and [the] billows" of God's wrath (Psa 42:7) went over the Sinbearer.

The surpassing love of Christ was evidenced by His espousing the persons of God's elect: undertaking their cause, assuming their nature, obeying and suffering in their room and stead. The apostle brought the whole of this blessed subject home with application unto believers when he said, "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (Eph 5:2). He knew what was necessary for our deliverance, and His love prompted Him to the accomplishment of the same. To "[wash] us from our sins" (Rev 1:5) was the one thing essential in order to our salvation; and for that, His blood *must* be shed. What stupendous proof was that of His love! Herein is love: that the Just should voluntarily and gladly suffer for the unjust, that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8), making full atonement for those who were "enemies." He chose to lay down His life for those who were by nature and by practice rebels against God, rather than that they should be a sacrifice to the wrath of God for ever. The guilty transgress, but the innocent One is condemned. The ungodly offend, but the Holy One endures the penalty. The servant commits the crime, but the Lord of glory blots it out. What reason have we to adore Him!

Christ cannot love His people beyond what He has done. He cannot increase in His love to them unto all eternity. He cannot give a greater evidence of His love to them than He has already done. He shone forth in all the meridian power and splendour of His love in Gethsemane and on Calvary. There, He sustained in His soul the whole of the awful curse which was due to the sins of His people. Then it was that "it pleased the LORD [the Father] to bruise him" (Isa 53:10) and put His soul to grief. His anguish was inconceivable. He cried out under it, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mat 27:46; Mar 15:34). It was *thus* He loved us, and it was *thereby* He provided the fountain

to cleanse us from our iniquities. Through the shedding of His precious blood, He has purged His people from the whole guilt and defilement of sin. “Blessings, eternal blessings on the Lamb who bore our sins and carried our sorrows! His bloody sweat is our everlasting health and cure. His soul-travail is our everlasting deliverance from the curse of the Law and the wrath to come. His bearing our sins in His own body on the Tree is our everlasting discharge from them. His most precious blood-shedding is our everlasting purification”—S. E. Pierce.

“And washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Rev 1:5). Sin alike blots our record before God, pollutes the soul, and defiles the conscience; and naught can remove the same but the atoning and cleansing blood of Christ. Sin is the only thing which the Lord Jesus hates. It is essential to His holiness that He should do so. He hates it immutably, and can as soon cease to be God as love it. Nevertheless, His love to His people is even greater than His hatred of sin. Through their fall in Adam, they are sinners: their fallen natures are totally depraved. By thought, and word, and deed, they are sinners. They are guilty of literally countless transgressions—for their sins are more in number than the hairs of their heads (Psa 40:12). Yet Christ loved them! He did so before they sinned in Adam; and His foreviews of them in their fallen estate produced no change in His love to them. Nay, it afforded greater opportunity for Him to display the same. Therefore, did He become incarnate that He should blot out their sins. Nothing was more loathsome to the Holy One of God; yet He was willing to be an alien to His mother’s children, despised and rejected of men, mocked and scourged by them—yea, abandoned by God for a season—that they might be cleansed.

We fully agree with John Gill (1697-1771) when he says on the words, “washed us from our sins” (Rev 1:5), that “this is not to be understood of the sanctification of their natures, which is the work of the Spirit, but of atonement for their sins and justification from them.” In other words, it is the impetration (purchase) of redemption, and not its application, which is here in view. The latter, of course, follows at regeneration—for all whom He washed from the guilt and penalty of sin are in due time cleansed from the love and dominion of sin. That which is imported in the clause before us is guilt cancelled, condemnation removed, the curse of the Law taken away, and the sentence of acquittal pronounced. This is the portion of *all* believers: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). We must distinguish between the justification of our *persons* once for all (Act 13:39), and the pardon of our sins as Christians (1Jo 1:9) which must be penitentially confessed; and then, we are forgiven and cleansed on the ground of Christ’s blood. It is the former which is in view in Revelation 1:5, where the saints are rejoicing in the love of Him whose blood has once and for all washed their *persons*; the latter is owned in Revelation 7:14, where their travel-stained *robes* [garments] are cleansed day by day.

The Life and Times of Joshua

51. Enemy Reactions, Part 2

In our last, we pointed out that the word “And” at the beginning of Joshua 9 has a double force: intimating that what now follows is to be linked with, first, what is recorded in the closing verses of Joshua 8—namely the magnification of the divine Decalogue on mount Ebal and the renewing of the Mosaic covenant by this new generation of Israel; and second, with the whole of chapters 6-8, which narrate their conquests, under God, of Jericho and Ai. In other words, the contents of Joshua 9 make known to us the enemy’s reactions to those incidents. As the events were twofold, so were his reactions. First, we are informed that as soon as the kings of Canaan “heard thereof,” they “with one accord” agreed to unite themselves together “to fight with Joshua and with Israel” (verses 1-2). Up to this point, they had acted on the defensive; but now that they saw *their own* interests were threatened, they determined to make a mass attack upon Israel. “The varied expressions here used [in Joshua 9:1] include the inhabitants of the land to the utmost western and northern borders”—Thomas Scott (1747-1821). It was not an immediate attack that was planned, but a consulting together how best to put a stop to Israel’s progress and secure their own territories.

Verily, “there is no new thing under the sun” (Ecc 1:9). A “League of Nations” or federating together with different peoples to “pool” their resources is no modern invention, but as old as human history. Here was a banding together of rival kings to make common cause in opposing the people of God. They entered into an agreement “at top level” to support and assist each other, and ultimately to assail Israel—which they did, as Joshua 11:1-5 shows. For the time being, they were willing to sink their individual differences and combine together. Nor was this the first time that such a thing had happened. As far back as Abraham, we are told that “it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations; That these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar. All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea” (Gen 14:1-3)—which may well be designated “the Western bloc of nations” against the “Eastern power and its satellites.” At a later date, we find still another consulting “together with one consent” of a number of nations, and a federating of themselves against Israel (see Psa 83:4-8).

That which is recorded in Joshua 9:1-2 should be of real practical value unto those who are engaged in fighting “the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12). There is real wisdom in that old adage, “To be forewarned is to be forearmed.” It is often a very real help to have reliable information of what effects a certain action produces upon the foe. Here we are shown the nature of such, immediately upon Israel’s solemn renewal of their covenant with JEHEVOH. The lesson in plain: it is when God’s people are most conscious of their obligations, when most determined by grace to discharge the same, when most zealous in fully consecrating themselves unto the LORD, that the ire of Satan breaks out the fiercest. As we have pointed out, up to this point, these Canaanitish kings had remained quiescent, but now they planned aggression. Naturally speaking, it seems strange that they were not actually hostile from the beginning, opposing Israel’s crossing of the Jordan, for they had received notice of their approach (Jos 2:9-10). Nor had these kings made any attempt to go to the relief of Jericho when that city was seriously threatened by those under Joshua’s command.

But notice what these kings *did not do*. They did not surrender themselves unto Israel. They did not consider themselves outnumbered, and cast themselves on Joshua’s mercy. Even after they learned of the miraculous crossing of the Jordan and the falling of Jericho’s walls, they did not capitulate. Nor do the enemies of the Christian. No matter how marked or extensive the victory God grants us, we must not conclude that the worst of the fight is now over. Satan in his activities is the nearest approach to “perpetual motion” found in any creature. He never accepts defeat or quits the field. One had thought he must recognize the utter futility of assailing Immanuel, but he did not. And though completely worsted and routed in his attempt, it was only “for a season” (Luk 4:13) he left Him. Why, then, should any of His followers expect to be exempted! The same is true of “the flesh” with all its evil lusts. Indwelling sin never surrenders to the new nature, nor ceases its attacks upon it. Nay, the farther a Christian advances into an experiential entrance into and enjoyment of his spiritual heritage, the fiercer the conflict becomes, and the more determined and concentrated the efforts of his enemies to thwart him.

It is striking to see how the Holy Spirit has particularized *the diversity* of the kings described in Joshua 9:1: some were from the mountains, some from the valleys, and yet others from the sea coasts; yet, though so widely scattered, they federated together against Israel. That illustrates the fact that the spiritual enemies of God’s people are of many kinds and types, that every form of worldliness—its most refined and elevated, as well as its coarsest and lowest—is a menace to them. Equally so are their own evil lusts varied and numerous: self-will, pride, unbelief, slothfulness, cowardice, impatience, discontent, and a host of others—all have to be resisted and mortified. How the unanimity of those heathen tribes should shame Christians because of their divisions! And how their banding together against Israel ought to arouse the believer to the realization that *all his graces* must work actively together—faith strengthening hope, love animating both—in waging the fight to which he is called. If it appears strange that these kings had been quiet so long, to carnal reason, it seems the more so that they should now plan an offensive after God had so signally shown Himself strong on the behalf of His people. But behind the scenes, the LORD was saying, “Associate [assemble] yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces” (Isa 8:9). Thus will it yet be with the enemies of His Church.

But we must now turn to and consider the second reaction of the Canaanites unto the recent conquests of Israel. This is quite different from the former one, and is described in Joshua 9:3-7. Here, we are informed, “And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai, They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up; And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy. And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us.” In Joshua 10:2, we are told that “Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities...greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty”; never-

theless, they were afraid of Israel. Herein we behold the sovereignty of God: His “terror” (Gen 35:5) fell not upon the kings mentioned in the preceding verses, yet it *did* upon the Gibeonites! Yet God was not acting arbitrarily or capriciously: He had His own wise reasons for making the Gibeonites an exception.

“And when the inhabitants of Gibeon *heard* what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai” (Jos 9:3). This is all of a piece with what is recorded in Joshua 2:9-10, where Rahab had said to the spies, “I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us...For we have *heard* how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.” Here is a further example of the same thing, which serves to demonstrate the consistency and truthfulness of this history. Spiritually considered, it illustrates this principle: that the unbelieving world do not remain in ignorance of the mighty works of God, which renders their unbelief the more inexcusable and adds to their guilt. The miracles of Christ were not wrought in a corner, but openly and publicly, so that even His enemies were obliged to acknowledge the reality of them (Joh 11:47); and Herod, too, was informed of the same (Luk 23:8). The same is true today: both of the providential interpositions of the Most High in the affairs of nations, and the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit in His elect.

Whenever there is a definite and striking display of the Holy Spirit’s power, some of the unregenerate are impressed and attracted thereby, and seek to join themselves unto the objects of the same. We behold an instance of that in connection with Abraham. He experienced an effectual call from God, which produced a supernatural effect, for it was against nature that he should leave his home, abandon the land of his fathers, and go forth “not knowing whither he went” (Heb 11:8). It was a peculiarly distinctive work of God of which he was made the subject, for the LORD Himself tells us, “I called him *alone*” (Isa 51:2). Nevertheless, we find that both his father and his nephew were so impressed by the change wrought in Abraham and his determination to make a complete break from his old manner of life, that they accompanied him as he left Chaldea (Gen 11:31)—though the former died before Canaan was reached, and the latter was far from happy therein. Likewise, when the children of Israel left Egypt, in order to go unto their inheritance, “a mixed multitude went up also with them” (Exo 12:38), and had an evil influence upon the people of God (Num 11:4). It was the same again when those in captivity availed themselves of the edict of Cyrus, that they might return to Palestine—for after they did so, and the Law of Moses was restored, we read that “they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude” (Neh 13:3)!

In this dual reaction of the Canaanites unto the mighty works which JEHOVAH had wrought in their land—their determining to use force against Israel, and under the pretence of friendship, to seek union with them—we have exemplified the two principal characters assumed by the arch-enemy of God and His people, and the methods employed under them. The devil is depicted in the Scriptures both as the roaring lion and the subtle serpent. As the lion, he uses force and seeks to terrorize; as the serpent, he employs cunning and endeavours to poison and corrupt. In the former character, he acts more openly, and assaults from without; in the latter, he works more secretly, aiming to defile from within. Against our first parents, he appeared as the lying and beguiling serpent; but in employing Cain to murder righteous Abel, we behold the power and cruelty of the lion (1Jo 3:12). Thus it was in connection with what we have here. In stirring up the kings of Canaan to fight with Joshua, Satan was relying upon the use of arms; but in moving the Gibeonites to cloak their character and pose to be what they were not—so that Israel might be deceived into making a league with them—we behold his craftiness, purposing to introduce his leaven into the meal.

We often point out in these pages that God does not work according to a stereotyped plan, but that infinite variety marks His operations. The same is true, in a lesser degree, of the devil—who is ever a marked imitator. He too acts not uniformly. If one plan or method fails, he always has another in reserve, as the whole history of Christendom has repeatedly demonstrated. He altered his tactics with Christ: first seeking to slay Him while a babe, then almost posing as “an angel of light” (2Co 11:14) when tempting Him, and then, as the dragon of darkness (Luk 22:53), he bruised His heel. So, too, with the followers of the Lord Jesus: first openly and directly persecuting, then flattering and fawning upon, and then corrupting by unholy alliances. The opposition and cruelty of Nero and other Roman emperors failing, the patronage of Constantine, and the making of Christianity the state religion, succeeded in accomplishing Satan’s design; just as centuries later, the spirituality and power of the great Reformation, under Martin Luther (1483-1546), was curtailed when the German princes gave support to it because of the political liberty which it promised them. No wonder the apostle declares that—with the Word of truth in our hands—“we are not ignorant of his [Satan’s] devices” (2Co 2:11); and with the records of the last nineteen centuries before us, there is still less excuse for our being unacquainted with his strategy.

That which is narrated in Joshua 9:3-6, of the dishonest Gibeonites, gives us a typical picture of graceless professors seeking to “join” the people of God. They knew there was no likelihood of their desire being realized if they

presented themselves before Israel in their true character, so they resorted to guile in order to deceive them. “They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors” (verse 4). It must not be overlooked that while Satan is very subtle, *the flesh also* is exceedingly artful, fully capable of playing many parts in order to gain its own ends. Behold how it moved Jacob to cover himself with a hairy skin and masquerade as Esau, king Saul to disguise himself when he went to the witch of Endor (1Sa 28:8), the wife of Jeroboam feigning herself to be another when she visited the prophet Elijah, whose eyes were set by reason of age (1Ki 14:1-6); and the wolves in sheep’s clothing of Christ’s day (Mat 7:15). In his second epistle, Paul warned the Corinthians against “false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ” (2Co 11:13); and Jude complained that ungodly men had “crept in unawares” into the assemblies of the saints (Jude :4). The churches are full of such to-day.

Those Gibeonites posed as “ambassadors”—men not only of peaceful design, but of importance—fitted to enter into an official engagement with Israel and make a covenant with them. Such is the character assumed by thousands of hypocrites who apply for church membership. They pretend to be fully qualified to be taken into fellowship among the LORD’s people, claiming that the peace of God is in their hearts. These Gibeonites pretended to have journeyed from a far country and attired themselves accordingly. They “took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up; And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy” (Jos 9:4-5). Very thorough were they in this work of imposture, well made up for the part they were playing—even in conforming to Israel’s peculiar ways by using “asses” rather than horses. In like manner, empty professors will often go to considerable trouble in their efforts to impose upon the people of God, affecting an outward change in their conduct and laying claim to inward graces which they possess not. They pose as being “poor in spirit” (Mat 5:3), convicted of sin, and hungry for “the bread of life” (Joh 6:35), and prate about their unworthiness.

Not only does this incident point a solemn and urgent warning for the churches of Christ to be much on their prayerful guard against taking hypocrites into their membership, but it also intimates how the individual Christian needs to be aware of his danger in being imposed upon by his *inward enemies*, for his lusts not only assume a great variety of forms, but often pretend to be his friends. He knows, both from Scripture and his own experience, that “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit” (Gal 5:17); but often, he fails to realize that even his corruptions are capable of posing as virtues, and would fain persuade him that they are kindly disposed and have good design toward him. It is not merely that his evil lusts become less active for a season and even appear to be asleep, but that they seem to have undergone a change for the better, and now assume the garb of piety. For example, it is easy for a Christian—if he fails to weigh everything in the balances of the Sanctuary and rigidly test his motives by Holy Writ—to persuade himself that his natural self-will is now a holy zeal for God, or that his impatience is really spiritual earnestness, or that his slothfulness is a holy caution.

The “flesh” or sinful nature takes upon itself many plausible guises; and those carnal enemies which are actually very near to us—yea, a part of our very selves—often pretend to have come from “a far country” (Luk 19:12): that is, from heaven itself, just as the Gibeonites presented themselves before Israel as having come from a great distance. In other words, what we sometimes regard as heavenly graces are nothing but our native corruptions dressed up to deceive us. Particularly is this the case with *mock humility* and lowliness. The Gibeonites appeared not in the attractive apparel of purple and fine linen, but in rags and tatters! Likewise will our very pride take on a deceptively modest appearance and pose. One may, from the teaching of God’s Word, be intellectually convinced of the total depravity of man—yea, be thoroughly persuaded of *his own* sinfulness and unworthiness—without his heart being in the least affected and bowed in contrition before God. He may even imagine that he has made considerable progress in the work of mortifications, and become *complacent* in the belief that he is increasingly “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts” (Ti 2:12)—perceiving not that such complacency is a sure sign that pride is at work.

Oh, how powerful and terrible is the “deceitfulness of sin” (Heb 3:13). If Joshua himself was imposed upon by these hypocritical Canaanites, how carefully and cautiously do we need to carry ourselves, and seek to profit from this incident. Make no mistake here, my reader: the *real* Christian has many “Gibeonites” within his own breast to contend with! In addition to what has been pointed out above, let us add that one may be not only absorbed with his good works, but even *well pleased with* the knowledge and sense which he has of his own corruptions. Truly, “the heart is deceitful above all things” (Jer 17:9). Who can know it? Yet, if we be sincere and diligent in examining ourselves, in comparing the workings of our hearts with the searching and holy teachings of God’s Word—daily viewing ourselves in *its* mirror—we shall perceive more of its “wiliness.” True humility is never engaged with itself, still less is it pleased therewith; but rather mourns over its paucity and the constant opposition produced by the

workings of pride. True humility delivers from self-importance and self-exaltation, and keeps us from posing as “ambassadors”—wanting to have the pre-eminence.

Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures

2. Its Nature and Origin

We concluded our last by affirming that both the context and the Greek require us to understand 2 Peter 1:20 as signifying, “No portion of God’s Word is of human origination.” That is no novel invention of ours. The renowned Puritan, Joseph Caryl (1602-1673), said, “These words show us the authority and original of the Scriptures than the way of their interpretation. The apostle’s scope being to prove that the prophets did not declare their own private opinions, but the mind of God is what they spake; and therefore, the Word of Prophecy, as the apostle adviseth in the previous verse, is to be heeded carefully. The words following in 2 Peter 1:21 lead us to the same sense. The prophets were the interpreters of the mind of God to the people, and not the messengers of their own minds. The false prophets vended their own dreams and ran of their own hearts before they were sent, therefore, their prophecies *were* of ‘private interpretation’: that is, they opened only that to the people which themselves were the authors of; but so *did not* the true prophets.” So too John Owen (1616-1683) said on the passage: the prophecies of Scripture “were not a fruit of any man’s private conceptions, nor was subject to the wills of men so as to attain it or exercise it by their own ability.” “Peter especially bids us to believe the prophets as the indubitable oracles of God, because they have not emanated from man’s own private suggestions”—John Calvin (1509-1564).

“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2Pe 1:21). Here, unlike 2 Timothy 3:16, the penmen themselves *are* seen. “Penmen” we say, for this statement must not be understood only of the oral utterances of the prophets—for it is made in exemplification of what is said in the preceding verse, where “the scripture” (i.e. the writing) is specifically in view, and is adduced in proof that no part thereof is of human origination. Note well what is postulated of these human instruments, and how completely they were under the control of God. Negatively, no portion of what they uttered or wrote originated from human impulse or issued from human brains. Positively, they acted only as they were acted upon by a divine impulse. The Greek word for “moved” (*pluro*) is a very strong one, and signifies to be “carried” or borne along, as a ship is by the wind! A supernatural inflatus or divine power was put forth upon the human instruments, impelling them to communicate God’s mind. They were carried along by a secret but powerful impulse from above.

Before proceeding farther, let us show that in the Word, the term “prophecy” includes much more than to make known future events, signifying not merely to foretell, but to *forthtell*—to give out a message from God. According to the Scriptural purport and usage, a “prophet” was both the recipient and the deliverer of a message from heaven: whether it was a disclosure of some important truth, the inculcation of an imperative duty, or the revealing of something yet to be. There is no record that Abraham ever made any predictions, yet the LORD declared “he is a *prophet*” (Gen 20:7)—one who was admitted into His secret counsels (Amo 3:7). Still more definitely is the term defined for us in its second occurrence: “And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be *thy prophet*” (Exo 7:1), which is explained by, “I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God” (Exo 4:15-16). Moses received the communication from God, transmitted it verbally to his brother, and Aaron was his “prophet” or mouthpiece unto Israel.

The “prophet,” then, was God’s mouthpiece unto man; and whatever he thus uttered was a prophecy or forthtelling. Moses himself is termed a “prophet” (Hos 12:13), because he received free communications from God. David declared, “The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue” (2Sa 23:2): he spoke not what he did from his own spirit or out of his own heart, but as the Spirit gave him utterance. The prophets were not able to prophesy at their own option, but only as they were influenced, empowered, and directed by the Holy Spirit. This was so well known in Israel that Zedekiah the king put this question to Jeremiah: “Is there any word from the LORD?” (Jer 37:17)—knowing full well that God’s servant could say nothing to good purpose, or that could be relied upon as a divine oracle, unless God vouchsafed him a message by His own sovereign pleasure. The Bible,

then, is something vastly superior to a book written by unenlightened men, expressing their own genius—namely one by which the living God spoke through and by its writers. In Romans 16:26, the penmen of the New Testament are designated “prophets.” So too the incarnate Word (Deu 18:18), because, as He averred, “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me” (Joh 7:16, and compare Joh 8:28; 12:49-50).

Literally understood, the Greek of 2 Peter 1:21, reads, “For not by [the] will of man was brought at any time prophecy, but by [the] Spirit Holy being borne, spake the holy men of God”—Bagster’s *Interlinear*. “It was *brought*—brought to the prophet as well as to us—nor had a human will, either ours or his, the least agency in that first bringing of it, any more than in the case of the Voice that sounded forth from the excellent glory at the transfiguration, or in that of the sun’s rays”—John Lillie (1812-1867). Those men were merely the instruments employed in delivering to us the Word of God—simply the channels of its transmission. They delivered what they received: nothing more, nothing less, exactly as they received it. They were “holy men” not in the sense of being sinless—a meaning which the term very rarely, if ever, has in Scripture—but as being separated and consecrated to this sacred function, being used of God in His immediate service. As another has well expressed it, “They spake under the sway of the heavenly Breath, as the organ sounds only under the hand of its master.”

When it is said that the prophets spoke or wrote as they were “moved” or “borne along” by the Holy Spirit, we understand that a divine impulse carried them out of—lifted them above—their natural condition, as John was “in the Spirit,” and then “heard behind [him] a great voice” (Rev 1:10); and “I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven” (Rev 4:2). They were transported into a higher and entirely spiritual state, losing consciousness of everything except that they were holding direct intercourse with God. Yet this raptured experience neither destroyed nor impaired their natural faculties, for they wrought in accord with their personal characteristics. As grace comes not to annihilate, but to sublimate, the powers of our souls—to quicken, purge, enlighten, energize, and exalt—so the Holy Spirit put forth a supernatural exercise of His power upon those men; yet doing no violence to the workings of their minds, and leaving intact the distinctive peculiarities of each individual. He did not set aside their faculties, but made them the instruments of His working. As J. Calvin expressed it, “He moved, not bereaved them of their mind.” Their agency was transferred to the divine sphere, thus securing them from all mistakes.

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” (Heb 1:1-2). Here is yet another divine statement which casts light upon the nature or modus of inspiration. It intimates that God also acted sovereignly here, in accordance with His “ways,” that diversity and variety mark all His works. He did not act uniformly, but communicated His mind not only piecemeal at intervals, but in many ways. There was indeed a unity of purpose, but not so of means. As to *why* God did not adhere to one mode, but changed it to different persons—and even to the same person at different times—it is not for us to say. So far from the divine revelation being made all at once to one man, it was given in portions of various sizes over a period of many centuries and through dozens of individuals, yet there was a manifest continuity of design and a sustained and superintending power over the whole, which constitutes it “The Holy Bible.”

If the Old Testament be read carefully, not a few examples will be found of the “divers manners” in which God vouchsafed to make known His mind to different ones. Sometimes the LORD was pleased to reveal Himself directly and communicate His will by audible voice, as He did unto our first parents, unto Abraham, unto Samuel, and on many occasions unto Moses, as he himself tells us: “And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims” (Num 7:89). At other times, He communicated with men indirectly, through an angel, as with the prophet Zechariah (Zec 1:14; 2:3; 4:1; etc.), with Joseph (Mat 1:20), the father of the Baptist (Luk 1:11), and Mary (Luk 1:28); also, while the whole of the Revelation, which God gave unto Jesus Christ, “he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John” (Rev 1:1). Another mode of revelation was by “visions” or representations made to the senses, as in the cases of Isaiah (Isa 6:1-9), Ezekiel (Eze 1:1), and Peter (Act 10:5-20). Often, the LORD made use of supernatural dreams, as with Jacob at Bethel (Gen 28:10-16), and Paul at Troas (Act 16:9). In some instances, the dream was sent to one person, and another was employed to explain it—as Pharaoh and Joseph, and Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel.

Generally, the word of the LORD came to the prophet without previous meditation or study on his part: “suddenly” as in Numbers 12:4, and as when the Spirit seized upon the young king Saul (1Sa 10:10-11), with Amos—“And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel” (Amo 7:15). At times when least expected: “And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the LORD came unto the prophet” (1Ki 13:20). In the case of Caiaphas, quite unknown unto himself (Joh 11:51). Usually, the prophet was enabled to understand the purport of what he was made to say; but by no means was this

always the case, as is clear from Daniel 12:8, and 1 Peter 1:10-11. Oh, the sovereignty of God! Sometimes the Word of God came to the prophet with intense and irresistible power: “But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I *could not stay*” (Jer 20:9)—but was obliged to deliver the same, however painful to himself or unpalatable to its recipients.

But what is perhaps the most striking feature of all, and one which forcibly exhibits the *uniqueness* of prophecy, is that many were made the mouthpieces and messengers of God *against* their own wills. The case of Balaam is by no means an isolated one: “The LORD put a word in his [Balaam’s] mouth,” so that he acknowledged, “Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it” (Num 23:5, 16, 20)—as much as he desired to do so. Moses was most reluctant to accept the divine commission (Exo 3:11; 4:1, 10). The role of prophet was forced upon him—clear proof that his messages were not the products of his own imagination. Isaiah, too, at first demurred at it, feeling his personal unfitness for such an office (Isa 6:5). Jeremiah, though appointed by God before his birth to be a prophet, complained, “Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child” (Jer 1:5-6). When Ezekiel was given a most distasteful message to deliver, he tells us, “I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me” (Eze 3:14), compelling him. We all know how hard Jonah tried to shirk his commission, but unsuccessfully.

It is indeed remarkable to behold how many instances there were of the prophet’s reluctance and opposition, and how faithfully the same is recorded by themselves. It scarcely needs pointing out that each of the examples adduced above supplies a striking illustration and exemplification of the statement that “the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man” (2Pe 1:21). This same phenomenon also serves to demonstrate one of the fundamental differences between the Bible and all the ordinary works of literature: the source of the former is from without; of the latter, from within—the knowledge of the one was divinely imparted; the other, humanly acquired. The prophets expressed ideas altogether distinct from their own origination and comprehension, and often opposed to their own sentiments; whereas all other literary works embody and express the personal views of their authors. All the penmen of the Bible were wholly under the superintendence of God: He possessed their hearts, moved their wills, and regulated their minds and tongues, so that the very words they employed were, in the highest sense, not their own, but His.

We shall now consider more definitely *the extent* of inspiration. Yet in so doing, we shall not, strictly speaking, be turning to a different branch of our subject, but rather providing fuller explanation and exemplification of what has already been before us. The *fact* of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures really defines its *scope*: for since “scripture” means “writing,” and writing is made up of letters and words, then it plainly and necessarily follows that the Scriptures are *verbally* inspired. Nor is this a mere academical question or theological dogma, but rather, a matter of great practical importance. Surely, it deeply concerns us to know exactly what measure of reliance should be placed upon the actual *words* used by the sacred writers: whether implicit credit is to be given to every utterance, or whether we are at liberty to regard some statements as being merely their own personal views, and (for example) summarily reject “Let your women keep silence in the churches” (1Co 14:34) by affirming, “Oh, that was only Paul’s idea.” Once it is clearly apprehended that inspiration respects *the matter* of Scripture and not the men who wrote it, the issue is clearly drawn: it is either full and verbal inspiration, or none at all! It is entirely a matter of *divine testimony*, which we must submissively receive, or impiously refuse.

There is no middle ground. We either take 2 Timothy 3:16 at its face value—without qualification and equivocation—or spurn it as an imposture. There is no other alternative: either the Bible is a fraud, the word of man, or “as it is in truth, the word of God” (1Th 2:13). Since divine inspiration is predicated not of the human instruments, but of what was transmitted through and by them, there can be no question of varying kinds and degrees of inspiration. It had not for its objects the penmen who were soon to pass away, but their *books*, which were destined to reveal from age to age the counsels of God unto the world. Inspiration covers every part of Scripture equally—both in substance and form—so that the whole is the very “Word of God.” Its express design was to communicate truth to us in an infallible manner, so that no error intermingled therewith; that the Holy Spirit determined every “jot” and “tittle” (Mat 5:18; Luk 16:17) recorded by His scribes. As an ancient writer well expressed it, “Whatsoever God willed that we should read either of His doings or sayings, that He commissioned His agents to write, as if their hands had been His own hands.” The absolute needs-be for such appears plainly in what we transcribe below.

“They behoved to have this full inspiration in order to recite, without any error, facts inaccessible to man’s knowledge: the creation of the universe, the extrication of chaos, the birth of light, the rise of the mountains, the intervention of angels, God’s secret counsels, the thoughts of man’s heart and his secret faults. But they specially behoved to have it in order that they might prefigure Christ by a thousand types unperceived by the writer himself, and thus exhibit even in their narratives of the past the character of the Messiah, His sufferings, His death, and the

glories that were to follow. It was necessary for them, in order that they might speak in a suitable manner of those events even that were known to them: to pass over some in silence, to relate others, to characterize them, to judge them; and thus, to show in them the thought of God. But it was above all necessary for enabling them to describe in the just measure prescribed by that thought of God and by the needs of the future Church: the scenes—whether national or domestic—which behoved them to carry along with them the types of the work of redemption, to prefigure the last times, and to take in a vast sweep of thousands of years posterior to them. They required it for the purpose of determining the measure of what they might confide to their readers, and what they should withhold; for the discreet use of their expressions, and for that admirable restraint upon themselves which they have uniformly preserved”—François Samuel Robert Louis Gaussen (1790-1863).

Whatever difficulty the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures may appear to involve in connection with the free agency of their penmen and the stamp of their own individuality being upon their several books—and which of the divine operations is free of difficulty to *our* finite and feeble comprehension?—they are as nothing in comparison with those involved in their non-inspiration, or even their partial. Had the human writers been left to themselves in any measure, we could have no certainty of the absolute reliability of what they wrote. The very best of human productions are marred by defects; and it was as truly a miracle for God to communicate His Word to us through human media—*without* it partaking of any of its infirmities—as it was for Him to cause the fingers of a man’s hand to come forth from the wall of Babylon’s palace—and *without* any human mind to direct it—to write those fatal words, “Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting” (Dan 5:27). How simple, then, for Him to direct the intelligence and pious pen of an apostle to transmit to us His message! That He *has* done so, the Scriptures affirm; that He *must* have done so is obvious—“The law of the LORD is *perfect*” (Psa 19:7), which could not have been the case had anything in it been left to man.

While we must insist that all Scripture is God-breathed, yet, that fact does not oblige us to draw the conclusion that the channels He used were mere ciphers in its communication. Though the Holy Spirit moved them to write precisely as they did, He neither prevented nor wholly set aside the use of their natural faculties. That is evident from the obvious variety of styles which is seen in the different books they penned—styles which can sometimes be clearly identified with the education and spiritual maturity of the writers. Nevertheless, the Spirit so operated in and through their faculties that every sentence which they wrote was an exact transcription of *His* mind. A very beautiful expression is used in the margin of Judges 6:34, which we believe casts light on the point now before us: “The Spirit of the LORD *came upon* [clothed Himself with] Gideon.” It must also be borne in mind that, though it pleased God that neither the mental calibres, nor the individual characters of the men He used should be hidden, yet both their natural endowments and spiritual capacities were given to them by Himself—given to serve this very end, that each instrument was fitted by Him and made suitable for the task in view. As the LORD used those whom He had specially qualified to make the garments of Israel’s high priest (Exo 28:3), and those whom He filled with wisdom and understanding to fashion the holy vessels of the tabernacle (Exo 35:30-35), so He equipped Paul to be a fit instrument to write the epistle to the Romans, and John to compose epistles on brotherly love.

Evangelical Obedience

Part 1

This article is intended to be the sequel to those which have recently appeared under the title of “Glorious Sinai.” It is designed chiefly for the enlightenment and comfort of those of God’s people who are deeply exercised over their own obedience, and are often cast down by the defectiveness of the same. There is a real need for a Scriptural opening-up of this subject, for there are very few pulpits today—even in the most orthodox circles—where anything clear and definite is given out thereon; in fact, we doubt if half of our readers have ever heard or read the term, “evangelical obedience.” It is also a subject which needs the most careful handling; and if a comparative “novice” attempts to deal with it, he is likely to do more harm than good. The difficulty involved in it is to maintain on the one hand the high and holy standard of obedience, which God has set before us in His Word; and to show on the other, the gracious provision which He has made for the relief of those who honestly endeavour, yet sadly fail, to measure up to that standard. The path between the two is a narrow one.

No matter how cautiously one may deal with this theme, if he is to be of any service to the real people of God, his efforts are sure to be put to a wrong and evil use by hypocrites, for they will “wrest [it], as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2Pe 3:16). Such is the perversity of human nature. When a discriminating sermon is preached—the particular design of which is to draw a clear line of demarcation between genuine and nominal Christians, and to “take forth the precious from the vile” (Jer 15:19)—the graceless professor will *refuse* to make application of the same and examine his own heart and life in the light thereof; whereas the possessor of divine life is only too apt to draw a wrong deduction and deem himself to be numbered among the spiritually dead. Contrariwise, if the message be one of comfort to God’s little ones, while too many of them are afraid to receive it, others who are not entitled will misappropriate it unto themselves. But let not a realization of these things prevent the minister of the Gospel from discharging his duty; and while being careful not to cast the children’s bread unto the dogs, yet the presence of such is not to deter him from setting before the children their legitimate portion.

Before developing our theme, we will define our terms: “Evangelical obedience” is obviously the opposite of *legal*, and that is of two sorts. First, the flawless and constant conformity unto His revealed will—which God required from Adam, and which He still demands from all who are under the Covenant of Works—for though man has lost his power to perform, God has not relinquished His right to insist upon what is His just due. Second, the obedience of unregenerate formalists, which is unacceptable unto God—not only because it is full of defects, but because it issues from a natural principle—is not done in faith, and is rendered in a mercenary spirit, and therefore consists of “dead works” (Heb 6:1; 9:14). Evangelical is also to be distinguished from *imputed* obedience. It is blessedly true that when they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, God reckons to the account of all the subjects of the Covenant of Grace the perfect obedience of their Surety, so that He pronounces them justified, or possessed of that righteousness which the Law requires. Yet *that* is not the only obedience which characterizes the redeemed. They now *personally* regulate their lives by God’s commands and walk in the way of His precepts; and though their performances have many blemishes in them (as they are well aware), yet God is pleased for Christ’s sake to accept the same.

It should need no long and laborious argument to demonstrate that God must require obedience—full and hearty obedience—from every rational agent, for only thus does He enforce His moral government over the same. The one who is indebted to God for his being and sustenance is obviously under binding obligations to love Him with all his heart, serve Him with all might, and seek to glorify Him in all that he does. For God to issue commands is for Him to impose His authority on the one He has made; and for him to comply is but to acknowledge his creaturehood and render that submission which becomes such. It is as the Lawgiver that God maintains His sovereignty; and it is by our obedience that we acknowledge the same. Accordingly, we find that upon the day of his creation, Adam was placed under Law, and his continued prosperity was made dependent upon his conformity thereto. In like manner, when the LORD took the nation of Israel into covenant relationship with Himself, He personally made known His laws unto them and the sanctions attached thereto.

There are no exceptions to what has just been pointed out. The inhabitants of heaven, equally with those of earth, are required to be in subjection to their Maker. Of the angels, it is said they “do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word” (Psa 103:20). When His own Son became incarnate and assumed creature form, He too entered the place of obedience and became subservient to God’s will. Thus it is with His redeemed. So far from the subjects of the Covenant of Grace being released from submission to the divine Law, they are under additional obligations to render a joyful and unqualified obedience to it: “Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently” (Psa 119:4). Upon which Thomas Manton (1620-1677) said, “Unless you mean to renounce the sovereign majesty of God, and put Him besides the throne, and break out into open rebellion against Him, you must do what He has commanded. ‘Charge them that are rich in this world’ (1Ti 6:17)—not only *advise*, but *charge* them!” Christ is Lord, as well as Saviour; and we value Him not as the latter, unless we honour Him as the former (Joh 13:13).

Not only does God require obedience, but an obedience which issues from, is animated by, and is an expression of, *love*. At the very heart of the divine Decalogue are the words: “And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments” (Exo 20:6). While there must be respect for His authority, unless there is also a sense of God’s goodness, and an outgoing of the affections unto Him because of His excellency, there can be no hearty and acceptable obedience. The severest self-denials and the most lavish gifts are of no value in God’s esteem, unless they are prompted by love. The inseparability of love and obedience was made plain by Christ when He said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (Joh 14:15). “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me” (Joh 14:21). “If a man love me, he will keep my words” (Joh 14:23). Likewise taught His apostles: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments” (1Jo 5:3). “Love is the fulfilling [not a substitute for, still less the abnegation] of the law” (Rom 13:10), for it inspires its performance.

To proceed one step farther: God has graciously promised to work obedience in His people: “And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Eze 36:27)—He would not only point out the way, but move them to go therein; not force by external violence, but induce by an inward principle. “They all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them” (Eze 37:24). Christ makes them “willing in the day of [His] power” (Psalm 110:3) that He should rule over them, and then directs them by the scepter of His righteousness. Under the new covenant, God has engaged Himself to create in His people, by regenerating grace, a disposition which will find the spirituality and holiness of His requirements congenial unto it: “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts” (Heb 8:10)—I will bestow upon them a new nature which will incite unto obedience and cause them to delight in My Law after the inward man. Herein lies a part of their essential conformity unto Christ: “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:8).

In accordance with those promises, we find that in the ministry of Christ, two things were outstandingly prominent: His enforcement of the claims of God’s righteousness, and His proclamation of divine grace unto those who felt their deep need. Matthew 5:17-20, 19:16-21, and 22:36-40, exemplify the former; Matthew 11:4-6, 28-30, 15:30-31, Luke 23:42-43, and John 4:10, illustrate the latter. The Son of God came not to this earth in order to open a door unto self-pleasing and loose living, but rather to maintain God’s holiness and make it possible for fallen creatures to live a holy life. Christ came here not only as a Saviour, but as a Lawgiver (Deu 18:18-19) and “to be ruler in Israel” (Mic 5:2); and therefore, He is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey* him” (Heb 5:9). His mission had for its design not to lessen God’s authority or man’s responsibility, but to put His people into a greater capacity for serving God. Hence, we find Him saying to His disciples, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (Joh 15:14); and when commissioning His servants, He bade them teach believers “to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Mat 28:20).

Love to God and our neighbour is indeed the great duty enjoined by Law (Deu 6:5; Lev 19:18) and Gospel alike (Gal 5:13-14); yet it is a love which manifests itself by a hearty obedience (2Jo :6). Though Christ delivers from the curse of the Law, yet not from its precepts: “That we being delivered out of the hand of our [spiritual] enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life” (Luk 1:74-75). Every privilege of the Gospel entails an added obligation upon its recipient. As creatures, it is our bounden duty to be in entire subjection to our Creator; as new creatures in Christ, it doubly behoves us to serve God cheerfully. It is a great mistake to suppose that grace sets aside the claims of righteousness, or that the Law of God demands less from the saved than it does from the unsaved. Nowhere are the high demands of God set forth more fully and forcibly than in the epistles addressed to the saints. Take these as samples: “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1Pe 1:15); “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10).

But right here, a formidable difficulty presents itself. On the one hand, the renewed soul clearly perceives the necessity and propriety of such a standard being set before him, and cordially acquiesces therein; yet on the other hand, he has to acknowledge, “to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Rom 7:18). Though it is his deepest longing to measure up fully to the divine standard, yet he is incapable of doing so; and though he cries earnestly unto God for enabling grace and unquestionably receives no little assistance from Him, yet at the close of this life, his desire remains far from being realized. Now the healthy Christian is deeply exercised over this, and instead of excusing his failures cries, “O that my ways *were* directed to keep thy statutes!” (Psa 119:5). But that is only half of the problem, and the least difficult half at that. The other half is, How is it possible for a holy God to accept and approve of imperfect obedience from His children? That He will not lower His standard to the level of their infirmities is clear from the passages quoted above; yet that He *does* both graciously receive and reward their faulty performances is equally plain from other verses.

In what has just been stated, we discover one of the fundamental differences between the Covenants of Works and Grace. Under the former, a rigorous and inflexible demand was made for perfect and perpetual conformity to God’s Law, and no allowance or relief was afforded for the slightest infraction of it. A single default, the least failure, was reckoned guilty of breaking all the commandments (Jam 2:10)—for not only are they, like so many links in the same chain, a strict unit, but the authority of the Lawgiver behind them was flouted. Nor was any provision made for the recovery of such a one. The constitution under which the first man—and the whole human race in him—was placed was without any mediator or sacrifice; and no matter how deep his remorse, or what resolutions of amendment he made, the transgressor lay under the inexorable sentence: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Eze 18:4, 20), for God will by no means clear the guilty. Moreover, under the first covenant, God provided no special grace to enable its subjects to meet His requirements. He made man in His own image, and pronounced him “very

good,” and then left him to his native and created strength. Finally, under that covenant, man was required to yield obedience in order to his justification—for upon his compliance, he was entitled unto a reward.

Now under the Covenant of Grace, everything is the very opposite of that which obtained under the Covenant of Works. Complete subordination to the divine will is indeed required of us, yet not in order to our justification before—and acceptance with—God. Instead, the moment we believe on the Lord Jesus and place our whole dependence on the sufficiency of His sacrifice, His perfect obedience is reckoned to our account; and God pronounces us righteous in the high court of heaven, and we are entitled to the reward of His Law. Consequently, our subsequent obedience is rendered neither under threat of damnation nor from a mercenary spirit, but out of gratitude for our deliverance from the wrath to come, and because of our acceptance in the Beloved. Nor are we left to our own strength, or rather, weakness. God does not barely command us, and then leave us to ourselves; but “worketh in [us] both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13), He communicates to us His blessed Spirit and makes available that fullness of grace and truth which there is in Christ our Head—for He is not only a Head of authority, but also of efficacious influence: “From whom the whole body [the Church] fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part” (Eph 4:16).

What is yet more to the point in connection with our immediate subject, under the New Covenant, provision *has been made* for the failures of its subjects. God does not reject their obedience because it is faulty, but graciously accepts the same when it is prompted by submission to His authority, is performed by faith, is urged by love, and is done with sincerity of purpose and endeavour. Sin has disabled from an exact keeping of God’s commandments, but He approves of what issues from an upright heart and which unfeignedly seeks to please Him. We are bidden to “have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably [not flawlessly!] with reverence and godly fear” (Heb 12:28). While God still justly requires from us a perfect and perpetual obedience, nevertheless, He is graciously pleased to receive and own genuine efforts to conform to His will. He does so because of the merits of Christ and His continued mediation on our behalf. Having accepted our persons, He also accepts our love-offerings—note the order in Genesis 4:4. We present spiritual sacrifices unto Him, and they are “acceptable to God *by Jesus Christ*” (1Pe 2:5).

That we are here propounding no new and dangerous error will be seen from the following quotations: “Notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works are also accepted in Him: not as though they were in this life wholly unblameable and unreproveable in God’s sight, but that He, looking upon them in His Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, though accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections”—The Westminster Confession of Faith. “I call it Gospel obedience, not that it differs in *substance* from that required by the Law, which enjoins us to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, but that it moves upon *principles*, and is carried on unto *ends*, revealed only in the Gospel”—John Owen (1616-1683). According to the modification of the new covenant, “God, out of His love and mercy in Christ Jesus, accepts of such a measure of love and obedience as answereth to the measure of sanctification received”—T. Manton.

Though the above quotations are far from being divinely inspired—and therefore, are without any binding authority upon the children of God—nevertheless, they are from men who were deeply taught and much used by the Holy Spirit, and thus, are deserving of our serious and prayerful attention. While the Christian is forbidden to call any man “father,” that is far from signifying that he should despise such teachers. There is no Antinomian laxity in the above citations, but a holy balance such as is scarcely ever found in the ministry of our day. We urge a careful re-reading of them, ere turning to the second and concluding part of this article in the December issue.



DECEMBER

The Lord Looking on Us

New Year's message to be read January 1st

As we near the close of another period of time, it is our desire (following our usual custom) to look unto the LORD and ask Him to graciously give us a word, which—with His blessing upon the same—will prove a real help to His people for the new year, and which may serve to keep up their faith upon Him throughout the days which lie ahead. Here is the one which is now laid upon our heart: “Look thou upon me” (Psa 119:132). It is a very brief address unto the living God, yet much is contained in it, and most comprehensive is the same. It is an appeal unto the divine compassion, a looking to God for help, a request for mercy, a petition for His favourable regard, a begging Him to take notice of our need. It is a very modest request, for the least discovery of the divine favour is welcome to a tried or afflicted soul. Any regenerate person regards it as a great favour for God to look upon him; and there is nothing he values so highly as a token and sense of His approbation.

Since my looking unto Thee is often so slight, so formal, so distant, that little impression is made upon my heart, do Thou condescend to “look upon me.” Vouchsafe me such a look as will melt me to tenderness and contrition. “Lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon [me]” (Psa 4:6), so that all darkness will be dispelled from my soul, that “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (Phi 4:7) may be mine in increasing measure. Grant me such a sight of Thy countenance as will kindle my affections and draw out my heart unto Thee. Such a request is an expression of faith and hope: “Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless” (Deu 26:15)—such a look is fraught with *blessing*! As Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) well put it: “If a look from us to God has saving virtue in it, what may we not expect from a look from God to us!” It is much to be thankful for when this is really the desire of our hearts: when, instead of shrinking from God and dreading His notice of us, we have such confidence in His goodness and mercy that we cry, “Look thou upon me.”

There was a time when the LORD said unto you, “Look unto me, and be ye saved” (Isa 45:22), and by enabling grace, you did so; and now you say unto Him, “Look thou upon me.” Thus, we see how Christ and the believer speak one and the same language: and no marvel, for one and the same Spirit who dwells in the Head dwells also in His members! “Look thou upon me” is a word which every soul who is hungering and thirsting after Christ may well appropriate. It is one which is most suitable for each of them to lay hold of at the beginning of a new year, for—no matter what may be your circumstances—it will prove an appropriate one for every day and every hour in it. Though so short, this prayer is exceedingly full, and expresses all we need to say, whatever be our situation. Whether in prosperity or adversity, joy or sorrow, health or sickness, life or death, you will need nothing more than for the LORD to look upon thee. Whether a babe or a mature saint, all your spiritual desires are summed up in this one expression.

All is well with the believer when the LORD looks in a manifestative way upon him with a look of love. Christ cannot look upon one of His own without His heart being drawn out to him, “for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” (Heb 4:15). Far otherwise: “In all their affliction he was afflicted” (Isa 63:9). Ask the genuine Christian what his case is, and he will reply, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom 7:18). Ask him how this affects him, and he will say, “The heart knoweth his own bitterness” (Pro 14:10). But this makes way for him to put up this petition: “Look thou upon me.” Is that the experience of the reader? It is frequently so with the writer. Thus, your case and mine are one and the same. Such experience consists of a knowledge of self and of sin; and this it is which fits us to live upon Christ—the sinner’s Saviour. “O LORD, I am *oppressed*; undertake for me” (Isa 38:14).

As none are freed from indwelling sin, so none are from its workings and effects. Nor is any child of God exempted in this life from the sorrows and distresses which are the consequences of the same. As a regenerate soul is

conscious of the activities of indwelling sin and their defiling effects, he cannot but grieve over the same; and such grief produces manifold disquietude of mind. Then it is that all of us are far too apt to lose sight of Christ and cast away our confidence in Him. Too often, the saints resort to reasoning, and draw gloomy conclusions—if not downright false inferences—from their uncomfortable feelings. But it ought not to be so. God suffers His people to be brought frequently into such a condition that they may make fuller use of this prayer: “Look thou upon me.” When do you have most *need* for Him to look upon you? When sensible of your sins, and cast down by them! He gives us a clear sight of what we are by nature to wean us from self and cast us more upon Himself.

Sometimes we are sorely tried by our outward circumstances—when, to carnal reason, everything seems to have gone wrong—and we petulantly exclaim with Jacob, “All these things are against me” (Gen 42:36). Yet they were not. His conclusion was, in fact, entirely erroneous, for all those things were working in his favour at that very time. Yet it often appears to us that everything is contrary to our best interests. Yes, my reader, God permits that *testing*, yea, orders those seemingly unpropitious circumstances. And why? To lead you from the creature unto Himself. Were we not painfully conscious of our straits and wants, what occasion would there be for us to go unto the LORD with such a prayer, as “Look thou upon me?” What saint is there who has not found exactly suited to his case those words, “Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is *overwhelmed*: lead me [for I seem to have lost my way] to the rock that is higher than I” (Psa 61:1-2)?

It is a wonderful relief to the mind to recall that Christ is the Saviour of sinners, yea, of the very chief of sinners. To remember that He loved us before ever we loved Him. That He loved us when there was nothing but sin in us. We readily assent to that as sound doctrine; but when, in experience, we feel how sinful we still are—what complete failures we have proved to be—we are slow to give full and hearty consent thereto. That is because we are too much occupied with our wretched selves. We forget that the greater the skill of the physician, the more suited to him is a desperate and urgent case. All too frequently we neglect coming to the great Physician. Do you feel there is none in more need of Him? Then say, “Look thou upon me.” Have compassion upon me, O LORD, even though I be not worthy to be called Thy son. If He deigns to look upon us—and when did He ever cast out one who came to Him?—we are sure to be the better for it.

The LORD has said everything in His Word to encourage His people to turn unto Him. He declares: “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands” (Isa 49:16). “And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me” (Isa 65:10). “But my kindness shall not depart from thee” (Isa 54:10). “I will not turn away from them, to do them good...Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good” (Jer 32:40-41). Christ regards His redeemed as His “brethren,” as members of His mystical body, as the travail of His soul, and as the apple of His eye. Therefore, we may well cry unto Him, “Look thou upon me.” In so doing, you give Him His glory. O fellow believer, suffer what you may, experience whatever it be, and allow it not to weaken your confidence in your most gracious LORD. Say to Him, Didst not Thou bear all my sins in Thine own body on the tree? Hast Thou not redeemed me from the curse of the Law, by being made a curse for me? Hast Thou not loved me, even me, and washed me from my sins in Thine own blood? Then “Look thou upon me” now.

If you be in health and strength, pray “Look thou upon me” (Psa 119:132) that they may be used to Thy honour and praise. If you are being ill treated by friends and deserted by brethren, here is your relief. When sin has mastered and overthrown you, make this your recourse. When you can feelingly confess, “I am vile” (Job 40:4), plead Isaiah 66:2. When bowed down with bereavement and your heart is too full to add more, say, “Look upon mine affliction” (Psa 25:18). If lying upon a bed of pain or the cold hand of death be nearing your brow, this is most suitable language to address the eternal Lover of your soul. You cannot have a need which He is unable to supply. He is interested in your body, as well as your soul, and is engaged to care for us in temporals, as well as spirituals. Nothing is too hard for Him. Such is His grace that “he giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength” (Isa 40:29). If we are spared to enter 1950, may each of us make frequent use of this prayer: “Look thou upon me.”

The Prayers of the Apostles

72. Revelation 1:5-6, Part 2

Two evidences of the love of Christ for His people are mentioned in this prayer: His cleansing, and His enriching of them by the dignities He bestows upon them. But there is also a third expression and manifestation of His love, which, though not distinctly expressed, is necessarily implied here—namely His *provision* for them. As the result of the work which His love prompted Him to perform on their behalf, He meritoriously secured the Holy Spirit for His people (Act 2:33). He therefore sends Him to regenerate them, to take of the things of Christ and show the same unto them, to impart an experiential and saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and to produce faith in their hearts, so that they believe on Him unto everlasting life. We say that all of this is “necessarily implied,” for thereby—and thereby alone—are they enabled truly and feelingly to exclaim, “Unto him that loved *us*” (Rev 1:5); yea, so that each of them may aver, “who loved *me*, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). That is the quintessence of real blessedness: to be assured by the Spirit from the Word that they are the objects and subjects of Christ’s infinite and immutable love. The knowledge thereof makes Him “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16) in their esteem, rejoices their souls, and sanctifies their affections.

See here the appropriating nature of saving faith. It takes hold of Christ and His sacrifice for sinners as made known in the Word of Truth. It says, Here is a love-letter from heaven about the glorious Gospel of the Son of God, which gives an account of Christ’s love and the strongest and greatest possible proofs thereof. I see that letter is *for me*, for it is addressed to sinners, yea, to the very chief of sinners; and that it both invites and commands me to receive this divine Lover unto myself, and unfeignedly believe in the sufficiency of His atoning blood for *my* sins. Therefore, I take Him as He is freely proffered by the Gospel, and rely on His own word, “And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (Joh 6:37). This faith comes not by feelings of my love to Christ, but by the *hearing* of His love to sinners (Rom 5:8; 10:17). True, the Holy Spirit, in the day of His power, makes impressions on the heart by the Word—yet the *ground* of faith is not those impressions, but the Gospel itself. The *Object* of faith is not Christ working on the heart, and softening it, but rather, Christ as He is presented to our acceptance in the Word. What we are called upon to hear is not Christ speaking secretly within us, but Christ speaking openly, objectively, without us.

A most dreadful curse is pronounced upon all who “love not the Lord Jesus Christ” (1Co 16:22), and solemn indeed is it to realize that the same rests upon the vast majority of our fellows, even in those countries which are reputed to be Christian. And why does any sinner love Christ? Because he believes the love of Christ to sinners. He perceives the wonder and preciousness thereof, for “faith...worketh by love” (Gal 5:6), even by the love of Christ manifested to us. It receives or takes His love unto the heart. There, it works peace in the conscience, gives conscious access to God (Eph 3:12), joy in Him, communion with and conformity to Him. That faith, implanted by the Holy Spirit, and which works by love—the reflex of our apprehension and appropriation of Christ’s love—slays our enmity against God, and causes us to delight in His Law (Rom 7:22). Such faith knows, on the authority of the Word of God, that our sins—which were the cause of our separation and alienation from Him—have been washed away by the atoning blood of Christ. How inexpressibly blessed it is to know that in the fullness of time, Christ appeared “to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb 9:26); and that God says of all believers, “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 10:17).

Upon our belief of these divine testimonies, it depends, to a large extent, on both our practical holiness and our comfort. In proportion to our faith therein will be our love to Christ and adoration of Him. Where there is a personal assurance of His love, there cannot but be a joining with the saints in heaven in praising Christ for washing us from our sins (Rev 5:9-10). But many will object, “I still have so much sin in me, and it so often gets the mastery over me, that I dare not cherish the assurance that Christ has washed me from *my* sins.” If that be your case, we ask, Do you mourn over your corruptions, and earnestly desire to be for ever rid of them? If so, that is proof you are entitled to rejoice in Christ’s atoning blood. God sees fit to leave sin in you, that in this life you may be kept humble before Him, and marvel the more at His longsufferance. It is His appointment that the Lamb should now be eaten “with bitter herbs” (Exo 12:8). “This is not your rest” (Mic 2:10), and He suffers you to be harassed by your lusts that you may look forward more eagerly to the deliverance and rest awaiting you. Though Romans 7:14-25 be your experience, Romans 8:1 also declares, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus”!

“And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father” (Rev 1:6). Here is the third inspiring reason of the ascription which follows. Having owned their indebtedness to the Saviour’s love and sacrifice, the saints are

now heard celebrating the high dignities which He has conferred upon them. They, in their measure, are made partakers of the honours of Him who is both the King of kings and our great High Priest; and the apprehension thereof evokes a song of praise unto Him. As it is realized that the Lord Jesus shares His own honours with His redeemed—conferring upon them both regal dignity and priestly nearness to God—they cannot but exultantly exclaim, “*To him* be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (verse 6). We were *virtually* made kings and priests, when He contracted to fulfil the terms of the everlasting covenant, for by that engagement, we were constituted such. *Imperatively*, we were made so, when He paid the price of our redemption, for it was by His merits that He purchased these privileges for us. *Federally*, we were made so, when He ascended on high (Eph 2:6), and entered within the veil as our Forerunner (Heb 6:20). *Actually*, we were made so, at our regeneration, when we became participants of His unction.

“And hath made us kings and priests unto God.” Here we have the Redeemer exalting and ennobling His redeemed. This presupposes and follows upon our pardon, and is the *positive* result of Christ’s meritorious sacrifice. The One who loved us has not only removed our defilements, but has also restored us to the divine favour and fellowship, and secured for us the award: He took our place that we might share His. In order that they may be protected from certain insidious errors—which have brought not a few of God’s children into bondage—it is important to perceive that these designations belong not merely to a very select and advanced class of Christians, but equally to *all* believers. It is also necessary, lest they be robbed by dispensationalists, that they should realize these dignities pertain to them *now*, and are not postponed until their arrival in heaven, and still less, till the dawn of the millennium. Every saint has these two honours conferred on him at once: he is a regal priest, and a priestly monarch. Therein, we see the dignity and nobility of the Lord’s people. The world looks upon them as mean and contemptible, but He speaks of them as “the excellent, in whom is all my delight” (Psa 16:3).

“Hath made us kings and priests” is definitely implied, though not actually stated—in “and hath *anointed* us” (2Co 1:21)—for it is a word expressive of *dignity*. Kings and priests were anointed when inaugurated in their offices; and therefore, when it is said that God has anointed all who are in Christ Jesus, it intimates that He has qualified and authorized them to the discharge of these high offices. As believers are informed through another apostle: “Ye have an unction from the Holy One” and “the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you” (1Jo 2:20, 27). We have a participation in Christ’s anointing (Act 10:38), receiving the same Spirit wherewith He was anointed—a beautiful type of which is set forth in Psalm 133:2. The blessedness of the elect appears in that they are made both kings and priests by virtue of the Name in which they are presented before God. They who receive “abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall *reign* in life by one, Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:17). Though in all things, Christ has the pre-eminence, being “the King of kings” (1Ti 6:15)—for He has been “anointed thee with the oil of gladness *above* thy fellows” (Psa 45:7)—yet His companions are invested with royalty, and “*as he is, so* are we in this world” (1Jo 4:17). Oh for faith to appropriate that fact, and for grace to conduct ourselves accordingly.

We believe there is a designed contrast between the two expressions, “the kings *of the earth*” and “hath made us kings and priests unto God.” They are kings naturally; and we, spiritually: they, unto men; and we, unto God. They are but kings; we are priests, too. The dominion of earthly monarchs is but fleeting; their regal glory quickly fades. Even that of Solomon—which surpassed them all—was but of brief duration. But *we* shall be sharers of a Throne (Rev 3:21) whose foundation is indestructible, whose scepter is everlasting, whose dominion shall be universal (Rev 21:6-7). We shall be clothed with immortality, and vested with a glory which shall never be dimmed. Believers are “kings”—not in the sense that they take any part in heaven’s rule over the earth, but as sharers in their Lord’s triumph over Satan, sin, and the world. In *that*, they are also distinguished from the *angels*—for they are not “kings,” nor will they ever “reign,” because they are not “anointed.” They have no union with the incarnate Son of God, and therefore, they are not “joint-heirs” with Him as the redeemed are. So far from it, they are “all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14). A subordinate place and a subservient task is *theirs*!

Christ has not only done a great work *for* His people, but He accomplishes a grand work *in* them. He not only washes them from their sins, which He hates, but He also transforms by His power their persons, which He loves. He does not leave them as He first finds them—under the dominion of Satan, sin, and the world. No, He makes them “kings”—and a king is one who is called to rule, is invested with authority, and exercises dominion; and so do believers over their enemies. True, some of the subjects we are called to rule are both strong and turbulent—yet we are “more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom 8:37). The Christian is “a king against whom there is no rising up” (Pro 30:31), for though he may often be overcome in his person, yet not so in his cause. There is still a law in his members warring against the law of his mind (Rom 7:23), yet sin shall not have dominion over him (Rom 6:14). Once, the world kept him in bondage—presuming to dictate his conduct—so that he was afraid to defy its customs, and ashamed to ignore its maxims. But “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this

is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1Jo 5:4)—causing us to seek our portion and enjoyment in things above.

“King is a name of honour, power, and ample possession. Here we reign spiritually, as we vanquish the devil, the world, and the flesh in any measure. It is a princely thing to be above those inferior things, and to trample them under our feet in a holy and heavenly pride. A heathen could say, ‘He is a king that fears nothing and desires nothing.’ He that is above the hopes and fears of the world, he that hath his heart in heaven and is above temporal trifles, the ups and downs of the world, the world beneath his affections; this man is of a kingly spirit. Christ’s kingdom is not of this world, neither is a believer’s. Thou ‘hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth’ (Rev 5:10)—namely in a *spiritual* way. It is a beastly thing to serve our lusts, but kingly to have our conversation in heaven and vanquish the world—to live up to our faith and love with a noble spirit. Hereafter, we shall reign visibly and gloriously when we shall sit upon thrones with Christ”—Thomas Manton (1620-1677). The saints will yet judge the world, yea, angels, too (1Co 6:2-3).

The work which is assigned to the Christian as a “king” is to *govern himself*. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that *ruleth his spirit* than he that taketh a city” (Pro 16:32). As a “king,” the Christian is called upon to mortify the flesh (Rom 8:12-13; Col 3:5-9; Gal 5:19-21, 24), resist the devil (Jam 4:6-7), discipline his temper (Pro 16:32; 19:11; Col 3:8), subdue his lusts (Rom 6:12; 13:14; Gal 5:22-24; Eph 4:21-22), and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2Co 10:5). That is a lifelong task. Nor can he accomplish it in his own strength. It is his duty to seek enablement from above, and to draw upon the fullness of grace which is available for him in Christ. The heart is his kingdom (Pro 4:23); and it is his responsibility to make reason and conscience govern his desires, so that his will is subject to God. He is required to be the master of his appetites and the regulator of his affections (Gal 5:24; 1Co 9:25; 2Pe 1:6; Pro 23:21), to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts,” to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Ti 2:12), to be “temperate in all things” (1Co 9:25). He is to subdue his impetuosity and impatience (Rom 12:12; 1Th 5:14; Jam 5:8), refuse to take revenge when others wrong him (Mat 5:39, 44; Luk 6:28-29), bridle his passions (Jam 3:2; Col 3:2), “overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21), and to have such control of himself that he “rejoice[s] with trembling” (Psa 2:11); and “in whatsoever state [he be, learn] therewith to be content” (Phi 4:11).

Some earthly monarchs have not a few faithless and unruly subjects, who envy and hate them, who chafe under their scepter, and want to depose them; nevertheless, they still maintain their thrones. In like manner, the Christian king has many rebellious lusts and traitorous dispositions which oppose and continually resist, yet he must seek grace to restrain them. Instead of expecting defeat, it is his privilege to be assured, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phi 4:13). The apostle was exercising his royal office when he declared, “All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (1Co 6:12)—and therein he has left us an example (1Co 11:1). He was also conducting himself as a king when he said, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection” (1Co 9:27). Yet, like everything else in this life, the *exercise* of our regal office is very imperfect. Not yet do we fully enter into our royal honours, or act out our royal dignity. Not yet have we received the crown, nor sat down with Christ on His throne—which are essential for the complete manifestation of our kingship. Yet the crown is laid up for us: a mansion (infinitely surpassing Buckingham Palace) is being prepared for us, and the promise is ours—“The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom 16:20).

Following our usual custom, we have endeavoured to supply the most help where the commentators and other expositors afford the least. Having sought to explain at some length the kingly office of the believer, less needs to be said upon the sacerdotal. A “priest” is one who is given a place of nearness to God, who has access to Him, and who holds holy intercourse with Him. It is his privilege to be admitted into the Father’s presence and be given special tokens of His favour. He has a divine service to perform. His office is one of high honour and dignity (Heb 5:4-5), and pertains to no ecclesiastical hierarchy, but is common to *all believers*. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood” (1Pe 2:9). Christians are “an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1Pe 2:5). They are worshippers of the divine majesty, and bring with them a “sacrifice of praise to God continually” (Heb 13:15). “For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts” (Mal 2:7). As priests, they are to be intercessors “for all men”—especially “for kings, and for all that are in authority” (1Ti 2:1-2). But the full and perfect exercise of our priesthood lies in the future, when—rid of sin, legality, and carnal fears—we shall see God face to face and worship Him uninterruptedly.

“To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev 1:6). This is an act of worship, an ascription of praise, a breathing of adoration unto the Redeemer from the hearts of the redeemed. Christians vary very much in their capacities and attainments, and differ in many minor views and practices, but they all unite with the apostle in

this. All Christians have substantially the same views of Christ and the same love for Him. Wherever the Gospel has been savingly apprehended, it cannot but produce this effect. First, there is a devout acknowledgment of what the Lord Jesus has done for us, and then a doxology rendered unto Him. As we contemplate *who* it was that loved us—not a fellow mortal, but the everlasting God—we are bowed before Him in worship. As we consider *what* He did for us—shed His precious blood—our hearts are drawn out in love to Him. As we realize *how* He has bestowed such marvelous dignities upon us—made us kings and priests—we cannot but cast our crowns at His feet (Rev 4:10). Where such sentiments truly possess the soul, Christ will be accorded the throne of our hearts; and our deepest longing will be to please Him and to live unto His glory.

“To him be glory.” This is a word, which, according to its derivation, signifies solid excellence and weight of splendour. The “glory of man” is a phrase used to express the human soul, for that is his most noble part. The “glory of God” connotes the excellence of the divine being, and the perfections of His character. The “glory of Christ” comprehends His essential deity, the moral perfections of His humanity, and the high worth of all His offices. He has an intrinsic glory as God the Son (Joh 17:5). He has an official glory as the God-man Mediator (Heb 2:9). He has a merited glory as the reward of His work, and this He shares with His redeemed (Joh 17:22). In our text, “glory” is ascribed to Him for each of these reasons. Christ is here magnified both for the underived excellence of His person—which exalts Him infinitely above all creatures—and for that acquired glory which will yet be displayed before an assembled universe. There is a glory pertaining to Him as God incarnate, and this was proclaimed by the angels over the plains of Bethlehem (Luk 2:14). There is a glory belonging to Him in consequence of His mediatorial office and work, and that is celebrated only by the redeemed.

“And dominion.” This too belongs to Him first *by right*, as the eternal God. As such, Christ’s dominion is underived and supreme. As such, He has absolute sovereignty over all creatures, including the devil himself being under His sway. But more: universal dominion is also His *by merit*. God has made “that same Jesus,” whom men crucified, “both Lord and Christ” (Act 2:36), and “all power [authority] is given unto [Him] in heaven and in earth” (Mat 28:18). It was promised Him in the everlasting covenant as the reward of His great undertaking. The mediatorial kingdom of Christ is founded upon His sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection. These dignities of His are “for ever and ever,” for “of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end” (Isa 9:7, and compare Dan 7:14). “Amen” sets faith’s seal to the same.

How blessed is this, that before any announcement is made of the awful judgments described in the Apocalypse, before a trumpet of doom is sounded, before a vial of God’s wrath is poured on the earth, the saints are *first* heard hymning the Lamb: “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests [not unto ourselves but] unto God and his Father [for His honour]; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev 1:5-6)!

The Life and Times of Joshua

52. The Gibeonites

In our last, we dwelt upon the twofold reaction of the Canaanites, the notable victories which the LORD gave Israel at Jericho and Ai: namely, the determination of the kings to employ massed force (Jos 9:1-2), and the deception which the Gibeonites practised upon them (verses 3-6), which illustrates the dual character in which Satan opposes the people of God and the methods he employs therein—as the roaring lion seeking to devour (1Pe 5:8), as the subtle serpent using guile (2Co 11:3; Gen 3:13). Both Scriptural and ecclesiastical history demonstrate that the latter is far more dangerous and successful than the former. When open persecution fails either to exterminate or intimidate the faithful, Satan resorts to his secret wiles, which only too often corrupt their testimony. Nor is the reason for this hard to discover. Not only is the former method much more easily detected, but fierce opposition casts believers upon the LORD for enabling strength and fortitude—and thus, proves a blessing in disguise to them, whereas they are very apt to be less on their guard against Satan’s sly artifices; and if pride persuades them that they are too well established in the truth to be misled by error or taken in by hypocrites, they more easily fall victims of his snares.

What has just been pointed out receives forceful exemplification in the incident we are pondering. By God's enablement, Joshua and his men made short work of the combined efforts of the kings and their vast armies (Jos 11:1-12), but, as 2 Samuel 21:1 shows, the descendants of these Gibeonites were long a thorn in Israel's side. But the fault was entirely their own: due (as we shall see) to their unwatchfulness and self-sufficiency. It was a solemn example of that which our LORD had in mind when He said, "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way" (Mat 13:24-25). In His interpretation, Christ stated that "the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one" (Mat 13:38). That is precisely what happened here. Let it be carefully noted that the enemy did not introduce among the wheat dandel or thistles, but "tares," which are a spurious imitation of the wheat, and so closely alike in appearance that the one cannot be distinguished from the other, until the time of harvest. So these Gibeonites came not in their true characters, but posed as those who had come from a far country.

As stated in our last, a threefold view may be taken of these Gibeonites. First, as the world extending its patronage to corporate Christianity, seeking to destroy its distinctive testimony and heavenly character by an amalgamation with the state. In the light of that severe indictment, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" (Jam 4:4), we see that the proposal for such an unholy alliance and glaring infidelity unto God must be promptly refused. Second, as hypocrites applying for membership in the local church. In view of the divine prohibition, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (2Co 6:14-15), how it behoves each Christian assembly to examine prayerfully and carefully the qualifications of each one seeking fellowship therewith! Third, as our evil lusts pretending to be what they are not—to have undergone a change for the better—so that they would fain persuade the unguarded that they are to be numbered among His graces. That which we are now to consider shows how inexcusable is our being imposed upon.

"And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us" (Jos 9:6). Incidentally, this reference to Gilgal makes it clear that Israel had made the long journey unto Ebal (Jos 8:30) for the express purpose of obeying the LORD's injunction in Deuteronomy 27:4-5, etc., that they remained there but a short time, and then returned to their original camp. But there is far more in it than that: the fact that Israel succumbed to this temptation at *this* particular place rendered their failure the more inexcusable. That will be evident from the sequel. "Gilgal" is mentioned for the first time in our book at Joshua 5:9; and there, we learn that it was the place where "the reproach of Egypt" was rolled away, when the male members of that new generation were circumcised. In other words, it was there that they received the outward mark and sign that they were separated from all other nations in covenant relation with JEHOVAH (Gen 17:9-10), set apart to His service. It was also the place where they "kept the passover" (Jos 5:10)—for it is only those who submit to God's ordinances and walk according to His precepts who can really enjoy communion with Him.

What has just been pointed out shows the need for looking up the marginal references of each passage, and seeking to ascertain the meaning of the proper nouns in Scripture—if we are too dilatory or in too much of a hurry to do so, we are sure to be the losers. It also supplies the key to the more specific typical signification of this incident. Circumcision connoted dedication unto God and was the Old Testament's figure of mortifying the lusts of the flesh (Jer 4:4; Deu 10:16)—the two things which Satan hates in the LORD's people above everything else and which he opposes at every turn, for they are what distinguish them from the world, and promote God's glory. That which the devil is most anxious to destroy is the testimony of the saints as a peculiar people, devoted unto God, walking with Him in separation from the ungodly (Rom 12:1-2). They are to conduct themselves as "strangers and pilgrims" (1Pe 2:11) in this scene. Through Balaam, JEHOVAH had declared, "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Num 23:9, and compare Deu 33:28). Through these Gibeonites—for it is ever his way to use human instruments (his "ministers"—2Co 11:14-15)—the enemy was making an attack upon Israel's consecration, inducing them to ignore God's injunction of separation, by a union with the heathen.

Thus, in the light of the special theme of Joshua, the outstanding lesson for us here is that a vital aspect of the believer's spiritual warfare consists of the imperative need for maintaining his consecration to God and persevering with the work of mortification, ever being on the alert against the wiles of the devil to hinder him therein. But more: he must be on his most diligent guard against the *workings of pride* while engaged in this very work. That also clearly is implied in this incident. After their arduous journey to Ebal and full obedience to God there, they *had* returned to Gilgal, yet it was *here* they suffered themselves to be deceived by the craft of Satan! Alas, how deceitful are our hearts! How prone we are to be elated with the very things divine grace works in and through us. If we are

gratified with our consecration, pleased with our self-denial, puffed up with our obedience, or proud of our prayerfulness and increasing dependence upon God, we are headed for disaster. “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Pro 16:18)—and pride was certainly at work in Israel at this time. Oh, how much we need to heed these injunctions: “Be not highminded, but fear” (Rom 11:20) and “Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling” (Psa 2:11)!

It is true that God had said unto Israel, “When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee” (Deu 20:10-11)—a passage which must be kept in mind when reading Deuteronomy 20:16-17, and one which shows that even here, in holy wrath, God “remember[ed] mercy” (Hab 3:2). But *that* was an entirely different matter from what is now before us. There was nothing whatever in the case of these Gibeonites which justified Joshua in ignoring the plain injunction, “Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee” (Exo 34:12). There is nothing that the LORD abominates more than unholy mixtures: “Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds...Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together. Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together” (Deu 22:9-11) plainly states the principle; and Revelation 3:15-16 demonstrates His abhorrence of our repudiation of the same, for “Laodiceanism” is a union between the world and the professing Church.

“And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?” (Jos 9:7). No doubt, it was the responsible heads of the congregation who took the lead in making answer to these disguised Canaanites, who had come with the express purpose of telling lies, to tempt the people of God, and lead them into sin. Three things are evident from their words. First, they were well instructed in the Law, for they realized it would be wrong to accede to this suggestion. Second, they were then occupying the ground of faith: “Dwell *among us*” (Jos 9:7, 22) was as though the whole of Canaan was already in their possession! Third, they did not immediately and impulsively grant their request, but voiced the language of distrust. It is those very things which made the sequel graver. It pays to be wary, yea, suspicious of impostors, if we are not to be deceived by glib tongues. “Put not your trust in princes” (Psa 146:3), and in a day like ours, “Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother” (Jer 9:4). We are sure to suffer if we disregard such warnings.

The careful reader will have observed that these “inhabitants of Gibeon” (Jos 9:3) are designated “Hivites” in verse 7; and, assured that there is nothing superfluous in Holy Writ, he will endeavour to ascertain *why* this detail has been placed on record. It cannot be without reason and significance that the Spirit has here told us that these deceivers belong to the Hivites, and therefore, it is our duty to discover His design therein. That may require a little trouble on our part (for the meaning of much in the Word is withheld from those who fail to search it diligently), but if it serves to cast light on this incident, it is worth it. The only way to discover the Spirit’s design is to use the concordance and look up other passages, particularly in the earlier books, where “the Hivites” are mentioned. Nor have we far to seek. In Genesis 34, we learn how the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father (who was a “Hivite”—verse 2) “*deceitfully*” (verse 13); and by a treacherous ruse, succeeded in slaying them and spoiling their city (verses 14-29). Here then was the bitter bit: the descendants of those who had so wickedly deceived the Hivites were now in turn deceived by them!

In the preceding article, we called attention to the fact that while the terror of the LORD had *not* fallen upon the kings of Joshua 9:1, yet it *had* upon the Gibeonites; and that while we may behold therein an illustration of His sovereignty—who makes one to differ from another, as He pleases—yet He acts not capriciously therein. Let us now amplify that statement. There was nothing arbitrary in the LORD’s dealing with these Hivites; rather, He was treating with them according to the principles of His government. Though at times, His mills grind slowly, yet none the less surely. Centuries previously, the sons of Jacob had wickedly tricked the Gibeonites, and now God suffered their descendants to reap the consequences of such deception. Thus, what is here before us is a clear case of what is termed “poetic justice.” But though God was righteous in permitting Israel to be imposed upon, that in no wise interfered with their accountability, or excused their slackness. Joshua and the princes of the congregation acted quite freely and—as verse 14 clearly intimates—were to blame because they sought not directions from the LORD. God’s *Word*, and not His secret will, is the rule of our responsibility.

“And they said unto Joshua, We are thy servants” (Jos 9:8). This was the language of deference, signifying inferiority and expressing their willingness to perform any tasks assigned them. That was the bait to entrap Israel: We can be useful and do the rough work for you. But Joshua was not satisfied with their indefinite statement. He was on his guard, but not sufficiently so. “And Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? and from whence come ye?” It was at this very point that he failed. Instead of conferring with them, he should have gone apart and sought counsel from

the LORD (Jos 9:14). He was evidently in doubt, and “for whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom 14:23). Even the wisdom of this world warns us, “When in doubt, do nothing.” But the Word of God proffers the believer far better advice than that: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally” (Jam 1:5). It is always the height of folly for us to parley with the enemy. Moreover, in thus interrogating them, Joshua was but *tempting* these Gibeonites to tell further lies! Remember that, my reader, and go very slow in asking souls, “Are you saved?” or “How did you like the magazine I loaned you?” lest you be guilty of giving occasion to your friend (in order to “save his face”) to utter a falsehood.

“And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt, And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that were beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which was at Ashtaroth” (Jos 9:9-10). The Gibeonites had already lied unto the princes of Israel (verse 6, and compare 15), and now that the further questioning of Joshua had given them an opportunity to declare their true characters, they only used it for an occasion to add to their guilt. Originally, they had stated, “We be come from a far country” (verse 6); now they said, “From a *very* far country” (verse 9), illustrating the solemn fact that one lie generally leads to another and still worse one. How earnestly we need to pray, “Remove from me the way of lying” (Psa 119:29)! It is very humiliating, but salutary to note that the LORD deemed it requisite to enjoin His own children, “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour” (Eph 4:25). Exaggerating is lying, so also is the making of promises which we have no real intention of keeping. Do you really *mean it* when you say to certain ones, “I am so glad to meet you”? We may *act* a lie, as well as utter one.

A careful examination of the tale told to Joshua by these Gibeonites reveals how everything in it was designed to appeal unto Israel’s *pride*. First, they claimed to have come from a very far country, which was to flatter Joshua that he was now being courted by those from so great a distance. That very feature was part of the temptation which fanned the egotism of Hezekiah and led to *his* undoing, because he was “glad” when the king of Babylon made friendly overtures unto him, and showed his messengers all his treasures—for when God’s servant took him to task, he said: “They are come from a far country unto me” (Isa 39:3). Beware, my reader, of all those who fawn upon you, and remember that “the LORD shall cut off all flattering lips” (Psa 12:3). Second, their repeated “thy servants” emphasized their readiness to take an inferior and subordinate place, and be subservient to Israel. Third, they intimated that so great was the fame of Joshua’s God that, even so remotely situate, they had “heard” of His wondrous works. This, too, was said for the purpose of ingratiating themselves with Joshua, as though they, too, desired to come under JEHOVAH’s protection.

One Hebrew scholar tells us that their words, “From a very far country thy servants are come *because of* the name of the LORD thy God” may be translated “*unto* the name of the LORD thy God”: that is, willing to be proselytes to Judaism, desirous of embracing Israel’s religion—the added “*for* we have heard the fame of him” seems to confirm that rendering; and thus, a strong appeal was thereby made to Israel’s piety. They appeared to be deeply impressed by the wonders which God had wrought, and therefore, sought friendship with Israel. For this purpose, they had undertaken a very fatiguing journey, which evidenced their willingness to be tributary unto them. Their story had been carefully thought out and was “all of a piece,” for while they made reference to their knowledge of what JEHOVAH had done in Egypt and to the kings of the Amorites, they were careful to make no mention of the supernatural crossing of the Jordan, nor of Israel’s recent victories at Jericho and Ai—for tidings of them would not yet have reached “a very far country”! Thus, we are shown how far hypocrites will go in order to gain the friendship of God’s people.

Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures

2. Its Extent

What we are about to contend for in this article is very much more than a mere hypothesis or theological theory of old-fashioned extremists, namely a divine affirmation. Second Timothy 3:16 positively asserts that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God”; and since “scripture” consists of nothing but words, therefore, all Scripture is verbally inspired—there *is* no other kind! This at once sweeps away the fanciful distinctions drawn by philosophizing

theologians, which have confused themselves and perplexed their readers. Such terms as “dynamical” and “mechanical” inspiration, and the inspiration of “illumination,” of “suggestion,” of “direction,” etc., are entirely arbitrary and man-made. Nowhere does the Bible itself authorize such distinctions; they are not only of human invention, but erroneous, utterly misleading, and deplorable in their results. They are misleading and mischievous, because they occupy us with the writers themselves, rather than with their writing; they direct attention to the human instruments, instead of to the One who employed them; they divert us from the grand fact of inspiration and seek needlessly to puzzle themselves over its *modus operandi*. Pretending to be wise beyond what is divinely revealed, they do but advertise their own folly.

To say that “all Scripture is God-breathed” is to affirm that every word in it is the very word which God chose in communicating to us what He designed that we should know. Every fragment of the Bible is equally inspired—no part more so than another. It is equally true of the language in which the simplest incident is narrated as of that in which the sublimest revelation is expressed. Not only does 2 Timothy 3:16 preclude *different degrees* of inspiration, but it tells us that the teachings of Moses are of the same authority as those of Christ. Our LORD Himself placed them on a par: “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?” (Joh 5:46-47). Through Moses, God fore announced concerning His Son, “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words [not simply ‘word’!] in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him” (Deu 18:18). And at the close of His ministry, when rendering an account thereof unto the Father, the Lord Jesus declared, “For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me” (Joh 17:8).

But alas, when spiritual conditions in Christendom—some two hundred years ago—began seriously to deteriorate, and as a century later, the deadly poison of infidelity (falsely labeled “higher thought,” “new light,” “Christian scholarship,” etc.) spread from Germany throughout the English-speaking world, a lower estimate of the Bible and its inspiration came into vogue and was propagated. The view was entertained that the prophets and apostles received a commission from God to write, but that the form in which they wrote—the actual clothing of their thoughts—was left entirely to their own judgment. It was affirmed that they were instruments, and illuminated in a general way, but permitted to exercise their own native ability. There seems to be little room for doubt that the principal reason why many, if not most, of those who admitted an inferior and general inspiration—but denied verbal—did so because of their reluctance to acknowledge anything more of the divine agency than a semblance of orthodoxy obliged. Therein we may behold the initial attempt to push *the supernatural* into the background—paving the way later for the total repudiation of it.

What has just been pointed out received sad exemplification in connection with many other branches of truth. Those who have an extensive acquaintance with the religious literature of the last two centuries are well aware that those men who held firmly to the verbal inspiration of Holy Writ were, generally speaking, sound on other subjects. Contrariwise, the lower a man’s views on inspiration, the less reliable and the more heretical was he upon other doctrines. And that is easily accounted for. The more we attribute to the Holy Spirit’s agency, the deeper our reverence for the Scriptures, the more do we feel their authority and tremble before them. But the larger place we accord to their penmen, the greater will be our tendency to resort to human reasoning, and the giving way to carnal prejudice and sentiment in our handling of them. This one consideration is sufficient to supply a strong argument in favour of the *verbal* inspiration of the Bible. Only as it is clearly recognized that the Spirit not only preserved the writers from all error—but also moved them to select every word they employed—will we stand in awe before God’s Word, and really receive it as the sole rule of our faith and standard of our conduct.

But we are not left to draw inferences or form our own conclusions on this all-important matter. Again and again, Scripture itself expressly declares that its actual words are the words of God Himself. How frequently are we told that “the word of God [the LORD]” came to such and such a one (1Ki 12:22; 1Ch 17:3; Luk 3:2): not simply that the Spirit of God came to him, but the very “word” of God—both the substance and the expression of it. Thus, David averred, “The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue” (2Sa 23:2): he was not only given the divine impulse to speak, but the very language he should utter. God indeed spoke in human speech, or He had not been intelligible to us, and we had been without a divine *revelation*; nevertheless, He Himself selected every term His instruments used. “Receive, I pray thee,” said Eliphaz to Job, “the law from *his* mouth, and lay up his *words* in thine heart” (Job 22:22). “Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book,” said the LORD God of Israel to Jeremiah (Jer 30:2). “Speak with my words unto them,” said He to Ezekiel (Eze 3:4). But “they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the *words* which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets” (Zec 7:12).

The same emphatic claim is made all through the New Testament: “This scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas” (Act 1:16). “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Act 2:4). “Which God hath spoken by the mouth [not the mind!] of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Act 3:21). “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (1Co 2:13)—there could be no stronger assertion of *verbal* inspiration than that! “When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1Th 2:13). “We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1Jo 4:6). “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book” (Rev 22:18).

That the language used by the prophets was the very words of JEHOVAH is demonstrated by the accomplishment of their predictions, which were not vague and general ones, but specific and detailed; and they were fulfilled not only in substance, but literally and minutely. Thus, by the pen of Moses, God made it known that the Vanquisher of that old serpent the devil should be the woman’s “seed” (Gen 3:15)—i.e. that He should be conceived and born of the virgin (Isa 7:14). It was further made known that the promised Deliverer should issue from the Japhetic branch of Noah’s family (Gen 9:27), and that He should be a direct descendant of Abraham (Gen 22:17-18). Still further was the compass narrowed by announcing that He should be of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of David (2Sa 7:12-13). His very birthplace was named (Mic 5:2). His gracious ministry (Isa 61:1-3) and miracles of healing (Isa 35:5-6) were particularized. His being despised and rejected of men (Isa 53:2-3), His being shamefully treated by them (Isa 50:6)—the very price His betrayer should receive for his perfidy (Zec 11:12). His death by crucifixion (Psa 22:16) were all foretold and fulfilled to the very letter! So too were His resurrection (Psa 16:10-11), ascension (Psa 68:18), and exaltation to God’s right hand (Psa 110:1).

Another conclusive proof of the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is found in the attitude of the Son of God toward them. He so regarded, treated, and used them. Again and again, we find Him basing His argument upon a single word. Thus, when He would prove to the Pharisees by the Scriptures the Deity of the promised Messiah, He did so by insisting upon the title accorded Him in Psalm 110:1. They affirmed He would be David’s Son, but He reminded them, “For David himself said *by the Holy Ghost*, The LORD said to my *Lord*, Sit thou on my right hand” (Mar 12:36). Likewise, when refuting the Sadducees, He insisted on the truth of resurrection from the language of Exodus 3:6: “Have ye not read that...I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Mat 22:31-32). Let young preachers especially mark attentively what weight every single word in the Book of God had for the One to whom they will in the day to come have to render an account of their stewardship (Heb 13:17; Jam 3:1). If they would ascertain the place which the Bible held in Christ’s esteem, let them ponder His emphatic assertion, “And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law [Scripture] to fail” (Luk 16:17).

As James A. Haldane (1768-1851) pertinently asked, “On what principle but that of the verbal inspiration of Scripture can we explain our Lord’s words, ‘Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?’ (Joh 10:34-36). Here, the argument is founded on one word—‘gods’—which, without verbal inspiration, might not have been used; and if used improperly, might have led to idolatry. In proof of the folly of their charge of blasphemy, He referred the Jews to where it is written in their law, ‘I said ye are gods.’ The reply to this argument is obvious: the Psalmist, they might answer, uses the word in a sense which is not proper. But Jesus precluded the observation by affirming, ‘the scripture *cannot be broken*’—that is, not a word of it can be altered, because it is the Word of Him with whom there is no variableness. Could this be said if the choice of words had been left to men? Here, then, we find our Lord laying down a principle which for ever sets the matter at rest.”

Equally explicit is the testimony of the apostles. “But we [the apostles] have the mind of Christ” (1Co 2:16). When recording what they had heard from His lips, they were not left to their own fallible recollection of the same: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost...he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (Joh 14:26). Paul insisted that the Gospel which he preached was “not after man,” neither did he receive it “of man,” but “by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal 1:11-12). He dogmatically affirmed to his detractors, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1Co 14:37). And again, “He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit” (1Th 4:8)—therein he made it clear that what he wrote was not his own opinions and views, but rather, that which had been given from above.

When he foretold the great declension which should mark the closing days of the Christian era, he was most particular to disavow any perspicuity or foresight of his own, saying, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith” (1Ti 4:1).

Like their Master, the apostles revered the Old Testament as of divine authorship and authority. When the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews made reference to the Mosaic rites and pointed out that none of the priests was allowed to enter the inner chamber of the tabernacle, saving only the high priest, and he but once a year, the statement was made, “The Holy Ghost this [thereby] signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest” (Heb 9:8). When solemnly warning them against apostasy, ere citing the sad example of their fathers recorded in Psalm 95:8-11, he declared, “Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith...)” (Heb 3:7-11), thereby showing that that Psalm had been dictated by God Himself. So again, when quoting from the prophet Jeremiah, to prove that the old covenant had been displaced by the new, he affirmed, “Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us” (Heb 10:15). As G. Bishop so forcibly expressed it, “‘God-breathed’ sweeps the whole ground. God comes down as a blast upon the pipes of the organ—in voice like a whirlwind, or in still whispers like Aeolian tones, and saying the Word, He seized the hand, and makes that hand His own, the pen of a most ready writer.”

Not only did the apostles bow to the divine authority of the Old Testament, but they regarded it as being verbally inspired. This is unmistakably clear from the use they made of it, for again and again, they too based their argument upon a single expression used therein. Let us turn again to the epistle to the Hebrews (where most use is made of the earlier Scriptures) for our illustrations: In Hebrews 2:8, after quoting, “Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet,” it is insisted that the one word “all” demonstrates the supreme dominion which has been accorded the coronated Redeemer. In Hebrews 2:11-12, it is shown from, “I will declare thy name unto my *brethren*” (Psa 22:22) that it behoved the Son of God to take upon Him human nature. In Hebrews 3:2-6, he takes his proof that Christ was the Servant of JEHOVAH, that He had a particular relation to the family of God, and that, because of His fidelity, He is worthy of the highest honour—all from a statement found in Numbers 12:7, where God said, “My servant Moses...who is faithful in all mine house.” In Hebrews 3:7-19 and 4:2-11, where Psalm 95:7-11 is repeatedly quoted, the writer “proves his case” by an appeal to the expressions “to day,” “I have sworn,” and “my rest,” which was further confirmed by “and he [God] *rested* on the seventh day” (Gen 2:2).

Evangelical Obedience

Part 2

In our last article, we pointed out that God justly requires a perfect obedience from all rational creatures, and that under no circumstances will He lower His demand. Every regenerate soul concurs with God’s holy claim, and deeply laments his inability to meet that claim. We also affirmed that under the moderation of the New Covenant constitution, God is graciously pleased to accept and approve of an obedience from His people, which—though sincerely desiring and endeavouring to measure up to His perfect standard—is, through their remaining corruptions and infirmities, a very defective one; and that He does so without any reflection upon His honour. We followed that brief averment by giving excerpts from some of the Puritans—the number of which might easily be multiplied—not for the purpose of buttressing our own teaching, but in order that it might be seen that we are not advancing here any dangerous or strange doctrine. Nevertheless, the majority of our readers will require something from an infinitely higher authority than that on which to rest their faith; and to it, we now turn.

In Genesis 26:5, we find the LORD declaring: “Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.” Yet he did not do so perfectly, for he was a man “subject to like passions as we are”; nevertheless, God owned his obedience, and, as the context there shows, rewarded him for the same. Sincere obedience, though it be not sinless, is acceptable unto God; if it were not, then it would be impossible for any of His children to perform a single act in this life which was pleasing in His sight. Not only so, but many statements made in the Scriptures concerning saints would be quite unintelligible to us—statements which *oblige us* to believe that God receives the hearty, yet imperfect, endeavours of His people; yea, that He attributes unto the same a far higher quality than they do. Thus, He said of Job, “That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared

God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1): yet, as we read all that is recorded of him, it soon becomes apparent that he—like ourselves—was “compassed with infirmity” (Heb 5:2).

When the LORD declared concerning David His servant that “he *kept* my commandments and my statutes” (1Ki 11:34), He was speaking relatively and not absolutely. “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way” (Psa 37:23), notwithstanding that he often stumbles, yea, falls, in the same. There are but two classes of people in the sight of God: “the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2), and “obedient children” (1Pe 1:14)—yet many a regenerate soul is fearful of classifying himself with the latter. But he ought not—his scruples are due to an insufficiently enlightened conscience. When the Lord Jesus said to the Father of those whom He had given Him, “They have *kept* thy word” (Joh 17:6), surely, it is obvious that He was not affirming that their obedience was perfect. “Evangelical keeping is filial and sincere obedience. Those imperfections, Christ pardoneth, when He looketh back and seeth many errors and defects in the life—as long as we bewail sin, seek remission, and strive to attain perfection. All the commandments are accounted kept when that which is not done is pardoned”—Thomas Manton (1620-1677). When the heart beats true to Him, Christ makes full allowance for our frailties.

With the Word of God in his hands, there is no excuse for anyone who has, by divine grace, been brought to hate sin and love God to stumble over the point we are now treating of. David had many failings—and some of a gross and grievous nature—yet he hesitated not to say unto God himself: “I [have] *kept* thy precepts” (Psa 119:56). In *what sense* had he done so? Inwardly: in spirit, in holy resolution, and earnest endeavour; outwardly, too, in the general current of his life; and wherein he failed, he deeply repented and obtained forgiveness from God. Christ will yet say to each one who has improved the talents entrusted to him, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Mat 25:21)—yet that is far from implying that therein he was without fault or failure. When Paul prayed for the Hebrew saints that God would make them “perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight,” he was making request for those indwelt by sin, as his added acceptable “*through* Jesus Christ” (Heb 13:21) necessarily implied. “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments” (1Jo 3:22) would have no comfort for us, if God accepted only sinless obedience.

“Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1Sa 16:7). Those words are capable of more than one legitimate application, but they are peculiarly pertinent here. True, God is very far from being indifferent to the *substance* of our obedience—yet the *spirit* in which it is performed is what He notices first. Duties are not distinguished by their external form, but by their internal frame—one may perform the same duty from fear or compulsion, which another does freely and out of love. “Waters may have the same appearance, yet one be sweet; and the other, brackish. Two apples may have the same colour, yet one may be a crab; and the other, of a delightful relish. We must look to the Rule that the matter of our actions are suited to it; otherwise, we may commit gross wickedness, as those did who thought that they did God service by killing His righteous servants (Joh 16:2). We must look also to the face of our hearts; otherwise, we may be guilty of gross hypocrisy”—Stephen Charnock (1628-1680). The Pharisees kept the Sabbath with great strictness, yet their outward conformity unto that divine Law was far from being acceptable in God’s sight.

“The LORD weigheth the spirits” (Pro 16:2). That has a meaning which should make each of us tremble—yet it should also be of great comfort to the regenerate, and evoke thanksgiving. If, on the one hand, the omniscient One cannot be imposed upon by the most pious appearance and utterances of the hypocrite; yet on the other, He knows those “who *desire* to fear [His] name” (Neh 1:11), even though some of their actions proceed from a contrary principle. All the intentions and motives of our hearts are naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do; and full consideration is given thereto as God estimates our performances. Was not this very truth both the comfort and confidence of erring Peter when he declared to his Master: “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that [contrary to appearances] I [really and truly] love thee” (Joh 21:17). “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities [the shortcomings of Thy full and righteous demands],...who shall stand?” (Psa 130:3). Not one of His people. But, as the next verse goes on to assure us: “But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared” (verse 4)—yes, held in awe, and not trifled with. Blessed balance of truth!

“For if there be first a *willing mind*, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not” (2Co 8:12)—upon which Matthew Henry (1662-1714) says in his commentary: “The willing mind is accepted when accompanied with sincere endeavours. When men purpose that which is good and endeavour according to their ability to perform also, God will accept of what they have or can do, and not reject them for what they have not, and what is not in their power to do; and this is true as to other things besides the work of charity.” Yet it was prudently added: “But let us note here, that this Scripture will not justify those who think good meanings are enough, or that good purposes and the profession of a willing mind are sufficient to save them. It is accepted in-

deed, where there is a performance as far as we are able.” A readiness of disposition is what God regards, and that disposition is judged by Him according to the resources which are at its command. Our Father estimates what we render unto Him by the purity of our intentions. Little is regarded as much when love prompts it. If the heart be really in it, the offering is well pleasing to Him whether it be but “two young pigeons” (Luk 2:24), or tens of thousands of oxen and sheep (1Ki 8:63).

“The Covenant of Grace insists not so much upon the measure and degree of our obedience, as on the quality and nature of every degree—that it be sincere and upright”—Ezekiel Hopkins (1634-1690). In contrast with legal obedience, evangelical obedience consists of honest aims and genuine efforts, striving to live holily, and to walk closely with God—i.e. according to the rules He has prescribed in His Word, and, according to the gracious condescension, yet equity, of the Gospel, is received and rewarded by God for Christ’s sake. That holy purposes and sincere resolutions *are* accepted by God—though they be not really accomplished—is clear from what is recorded of Abraham: namely, that “he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar” (Jam 2:21), for he never actually “offered up” Isaac, except in intention and willingness. Upon which T. Manton said: “God counteth that to be done which is about to be done, and taketh notice of what is in the heart, though it be not brought to practice and realization. Yet not idle purposes when men hope to do tomorrow what should and can be done today.” “Wherefore we labour, that, whether present [at home in the body] or absent, we may be accepted of him” (2Co 5:9) must be our grand and constant endeavour.

Another example to the point is the case of David, who desired and planned to provide a more suitable dwelling-place for JEHOVAH in Israel’s midst. As Solomon, at a later date, declared: “But the LORD said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart” (2Ch 6:8). God graciously accepted the will for the deed, and credited His servant with the same. So it is with evangelical obedience: that which is truly sincere and is prompted by love unto God, though very imperfect, He graciously accepts as perfect. When He appeared before Abraham, the father of all them that believe, He declared, “I am the Almighty [all-sufficient] God; walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Gen 17:1)—which, in the margin, is accurately and helpfully rendered, “upright or sincere,” for absolute perfection is in this life impossible. Legal obedience was approved by *justice*; evangelical obedience is acceptable unto *mercy*. The former was according to the unabated rigour of the Law, which owned nothing short of a conformity without defect or intermission; whereas the latter is received by God through Christ, according to the milder dispensation of the Gospel (Gal 3:8).

Second Chronicles 30:18-19 records a very striking instance where God accepted the will for the deed, and enforced not the full requirements of His Law: “For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good LORD pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.” Hezekiah apprehended God’s mercy better than do some of His people today! “And the LORD hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people” (verses 18-20). Ah, but note well that the king had restricted his request unto those who had “set [prepared] their hearts to seek” (2Ch 11:16)! Such uprightness was the very opposite of what we read of in Deuteronomy 29:19-20: “And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man.”

Sincere obedience necessarily presupposes regeneration, for filial submission can proceed only from a real child of God. A spiritual life or “nature” is the principle of that obedience, for when we are renewed by God, there is newness of conversation. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Joh 3:6)—disposed and fitted for spiritual things. Yet *after* renewal, there still remains much ignorance in the understanding, impurity in the affections, and perversity in the will yet—so as grace prevails over nature, holiness over sin, and heavenliness over worldliness. “But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa’s heart was perfect with the LORD all his days” (1Ki 15:14). Though God writes His Law on our hearts (Heb 8:10), yet as E. Hopkins pointed out, “This copy is eternally durable, yet it is but as writing upon sinking and leaky paper, which in this life is very obscure and full of blots.” It is also termed, “obedience to the faith” (Rom 1:5), because “without faith it is impossible to please him [God]” (Heb 11:6)—yet how feeble our faith is! It is therefore an obedience which is performed in reliance upon Christ’s mediation (Rev 8:3-4) and enablement (Phi 4:13).

But now we must endeavour to furnish a more definite and detailed answer to the pressing question: How am I to determine whether *my* obedience is really sincere and acceptable to God? By testing it with these criteria: First, is it one which, in its negative character, has a universal antipathy for sin? “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil” (Pro 8:13)—such is the purity of that nature communicated to God’s child at the new birth. Though evil still cleaves to

and indwells him, yet his heart loathes it. His hatred of evil is evidenced by dreading and resisting it, by forsaking it in his affections and denying self, by bitterly mourning when overcome by it and confessing the same unto God, by exercising the contrary graces and cultivating the love of holiness. Where there exists this fear of the LORD which abhors evil, it will make no reserve or exception, nor tolerate or “allow” any form or phase of it. Instead, it will aver with the Psalmist: “I hate *every* false way” (Psa 119:104, 128), because contrary to the God I love, and as polluting to my soul.

Second, is it one which diligently endeavours to regulate the inner man as well as the outer? God’s requirement is: “My son, forget not my law; but let thine *heart* keep my commandments” (Pro 3:1). It was at this point that the hypocritical Pharisees failed so completely, for, said Christ: “For ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness” (Mat 23:27). The LORD has bidden us, “Keep thy heart with all diligence” (Pro 4:23)—and that calls for the checking of sinful thoughts and the mortifying of evil imaginations; the resisting of pride, self-will, and unbelief; the scrutinizing of our motives and aims; and making conscience of temptations and occasions to sin. Third, is it one which has the glory of God for its aim? The heart is very deceitful, and much of human religion is prompted by nothing higher than to be “seen of men” (Mat 6:5; 23:5) and gain a reputation for personal piety. How searching are those words: “He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory” (Joh 7:18)! True piety is modest and self-effacing, aiming only at honouring the Lord and pleasing Him.

Fourth, is it one which has an appropriation of the whole revealed will of God, enabling me to say, “Therefore I esteem *all* thy precepts” (Psa 119:128)?—for the wilful rejection of one is the virtual of all. Though we fail miserably in some, and keep none of them perfectly, yet do our hearts approve of every duty enjoined? Fifth, is there a genuine willingness and honest desire to render full obedience unto God? If so, we shall not voluntarily and allowedly fall short of the highest perfection, but have an equal regard unto every divine statute, not dispensing with, nor excusing ourselves from, the most severe and difficult. Sixth, is there a firm resolution (“I have sworn, and I will perform it”—Psa 119:106), a genuine effort (“I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway”—Psa 119:112), a persevering industry (“reaching forth unto those things which are before” and “pressing toward the mark”—Phi 3:12-14), and an assiduous striving to please God in all things? Seventh, is it accompanied by a conscience which testifies that though only too often I transgress, yet I loathe myself for it, and honestly endeavour to conform to the whole of God’s will? Such an obedience God accepts and accounts perfect, because the falls are due to the subtlety of Satan, the deceitfulness of sin, and the weakness of the flesh, rather than to a deliberate defiance and determined obstinacy.

Nowhere else in Scripture are the character and conduct of a saint so clearly and fully delineated as in Psalm 119, and the conscientious Christian should frequently compare himself with it. All through that Psalm, we find holy resolution and earnest endeavour side by side with conscious weakness and frailty, but dependence upon God: “Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently” (verse 4)—“O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes” (verse 5)—“I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly” (verse 8)—“With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments” (verse 10)—“I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart” (verse 32)—“Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness” (verse 159)—“Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts” (verse 173). Thus, there are both holy yearning and activity, yet constant looking to God for strength and enablement.

Thus will it be seen that sincere obedience consists not of a sinless conformity to God’s will, but of genuine desires and proportionate efforts after it. It comprises two parts: the mortification of our corrupt affections, and the vivification of our graces, so that we increase in strength and make further advances in true piety. So also has it two adjuncts or attendants: repentance for past sins, and the exercise of faith for present grace. Failures are reflected upon with hatred and shame, are confessed to God with sorrow and contrition, while earnestly resolving and endeavouring to abstain from any further repetition of them. Faith looks to the merits of Christ, pleads the virtues of His blood, rests upon His intercession for us in heaven, lays hold of the promises, and counts upon God’s acceptance of our imperfect obedience for His Son’s sake—knowing that it deserves not His approbation, and is rewarded (Psa 19:11) not as a matter of debt, but of pure grace. Then let none conclude that they have no grace, because there are so many imperfections in their obedience: a child may be weak and sickly, yet a legitimate one! Renew your repentance daily, rely wholly on the mediation of Christ, and draw upon His fullness.

Our Annual Letter

“Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10, and compare Est 9:18, 22). It was a time of rejoicing in Israel, and after all the people had gathered together and the Book of the Law was read to them “from the morning until midday” (Neh 8:3), God’s servant bade them go and refresh their bodies—yet enjoined them not to overlook the poor, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. Like all Scripture, this verse has a spiritual and practical application unto us today, and contains a message for those who, by God’s blessing, receive help from these pages. Ours is markedly an age of selfishness, and probably all of us are more affected by its evil than we suspect. We know that a goodly number of our readers need not to have their attention drawn to it, but others perhaps require to be reminded of this word: “Send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared” (Neh 8:10). If you find food for *your* soul in these pages, would it not be pleasing unto the LORD if you had us send the “Studies” to some isolated or shut-in saint who is cut off from the public means of grace, that he too may feast thereon and rejoice with you? We are satisfied that there is a close connection between the two parts of this verse. Certain it is, God will be no one’s debtor; and if we be more lovingly solicitous for the good of others, we shall increasingly find that “the joy of the LORD is [*our*] strength” (Neh 8:10).

We have less space than usual for our letter, so must condense our remarks. We are thankful to report that our wonder-working God has maintained our small circulation, yea, granted us another slight increase. Once again, there will be at least two hundred who will not be entered upon next year’s mailing list till we hear from them, for we dare not waste the Lord’s money in sending this magazine to those who have lost interest in it. But we hope the majority of them will write us before 1949 expires. Beginning in the January 1950 issue (D.V.) will be the first installment of our long-awaited verse-by-verse exposition of the first epistle of John. Therein, we shall also start a *new* doctrinal series on “Human Depravity.” “The Life and Times of Joshua” is to be continued, and our articles on the divine inspiration of the Scriptures are to be followed by several on their *interpretation*, which, though somewhat technical, should be of special interest and importance to preachers. We sincerely trust that all who desire the 1950 issues will send in for them before copies of the earlier months are exhausted. Yet if hundreds write us during the next few weeks, we would ask them to please allow us a few days in acknowledging their letters.

It is very rarely that we make any reference to the financial side of this work, but the present situation seems to call for a word—a pleasant one, we trust. In view of the recent alteration in the value of the pound sterling in its relation to the dollar, will friends in Australia and New Zealand kindly note that 4/6 (English value) will fully cover the 1950 loose issues and 6/- the bound volume; and those in Britain 6/- for the loose issues and 7/6 for the bound volume. We shall incur no loss and make no profit at these figures. There will be no change for U.S.A. and Canadian readers—\$1.50 loose issues; \$1.75 bound volume. Promises today are unreliable, so we cannot state any definite date when the bound volumes will become available. But, all being well, they will be posted out within a few hours of their arrival. The January and February 1950 issues will not be mailed before mid or late February.

By the goodness of God, both of us have enjoyed our usual health throughout the year, and we close with a small credit balance. Praise God and continue in prayer. With hearty Christian greetings. Yours by divine mercy—A. W. and V. E. Pink.



APPENDICES

About Studies in the Scriptures

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952) wrote and published his monthly 28 page expository digest, *Studies in the Scriptures*, from 1922 to 1953. He mailed it worldwide by paid subscription to whomever desired the deeper truths of God. Each issue contained continuing serialized articles on six to eight subjects. When one subject was “completed” to the author’s satisfaction, another subject series began in its place in the next issue. In total, the 380 issues comprise a treasure of immense proportions.

By God’s grace, Chapel Library republishes the *Studies* beginning with the year 1934, available for download worldwide, and mailing three issues each quarter by free subscription in North America. We also print many books and booklets gleaned from articles in the *Studies*. These may be ordered in print in North America, or downloaded from our website worldwide without charge:

Studies: www.chapellibrary.org/studies

Other literature: www.chapellibrary.org/literature/title-catalog

Today the various subjects are being gathered together by topic, and republished in paperbacks by several sources. *Chapel Library* offers the following at the time of this printing:

- The Sovereignty of God	176 pages
- Comfort for Christians	79 pages
- Profiting from the Word	96 pages
- Seven Sayings of the Savior	94 pages
- Spiritual Union and Communion	175 pages
- The Attributes of God	105 pages
- The Doctrine of Human Depravity	241 pages
- The Doctrine of Revelation	214 pages
- 1 John – An Exposition, Part 1	190 pages
- 1 John – An Exposition, Part 2	173 pages
- The Holy Spirit	196 pages

Biography of A.W. Pink

by Erroll Hulse

Concerning Calvinism⁴ and Arminianism⁵ during the first half of the Twentieth Century, a most interesting case study is the experience of Arthur W. Pink. He was a preacher and writer of outstanding talent who ministered in

⁴ **Calvinism** – the doctrinal system developed from the teachings of the French-born Swiss Reformer John Calvin (1509-1664), holding that the Bible teaches the supreme authority of the Scriptures, the sovereignty of God, predestination, and the “doctrines of grace”; these doctrines were the response of the Synod of Dort (1618-19) to the Arminians’ remonstrance (protest) and are commonly known by the acronym TULIP.

⁵ **Arminianism** – (from Jacobus Arminius, 1560-1609, Dutch theologian) the doctrinal system that rejects the Reformers’ understanding of predestination, teaching instead that God’s predestination of individuals was based on His foreknowledge of their accepting or rejecting Christ by their own free will.

Britain, America, and Australia. When he died in 1952 in isolation on the Island of Lewis in north eastern Scotland, he was hardly known outside a small list of subscribers to his magazine, *Studies in the Scriptures*. Yet, by the 1970s, his books were in wide demand and his name was widely known among publishers and ministers. In fact, for that period it would be difficult to find a reformed author whose books were more widely read.

The preaching ministry of A. W. Pink had been remarkably blessed in the USA, but it was in Australia that he seemed to reach the apex of his public ministry, and there in particular that his preaching ministry reached great heights. He was then faced with accreditation by the Baptist Union and was rejected on account of his Calvinistic views. He then ministered in a Baptist church of Strict Baptist pedigree. There he came unstuck since they esteemed him an Arminian! A considerable group, however, appreciated Pink, recognised his worth, and seceded from that Strict Baptist Church to form a new church of 27 members. Then suddenly, in 1934, Pink resigned and returned to Britain. It is widely held that one rejection is enough to cripple a minister for life, but two in quick succession can destroy a pastor completely. So it proved for Arthur Pink. He never again found meaningful entrance into the ministry, though he tried his utmost. He sought openings in both the UK and the USA without success. He became increasingly isolated. He ended his days as an evangelical recluse in the Island of Stornoway off the coast of Scotland. It was rumoured that not more than ten souls attended his funeral.

There is much that we can learn from the life of A. W. Pink. Firstly, we will trace out his early life in broad outline. Secondly, we will describe his experience in Australia, and trace out the adverse effects of this on his life. Thirdly, we will the impact of his writing ministry.

1. Early Life

Arthur Pink was born in Nottingham, England, in 1886. His parents were godly. They lived by the Bible and kept the Lord's Day holy. Arthur was the first of three children brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. To the grief of their parents, all three children drifted into lives of unbelief. Worse was to come: Arthur embraced *Theosophy*, an esoteric cult that claimed powers of the occult! "Lucifer" was the name of the leading theosophy magazine. A natural feature of Arthur's character was wholeheartedness, and he entered theosophy with zeal. A leadership role was offered him, which meant that he would visit India. At the same time a friend who was an opera singer, noted that Arthur possessed a fine baritone voice; he urged him to study for a career in opera. Then suddenly on a night during 1908, Arthur was converted. His first action was to preach the Gospel to the theosophist group.

Simultaneous with Pink's conversion was a call to the Christian ministry. But the colleges were in the hands of liberals bent on the destruction of the Scriptures. Arthur, however, heard of the Moody Bible Institute, which had been founded by D. L. Moody⁶ in 1889. In 1910, aged 24, Pink left for Chicago to begin a two-year course. His time at Moody lasted only six weeks, however. He decided that he was wasting his time, and that he should enter directly into a pastorate—and his professors agreed! He was not disgruntled, but rather frustrated, that the teaching was pitched at such a primary level that it did nothing for him.

During 1910, he began in his first pastorate in Silverton, Colorado, a mining camp in the San Juan Mountains. We possess little detail of this period, but we know that from Silverton, Pink moved to Los Angeles. He was always a hard worker, and this is illustrated by the fact that at one point in Oakland he was engaged in tent evangelism six nights a week for eighteen weeks!

From Los Angeles, he moved to Kentucky. It was here that he met and married Vera E. Russell. There could not have been a better gift from heaven. Vera was entirely committed to the Lord. She was hard working, gifted, intelligent, and persevering. She died just ten years after Arthur's decease on the island of Stornoway.

The next move was to Spartanburg, South Carolina, from 1917 to 1920. This church building consisted of a small and frail wooden structure, while he and Vera lived in a small wooden house standing on wooden columns. Heating was inadequate, and in the freezing winter it was like an ice box.

It was during this time Pink began writing books. There were two of significance: one with the title *Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, and the second *The Sovereignty of God*, the foreword of which is dated June 1918. It was this book that was later taken up by The Banner of Truth publishers. The first edition, according to I. C. Herendeen, his first publisher at that time, was only 500 copies, and it was a struggle to sell that number. When the book came to Banner, it was edited by Iain Murray and vastly improved. It became one of the most popular of The Banner of Truth paperbacks. By 1980, 92,000 copies had sold.

After about a year at Spartanburg, Pink almost came to grief. He felt a strong conviction to give up the ministry and devote himself to writing only, and at one point was disconsolate. Vera wrote to a friend saying that her hus-

⁶ **D. L. Moody** (1837-1899) – American evangelist and publisher who founded the Moody Church, Northfield School and Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts (now the Northfield Mount Hermon School), the Moody Bible Institute, and Moody Publishers.

band was even thinking of leaving the ministry and going into business, to make money for the Kingdom as a better way of serving God. In 1920, Arthur resigned the pastorate at Spartanburg. He and Vera moved and settled at Swengel, Pennsylvania, in order to be near the publisher I. C. Herendeen.

In the middle of July, 1920, he left to take a series of meetings in California. Large crowds gathered and numbers were saved. At one point 1,200 gathered to hear the Gospel. Other crusades and conferences followed; it was evident that Pink was eminently suited to this kind of ministry. Looking back over his life, it is apparent that he experienced more blessing in the itinerant ministry than he did in a total of twelve years in pastoring churches. This had to do with his temperament; he preferred being in his study to visiting.

In 1921, Arthur and Vera were back in Pennsylvania. The monthly digest, the *Studies in the Scriptures*, first appeared in 1922. It ran continuously without interruption for 32 years, until Arthur's death in 1952. Initially, this was a 24 page magazine, with four to six articles as instalments in a series. To write expository material at a high standard at this rate every month is a tremendous testimony to his insight into the Scriptures, and to the Lord's blessing and enabling. All his articles had to be written by hand and finished for the printer at least two months before the date of publication. *Studies in the Scriptures* had about 1,000 circulation at the beginning, but for most of its existence the subscription level hovered at about 500. The financial side was always precarious, with only just enough to cover printing costs from one month to the next. Pink corresponded with some of his subscribers; eventually this formed his pastoral work. Throughout he was assisted by his very hard working wife, who acted as secretary. They never had a family, always lived very humbly, and managed always to make ends meet. This was made possible through a modest inheritance left to him by his parents and through gifts that he received from his readers.

During 1923, Arthur fell into a deep depression, which turned out to be a nervous breakdown. At this juncture a young couple that had been greatly blessed by Pink's ministry came to the rescue, and Arthur was nursed through a period of several months enforced rest, which brought him back to normal health.

In 1924, a major new direction came by way of letters of invitation from a publisher in Sydney, Australia. Before departing for Australia, no less than four months preparation had to be made for the *Studies*. On his way to Australia, Pink engaged in more Bible conference preaching in Colorado, then in Oakland, California, and also San Francisco—from where he and Vera took ship across the Pacific to Sydney.

2. *Pink's Experience in Australia*

The Pinks spent a total of three and half years in Australia. These times were for them the best, but also turned out to be the worst. Upon arrival Arthur had more invitations than he possibly fill. Initially his ministry in Australia was a great success. Crowds gathered; churches were filled; believers were revived; and souls were brought to the Saviour.

Attendance swelled in every place he preached. In the first year in Australia Arthur preached 250 times. He would often work until 2:00 in the morning to keep *Studies in the Scriptures* going. The Pinks truly must have felt that at last they had found the place of permanent fulfilment. There was an evident power in his ministry. One mature believer declared that he drew people "like a magnet," and that he preached the "whole counsel of God's Word," and was capable of preaching a sermon "from every word of the text."

This period proved to be one of great joy. Pink was now 40 years old. He was preaching almost daily for well over an hour. He would get home at 10:00 PM and then work until 2:00 AM. He wrote, "never before during our 16 years in the ministry, have we experienced such blessing and joy in our souls, such liberty of utterance, and such an encouraging response as we have done in this highly favoured portion of Christ's vineyard."⁷

We can be sure that a thrilling and powerful soul-saving ministry will arouse the fury of Satan. And so it proved to be in this case when that old serpent, the devil, mounted a cunning counterattack. The Baptist Union leaders were fundamentally opposed to Calvinism. These leaders invited Arthur Pink to read a paper on "Human Responsibility." Sadly, Pink did not realise that this was a plot to demote him in the eyes of the public—and in his sincere earnestness he fell into the trap. Instead of declining this invitation, he presented the paper and then answered questions for over an hour. The result of this was that the BU of New South Wales published a statement that they agreed unanimously *not* to endorse his ministry. What they really meant (for they did not themselves clarify any doctrine) is that they did not agree with Pink's Reformed doctrine. They were fundamentally Arminian. The effect of all this was that invitations dried up, and Pink's wider effective ministry in Australia was drastically reduced.

It was at this juncture that one of three Strict and Particular Baptist Churches invited Pink to become its pastor. This church was known as the Belvoir Street Church. Here Pink was as busy as he had ever been in his life. He had

⁷ *The Life of Arthur W. Pink*, by Iain H. Murray, *The Banner of Truth Trust*, p 49

preached 300 times in the year ending 1926. In addition to preaching three times a week at Belvoir Street, he preached in three different places in Sydney each week to an average of 200 at each meeting. He still managed to maintain *Studies in the Scriptures* by burning midnight oil.

Trouble however was in store. The early part of the Twentieth Century was a time of lack of clarity in doctrine. One of the evidences of this was confusion over Calvinism, Arminianism, and hyper-Calvinism.⁸ Many churches polarized. The Baptist Union was Arminian, and the Strict and Particular Baptists tended to be hyper-Calvinist. This proved to be the case at Belvoir Street. Until about May 1927, the Pinks believed that they had found a permanent church home.

3. *Impact of Pink's Writing Ministry*

If history had progressed normally, Arthur Pink would have been forgotten. There are several leaders in each generation who are well known, but it is unlikely that their names will be remembered for very long. When Arthur Pink died, he was known to a small circle of readers—about 500—who read his monthly periodical *Studies in the Scriptures*, which he had faithfully produced with the help of his wife Vera for 31 years. Yet, after his decease, as his writings were collected and published as books, his name became very well known in the English-speaking evangelical world. During the 1960s and '70s, there was a dearth of reliable expository writing; Pink's writings filled an important need. His expositions are God-centred, theologically compelling, and reliable—as well as practical and experimental. That was precisely what was needed during a period of spiritual drought. Publishers discovered the value of his writings. The outcome was dramatic.

For instance, Baker Book House published twenty-two different titles by Pink, with a combined total sales by 1980 of 350,000. By the same date just three books (*Sovereignty of God*, *Life of Elijah*, and *Profiting from the Word*) totaled 211,000. Yet as contemporary reformed authors have multiplied, so the demand for Pink's books has lessened.

We must remember that with the dawning of the twentieth century, the mainline denominations had already suffered extensive losses to higher criticism and modernism. Such was the advance of modernism in the late nineteenth century and through the first half of the twentieth century, most Bible colleges and seminaries were lost to an agenda of unbelief and anti-Christianity. Instead of producing preacher/pastors for the churches, men were sent out who emptied the churches. The most striking example is Methodism. The aggregate membership in Methodism grew to be the highest of the non-conformist churches. Yet this denomination has been virtually annihilated by modernism.

The writings of Pink provided not only food for the spiritually hungry, but as Iain Murray asserts, “Pink has been immensely important in reviving and stimulating doctrinal reading at the popular level. The same can be said of few other authors of the twentieth century.”⁹

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⁸ **hyper-Calvinism** – the doctrinal error that holds men need not evangelize, since God will save His elect children with or without the means of preaching the Word. This represents only one side of biblical truth; the other is that God is pleased to use human instruments as means to His work, and the preaching of the Word is uniquely marked out for this purpose (2Ti 4:2; 2Ti 3:16; Mat 28:19).

⁹ *ibid.*

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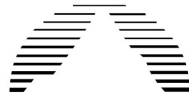
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