

**Volume 16—Studies in the Scriptures—No. 7****JULY, 1937****THE SPIRIT FRUCTIFYING.**

Far more is said in Scripture upon this aspect of our many-sided subject than is generally supposed; different figures being used, especially in the Old Testament, to express the graces and virtues which the Spirit imparts to and develops in the elect. A considerable variety of emblems are employed to set them forth. They are frequently referred to as flowers and gardens of them, to beds of spices, and unto trees and orchards. For example, in Solomon's Song we hear Christ saying to His Spouse: "A garden enclosed is My sister, My Spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard. Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices: a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon" (Song. 4:12-15).

The figures used in the above passage are very beautiful and call for careful consideration. A "garden" is a piece of ground distinguished and separated from others, for the owner's use and delight; so the Church of Christ is distinguished and separated from all other people by electing, redeeming, and regenerating grace. In a garden is a great variety of plants, herbs, and flowers; so in the Church there are members differing much from each other, yet in all there is that which is delightful to their Lord. In a garden the plants and flowers do not grow up naturally of themselves, they do not spring forth spontaneously from its soil, but have to be set or sown, for nothing but weeds grow up of themselves; so in Christ's Church, those excellencies which are found in its members are not natural to them, but are the direct product of *the Spirit's operations*, for by nature nothing grows in their hearts but the weeds of sin and corruption.

The commentators are not agreed as to whether Christ is speaking to His Spouse in verse 15, or whether She is there heard replying to what He had said in verses 12-14. Personally, we strongly incline to the latter: that Christ having commended His Church as a fruitful garden, She now ascribes it all to Him: "A Fountain of gardens, a Well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." Yet, if we accept the former interpretation, it amounts to much the same thing, for He would there be explaining *what it was* that made His Garden so fertile. To be healthy and productive a garden must be well watered, otherwise its delicate plants will quickly wilt and wither; the same being true of trees and all vegetation: a plentiful supply of water is indispensable. Consequently, in keeping with the fact that believers are likened unto plants and trees, and their graces to flowers and fruits, the quickening, renewing, reviving, and fructifying operations of the Spirit are spoken of as "dew," as "showers," as "streams in the desert," etc.

The Holy Spirit not only *imparts* life and holiness, but He *sustains* the same in the soul; He not only communicates heavenly graces, but He cultivates and develops them. "That they might be called Trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified . . . For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations" (Isa. 61:3, 11). Yes, the same One who "planted" those "trees of righteousness" must also "*cause* them" to "spring forth" to grow and bear fruit. While the tendency of the new nature is ever Godwards, yet it has no power of its own, being entirely dependent upon its Creator and Giver. Hence, that fruit

which is borne by the believer is expressly called “the fruit *of the Spirit*” so that the honour and glory may be ascribed alone unto Him. “From *Me* is thy fruit found” (Hosea 14:8).

“For I will *pour water* upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will *pour My Spirit* upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses” (Isa. 44:3, 4). Just as surely as a drought brings death, so the absence of the Spirit’s working leaves all in a state of spiritual death; but just as heavy rains renew a parched vegetation, so an outpouring of the Spirit brings new life. Then shall it indeed be said, “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose” (Isa. 35:1), which is expressly interpreted for us by the Spirit in “For the LORD shall comfort *Zion*: he will comfort all *her waste places*; and he will make *her wilderness* like Eden, and *her desert* like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody” (Isa. 51:3). We have purposely added Scripture to Scripture because the spiritual meaning of these passages is commonly unperceived today, when carnal dispensationalists insist on the ignoring of all figures, and the interpreting of everything “literally.”

“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (Gal. 4:19)—that which the Apostle did ministerially, the Spirit does efficiently. *This is how* the Spirit makes the Christian fruitful, or rather, it is how He first fits him to be fruitful: by forming *Christ* in him. The metaphor is taken from the shaping of the child in its mother’s womb, so that as its natural parents communicated the matter of its body, it is then framed and shaped into their likeness, limb for limb, answering to themselves. In like manner, the Spirit communicates to the heart an incorruptible “seed” (1 John 3:9) or spiritual nature, and then conforms the soul unto Christ’s image: first to His graces, and then to His example: “That ye should *show forth* the praises of Him who hath called you” (1 Peter 2:9)—which we could not do unless we had first *received* them. Ah, my reader, this is a solemn thing: we pass among men for genuine Christians, but the only coins which will pass the eye of God are those which bear stamped upon them the image of His Son.

In other words, then, the Spirit’s fructifying of the believer is the conforming of him *unto Christ*, first in his heart, and then in his life. By nature we are totally *unlike* Christ, being born in the image of Adam and dominated by Satan; or, to revert to the figure in the opening paragraph, so far from resembling a beautiful and well-kept garden, we are like a barren desert, where nothing but useless shrubs and poisonous weeds are found. “I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down” (Prov. 24:30, 31). *That* is how we appeared unto the holy eye of God in our unregenerate state! It is only when a miracle of grace has been wrought in our hearts that Christ begins to be formed in us, and that we (in our measure) reproduce His graces; and this is due solely to the sovereign and effectual operations of the Holy Spirit.—A.W.P.

“And every virtue we possess,  
and every victory won,  
And every thought of holiness,  
Are His, and His alone.”

### The Epistle to the Hebrews.

115. *Outside the Camp*: 13:12, 13.

Were it not so pathetic and tragic, it would be most amusing if we could obtain and read a complete record of the manner in which our text has been employed by various individuals and groups during the last four hundred years—to go no farther back. The reader would thereby be supplied with a striking illustration of the fact that “There is no new thing under the sun” (Eccl. 1:9) and see how frequently history repeats itself. He would learn too how easily simple souls were beguiled by a plausible tongue and how successfully Satan deceives the unwary by the very letter of Scripture. He would discover how the different *divisive moments* in the ecclesiastical realm—whether in Poland, Germany, Great Britain, or the U.S.A.—all started in much the same way, followed the same course, and, we might add, met with a similar disappointing sequel. To be forewarned is to be forearmed: it is because the rank and file of the people do so little reading, and are so ignorant of religious history, that they so readily fall a prey to those with high spiritual pretensions.

Hebrews 13:13 has ever been a great favourite with those who started “Come out” movements. It has been used, or rather misused, again and again by ambitious Diotrepes, who desired to head some new party or cause. It has been a sop for the conscience by many a little group of discontented and disgruntled souls, who because of some grievance (fancied or real) against their religious leaders, church, or denomination, forsook them, and set up an independent banner of their own. It is a verse which has been called into the service of all separatists, who urged all whose confidence they could gain to turn away from—not the secular world, but—their fellow-Christians, on the ground of trifling differences. That which these men urged their dupes to forsake was denounced as the God-abandoned and apostate “Camp,” while the criticism they have (often *justly*) met with for their pharisaic conduct, has been smugly interpreted as “bearing Christ’s reproach.”

In his most interesting and instructive work “The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity”—a standard work which long found a place in all well-furnished libraries—Richard Hooker, three hundred years ago, described the tactics followed by the Separatist leaders which preceded or were contemporaneous with him. We will give here a very brief digest of the same. First, in seeking to win the people’s attention unto their “cause,” these would-be Separatists, loudly proclaimed the faults and failings of those in high places, magnifying and reproving the same with much severity, and thereby obtaining the reputation of great faithfulness, spiritual discernment, love of holiness. Second, those faults and corruptions which have their roots in human frailty, are attributed to an unscriptural and evil ecclesiastical government, whereby they are regarded as possessing much wisdom in determining the cause of those sins they denounce: whereas in reality, the very failures they decry will adhere to *any* form of government which may be established.

Third, having thus obtained such sway in the hearts of their hearers, these men now propose *their own* form of church government (or whatever else they are pleased to designate their scheme or system), declaring with a great blowing of trumpets that it is the only sovereign *remedy* for the evils which poor Christendom is groaning under, embellishing the same with an ear-tickling name or designation. Fourth, they now “interpret” (?) the Scriptures in such a way that everything in them is made to favour their discipline, and discredit the contrary. Fifth, then they seek to persuade the credulous that *they* have

been favoured with a special illumination of the Spirit, whereby they are able to discern these things in the Word, while others reading it perceive them not. Sixth, assured that they are led by the Spirit “This hath bred high terms of separation between such and the rest of the world, whereby the one sort are termed, The brethren, The godly, and so forth; the other, worldlings, time-servers, pleasures of men not of God” etc. (Hooker, Vol. 1, p. 106).

Finally, the deceived are now easily drawn to become ardent propagators of their new tenets, zealous proselytisers, seeking to persuade others to leave the apostate “Camp” and join them on “the *true* scriptural ground.” “We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us” (1 John 4:6), as for the rest, “ye are of the world” (Hooker). Such was the policy pursued by the “Fifth Monarchy men,” the “Brownists,” Thomas Cartwright and his following in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such too was the course taken by John Kelly in Ireland, Alexander Campbell in Kentucky, more than a century ago—the latter founding “the Christian Church,” denouncing all others as unscriptural. So that Mr. J.N. Darby followed a well-trodden path!

“Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach” (Heb. 13:13). After mentioning the Christian’s altar and the suffering and offering of Christ thereon, the Apostle now draws an exhortation unto that duty which is the basis of our whole Christian profession. There are five things in this brief text which call for prayerful consideration. First, the exact force of its “therefore”—requiring us to ascertain the relation of our text to its setting. Second, what is signified here by “the camp,” both as it concerned the Hebrews and as it respects us today. Third, in what sense we are to go forth from it. Fourth, how in so doing we go unto Christ. Fifth, by what means this duty is to be discharged.

“Let us go forth *therefore* unto Him without the camp.” The duty which is here enjoined on the believer is drawn from what had just been declared: “Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate” (Heb. 13:12). There were one or two points in that verse which we reserved for consideration in this article. First, with regard to the meaning of “sanctify.” We cannot agree with those commentators (among them some for whom we have a high regard) that would here restrict it to “expiate”: we see no reason for this narrowing of its force. Personally, we consider the term has as wide a signification here as elsewhere in Scripture: by His perfect oblation Christ has *separated* His people from the world, *purified* them from all their iniquities, *consecrated* them to God, so that they stand before Him in all *acceptableness* of their Head.

Many words have a wider scope in Scripture than in ordinary usage, and the expositor needs to be constantly on his guard against narrowing the meaning of important terms. It is blessedly true that at the Cross the believer’s Surety expiated all his sins, that is, cancelled their guilt, by making reparation to the Law; but it is *the effects of that* which are here in view. The sanctification of His people was the grand object which Christ had in view in becoming incarnate, and that He steadily pursued throughout the whole of His life and sufferings. The Church is now cleansed, set apart, and adorned by His atoning sacrifice. Christ sustained all the transgressions of His people, made atonement for them, removed the same from before God, and washed them from all defilement by His soul travail, bloody sweat, and death; and in consequence, they now stand before the Eye of infinite justice and holiness as everlastingly righteous, and pure.

Herein we may behold once more the outstanding excellency of Christianity above Judaism—something which we must ever be on the lookout for if we are not to miss the principal design of the Spirit in this Epistle. These verses abound in details which exhibit the privileges of the new covenant as far surpassing those of the old. First, we have that “establishing of the heart” before God (v. 9) which the natural Israel possessed not. Second, we have “an altar” furnishing the highest and holiest sacrifice of all (v. 10), which they had no right or title to partake of: *their* sin offerings were *burned*, not eaten (v. 11). Third, we have an effectual and abiding sanctification of our souls before God, whereas they had a sanctification which was but external and evanescent “to the (ceremonial) purifying of the flesh” (Heb. 9:13). Fourth, Jesus has sanctified the people “with *His own blood*” (Heb. 13:12), which was something that the High Priest of Judaism could never do—they offered to God the blood of others, even that of animals.

A further word now on the fact that the Saviour “suffered without the gate,” that is, outside the city of Jerusalem which answered to the camp in the wilderness, wherein the tabernacle was first set up. Sundry things were represented thereby. First, this signified that He was not only a sacrifice for sin, but was being punished for sins, dealt with as a malefactor and dying that death which by Divine institution was a sign of the curse (Gal. 3:13). “They took Jesus, and led Him away. And He bearing His cross went forth (out of Jerusalem) into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified Him, and two others with Him” (John 19:16-18). This was done by the malice of the Jews, yet their wickedness was “by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23), so that it might appear Christ is *the true sin offering*. Thus, God made the hatred of Satan and his agents to subserve His purpose and accomplish His own will—how the knowledge of this should *comfort* us when the wicked are plotting against us!

Second, in ordaining that His Son should be put to death outside the city of Jerusalem, symbolic intimation was thereby given by God to the Jews that He had *put an end to all sacrificing in the temple*, so far as their acceptance by Him was concerned: now that Christ Himself was laid on the altar, there was no longer any need for those offerings which prefigured Him. The shadow and the substance could not stand together: for the Levitical sacrifices to be continued after Christ’s death would denote either that He had *not come*, or that His offering was *not sufficient* to obtain salvation. Third, Christ’s going forth out of Jerusalem signified *the end of the church-state of the Jews*, and therefore as He left the city, He announced their destruction: see Luke 23:28-30. Very solemn was this: Christ was no longer “in the Church” of the Jews (Acts 7:38), their house was now left unto them desolate (Matt. 23:38). If, then, a Jew desired to partake of the benefits of the Messiah, he too must leave the camp—the whole temple system.

What a depth and breadth of meaning there is to every action of our blessed Redeemer! what important truths they illustrated and exemplified! How much we lose by failing to meditate upon the details of our Lord’s passion! In addition to what had been pointed out above, we may observe, fourth, that Christ’s offering Himself as a sin offering to God outside Jerusalem, clearly shows that His sacrifice and its benefits *were not confined* to the elect among the Jews, but extended equally unto the chosen remnant from the Gentiles. It was, then, yet another sign that “the middle wall of partition” was now broken down, that the barrier which had for so long existed between Judaism and the world no more existed. As 1 John 2:2 declared, “He is the propitiation for our sins: and

not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world”—for an exposition of which see our booklet on “The Atonement.”

Thus, the force of the “therefore” in our text is not difficult to determine: because Jesus Himself “suffered without the gate, let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach” (Heb. 13:12, 13). But to make it still more simple for the reader to comprehend, let us divide the “therefore” into its component parts. First and more generally, because Christ has left us an example, let us follow His steps. Second, since we partake of the food of our altar, let us use the strength therefrom in a way pleasing and glorifying to Christ. Third and more specifically, if the Son of God were willing to suffer the ignominy of being cast out of Jerusalem in order to bear our doom, surely it would ill-become the sons of God if they were unwilling to go forth and bear His reproach! Fourth, if Christ in obedience to God took the place of being scorned and hated by men, shall we in disobedience to Him seek to be esteemed and flattered by His enemies? Fifth, because Christ has “sanctified” us, let us *evidence* our separation from the ungodly.

“Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.” The second thing requiring our careful consideration here is what is meant by “the camp.” “The Apostle, in all this Epistle, hath respect unto the original institution of the Jewish church-state and worship in the wilderness. Therefore he confines his discourse to the tabernacle and the services of it, without any mention of the temple or the city wherein it was built, though all that he speaks be equally applicable unto them. Now the camp in the wilderness was that space of ground which was taken up by the tents of the people, as they were regularly pitched about the tabernacle. Out of this compass the bodies of the beasts for the sin offerings were carried and burned. Hereunto afterwards answered the city of Jerusalem, as is evident in this place; for whereas in the foregoing verse, Christ is said to suffer ‘without the gate,’ here He is said to be ‘without the camp’: these being all one and the same as to the purpose of the Apostle” (John Owen).

“The camp” of Israel, then, and later the city of Jerusalem, was the seat and centre of the political and religious life of the Jewish church. To be in “the camp” was to have a right unto all the advantages and privileges of the commonwealth of Israel (Eph. 2:12) and the Divine service of the tabernacle. For to forfeit that right, for any cause, for a season, meant that the offender was taken *out of* the camp: Leviticus 14:3; 24:14; Numbers 5:2; 12:15. Now it was in that camp that Christ had been “despised and rejected” by the Nation. It was concerning that camp He had solemnly declared “your house is left unto you desolate” (Matt. 23:38). It was from that camp He had suffered Himself to be conducted, when He went forth to the Cross. Thus, at the time our Epistle was written, “the camp” signified an apostate Judaism, which would have none of Christ, which *hated and anathematized* Him; and in consequence, it was the place *abandoned by God*, given up by Him to destruction—for a generation later it ceased to be, even in a material and outward way.

But Judaism as such has long since passed away, what, then is *its present counterpart*? The question should not be difficult to decide, though it meets with varied answers. Some say “the camp” is Romanism, and call attention to the many striking points of analogy between it and Judaism. Some say it is “the dead and carnal professing church”—from which, of course, *their* denomination is an exception. Others insist that it is “all the man-made sects and systems of Christendom,” from which they have withdrawn, only to set

up another system of their own, even more pharisaical than those they denounce. But a single consideration is sufficient to dispose of all such vagaries—which have, in the past, misled the writer. Is *Christ Himself* hated and anathematized by either Rome or the deadest and most erroneous portions of Protestantism? The answer is, NO. We must turn to *other* Scriptures (like Rev. 18:4 and 2 Tim. 3:5) to learn God's will for us concerning Romanism or the carnal sects, for Hebrews 13:13 cannot be fairly applied to either of them. The very name of Christ was abhorred by Judaism, it is *not so* by either Rome or degenerate Protestantism.

Let us not be misunderstood at this point. We are *not* here expressing our views on *the whole subject* of the Christian's separation from what is dishonouring to Christ, nor are we holding a brief for the Papacy and her daughters. Admittedly Christendom is in a far worse state today than it was a century ago, and there is very much going on in it with which the follower of the Lord Jesus should have *no* fellowship; but that is a totally different thing from withdrawing from a company where there are many of God's people and where all the fundamentals of the Truth were faithfully proclaimed—think of denouncing Spurgeon's Tabernacle as a part of "Babylon," and refusing to allow those to "break bread" who occasionally attended its services! No; our present object is to define what "the camp" of Hebrews 13:13 actually signifies, and then to show how erroneously that term has been applied to something radically different.

As we have said above "the camp" was that degenerate Judaism which had hounded the Lord of Glory to death, and which could not be appeased by anything less than putting Him to death as a base malefactor and blasphemer. It is readily conceded that not only may numerous points of analogy be drawn between Judaism and Romanism, but that large sections of degenerate Protestantism now have many things in common with it. But it was *not* its law, its priesthood, its ceremonialism, nor even its corruptions which caused God to give up Jerusalem unto destruction. The "camp" from which the Apostle bade his readers "go forth" was a Judaism which had not only rejected Jesus as the Christ of God, denied that He was risen from the dead, but which also insisted that He was a vile imposter, and *reviled His very name*. But so far as we are aware, there is not a single church or company upon earth that professes to be "Christian" of whom *that* can be said!

The fact is, there is nothing upon earth today which exactly duplicates the Judaistic "camp" of the Apostle's time. Yet there *is* that which essentially corresponds to it, even though externally it differs somewhat therefrom; and that is *the world*—the secular and profane world. Concerning it we read, "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). Those who compromise it are unregenerate, unholy, ungodly. It is true that one of the effects of Christianity has been to cast a veneer of morality and religious respectability over large sections of the world; though that veneer is now getting very thin. It is true that in some circles of it, it is still fashionable to feign *respect* for Divine things, yet, if the exacting claims of God be pressed upon them, it soon becomes apparent that the carnal mind is enmity against Him. But for the most part, Christ is openly *hated* by the masses, and His name fearfully blasphemed by them. And hence it is that we are plainly told "the friendship of the world is enmity with God: whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

Our next consideration is, *In what sense* is the Christian to "go forth" from the camp, i.e., from that which is avowedly and actively hostile to Christ? This question needs to be carefully considered, for here too the language of our text has been sadly wrested. Let us

bring the point to a definite issue: is it a corporeal or a mental act which is here enjoined? Is it by the body or the soul that the duty is performed? Is it by our feet or our hearts that obedience is rendered? In other words, is it a "literal" or a metaphorical forsaking of the world which God requires from us? Those who made the serious mistake of supposing that it is the former, have betaken themselves to monasteries and convents. The explanatory and qualifying words of the Apostle "for then (if separation from the wicked were to be taken absolutely) must ye needs go out of the world" (1 Cor. 5:10) shows the error of this; contrary also would it be to the spirit of the Lord's prayer, "I pray *not* that Thou shouldest take them out of the world" (John 17:15).

Let us consider the case of the Jews in the Apostles' time. When one of them savingly believed on the Lord Jesus Christ was he required to "literally" or physically get out of Jerusalem? No, indeed: even the Apostles themselves continued to abide there (Acts 8:1)! It was *not a local* departure which was intended—though a little later that *was* necessary if their lives were to be preserved (Luke 21:30-32); rather was it a *moral and religious* going forth from the camp. "There was nothing that these Hebrews did more value and more tenaciously adhere unto, than that political and religious interest in the commonwealth of Israel. They could not understand how all the glorious privileges granted of old unto that church and people, should so cease as that they ought to forsake them. Hereon most of them continued in their unbelief of the Gospel, many would have mixed the doctrine of it with their old ceremonies, and the best of them found no small difficulty in their renunciation. But the Apostle shows them, that by the suffering of Christ without the gate or camp, this they *were* called unto" (John Owen).

The application of this principle unto us today is not difficult to perceive. It may be stated thus: God requires us to forgo and renounce all advantages and privileges—whether social, financial, political, or religious—*which are inconsistent with* an interest in Christ, communion with Him, or fidelity to His cause. An illustration of this is furnished in Philippians 3:4-10: those things which Saul of Tarsus had formerly counted gain—his Jewish birth and orthodoxy, his pharisaic strictness and righteousness, his persecution of the Church—he now "counted loss for Christ." The same thing obtains now in heathendom: when a Parsee, Buddhist, Mahommedan (or a Jew, or a Romanist) is truly converted, he has to turn his back upon, relinquish those things which he had hitherto most highly venerated. Love to Christ moves him to now hate those things which are directly opposed to Him.

Now for the fourth point in our text: by going forth from the camp we go "unto Him," or, conversely, by going forth unto Christ we go outside the camp. The two things are inseparable: they are convertible terms. We cannot go *unto*, without going *from*, and we cannot go "from" without going "unto." This is exactly what conversion is: a turning around, a right-about face. It is the heart turning from Satan to God, from sin to holiness, from things below to things above, from "the camp" unto Christ. That which is opposed to the Lord Jesus is renounced for His sake. The world is left, and He is followed. Self-righteousness is dropped that an empty hand may lay hold of His atoning sacrifice. To "go forth unto Him" is to betake ourselves to Christ in His office as the Prophet, Priest, and King of His Church, and thereby find acceptance with God. It is to cleave unto and own Him under the contempt and opposition of those who despise and reject Him.

To go forth unto Christ without the camp, signifies for us to be so enlightened by the Spirit as for the eyes of our understanding to see Him as the promised Messiah, the alone



Mediator between God and men; to behold the One whom the Jews and Gentile condemned to a malefactor's death, as the all-sufficient Saviour. It is for the heart to be attracted by the supernal excellencies of His Person, to be won by Him, the soul perceiving Him to be "the Fairest of ten thousand." It is for the will to be brought into subjection to Him, so that His yoke is gladly accepted and His sceptre readily submitted to. In a word, it is to heartily approve of Him whom the world still hates, becoming His humble follower, His willing disciple, and gladly enduring for His sake all the ridicule and persecution which fidelity to Him and His cause entails. Like the Gadarenes of old, the professing world now say to Him, "Depart out of our coasts" (Mark 5:17), but those who go forth unto Him exclaim, "my Beloved is mine, and I am His" (Song. 2:16).—A.W.P.

### **The Life of David.**

#### *67. His being Befriended.*

Amid much that is saddening in the next two or three chapters there occasionally shine rays of light through the darkness which overshadows them. The record is mainly concerned with the deeds of David's enemies, but here and there we find chronicled some of the kindly actions of his friends. The depravity of fallen human nature is exhibited again and again, and we behold what fearful depths of iniquity men will fall into when not immediately restrained from above. God righteously permits the Devil to work freely in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2), for man at the beginning deliberately elected to become subject to Satan's sceptre rather than remain in allegiance to his Maker: preferring death to life, darkness to light, bondage to freedom, he is made to suffer the consequences of the same. Nevertheless, the Almighty is over Satan and makes his ragings to subserve His own purposes: "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain" (Psa. 76:10)—strikingly illustrated again and again in the various scenes which are to come before us.

The depravity of fallen human nature is not an attractive subject, yet it is a solemn fact confronting us daily, both within and without. Moreover, it explains to us, as nothing else will, the fearful wickedness which abounds on every hand. A corrupt tree can (of itself) produce naught but corrupt fruit. That which should really surprise us is not the bountiful harvest which sin is producing in the human family, but rather that so many of its foul blossoms and buds are nipped before they can develop. Now and again God permits some monster of iniquity to run his race without hindrance, to show us what fearful evil man is capable of, and what would be common occurrence were He to leave Adam's descendants entirely to themselves. The deeds of Ahithophel and Absalom would be duplicated all around us were it not that God puts bridles into the mouths of those who hate Him, and bounds their enmity as truly as He does those of the winds and waves.

But the restraining of man's wickedness is not the sole operation of the Divine government of the human family: from the uncongenial soil of fallen human nature God is also engaged in producing that which makes this world a fit place for His people to live in, for He is doing *all* things for *their* sakes (Rom. 8:28)—His glory and their good being inseparably bound up together. That the saint meets with *any* mercy, justice, or kindness at the hands of the unregenerate is due alone to the grace and power of the Lord. That the believer is at times befriended by those who have not the love of God in their hearts, is as much the product and marvel of Divine power as His creating an occasional oasis in the desert. There are times when the Lord makes the leopard to "lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together" (Isa. 11:6). There are times when He causes the ravens to feed His servants. Yet whatever be the instruments God is pleased to use, the language of the believer should be "*Thou* preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies" (Psa. 23:5).

Thus, amid the hardships and sufferings which his enemies inflicted upon David, we are also to note the reliefs and kindly supplies which God moved others to furnish him and his men. It was so in the experience of his blessed Son: if on the one hand we read that He "had not where to lay His head," on the other we are told "And many others (of the women), which ministered unto Him of their substance" (Luke 8:3). It was so in the history of the Apostle Paul; if on the one hand he sometimes experienced "hunger and thirst . . . cold and nakedness" (2 Cor. 11:27), at others it could be recorded "The barba-

rous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold . . . who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary" (Acts 28:2, 10). And has it not been thus in the lives of both writer and reader? Undoubtedly; sweets and bitters, disappointments and pleasant surprises, have been intermingled: "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath *set the one over against the other*" (Eccl. 7:14).

"And the king, and all the people that were with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there" (2 Sam. 16:14): that is, at Bahurim (v. 5). After their long and arduous journey from Jerusalem, David and his band of loyal followers pitched camp and obtained a much-needed rest. At the same time "Absalom, and all the people the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him" (v. 15). David and his retinue having left the way wide open for Absalom to take possession of the royal city whenever he pleased. There were none to oppose him. Accordingly he came, and no doubt felt much elated by this initial success, promising himself that the whole country would soon be his: "God suffers wicked men to prosper a while in their wicked plots, even beyond their expectation, that their disappointment may be the more grievous and disgraceful" (Matthew Henry).

"And it came to pass, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, Let the king live, Let the king live (margin). And Absalom said to Hushai, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? why wentest thou not with thy friend? and Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay; but whom the LORD, and this people, and all the men of Israel, choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide. And again, whom should I serve? should I not serve in the presence of his son? as I have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in thy presence" (vv. 16-19). This is the sequel to what was before us in 15:32-37; Hushai, at some risk to himself, ventured into the lion's den, in order to serve and help David. His conduct on this occasion raises a problem, one which the commentators have differed widely upon. Some have argued that, on the worldly principle of "all is fair in love and war," Hushai was fully justified in his dissimulation: others have condemned him without qualification, as an unmitigated liar; while a few have been so puzzled they withheld a judgment.

Let it be pointed out, first, that Hushai did *not* say "Let king Absalom live"; and when challenged concerning his infidelity to David, he did not reply "I have done with thy father, and am now devoted solely to *thee* and thy cause": his language was ambiguous, capable of a double construction. While that somewhat modified his offence it by no means cleared Hushai, for his language was intended to mislead, and therefore was chargeable with duplicity. That his intention was a good one, and that his efforts succeeded, by no means exonerated him. "Results" are not the criterion by which we should determine the rightness or wrongness of anything. Bear in mind it is the *human* side of things we are now considering—from the Divine side, God suffered the pride of Absalom's heart to deceive him: he fondly imagined that David's best friends were so in love with himself that they gladly took the present opportunity to flock to his banner; and therefore he construed Hushai's words in favour of himself.

The above incident is recorded as a warning, and *not* for our imitation. It shows that something more than a good motive is necessary in order for a deed to be right in the sight of God. This is an important principle for us to weigh, for not a few today excuse

much that is wrong by saying “Well, his intentions were good.” While it be true that the motive often determines the value of an act, yet *other* principles and considerations must also regulate us. For instance, in seeking to carry out our good intentions, we must use *the right means*. It is praiseworthy for a parent to seek food for his hungry children, yet he or she must not steal the same. *This* was where Hushai failed: the desire to help David did not warrant his playing the part of a hypocrite. “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in *simplicity and godly sincerity*, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world” (2 Cor. 1:12) is the Christian’s standard. It is never right to do wrong.

The principal means which the believer should employ in every time of trouble and emergency, is *prayer*: presenting his case in humble and trustful confidence to Him with whom there are no difficulties, leaving Him to undertake for us as seemeth Him best. This is what David had done at first (2 Sam. 15:31); but, later, he spoilt it by reasoning to a carnal policy (15:34). Ere passing on let us note how Absalom’s challenge to Hushai may be taken to heart by ourselves in a higher sense: “Men who admire themselves will be easily deceived by those who profess an attachment to them; yet they readily discern those faults in others, of which themselves are far more notoriously guilty, and are apt to express astonishment at them. If a zealous disciple of Christ commits evident wickedness, even profligates will exclaim ‘is this thy kindness to thy Friend?’ But, alas, how often might the Saviour Himself address each of us in these words, to our shame and confusion! And how often should we thus check ourselves, and remember our ingratitude, to our deep humiliation” (Thomas Scott). Unfaithfulness to Christ is a species of unkindness to our best Friend! What a theme that is for a practical sermon!

We have, in a former article, already made allusion to the revolting episode recorded in the closing verses of 2 Samuel 16, so a few brief remarks on it here will suffice. “Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do” (v.20). First, we note that Absalom did not seek unto the custodians of the ark (which David had sent back to Jerusalem) for guidance, for he had no concern for the will of Jehovah: throughout the entire piece he acts as an infidel, a blatant rebel. Second, the obvious design of Ahithophel in so evilly advising Absalom—which, as Matthew Henry rightly says was as though he enquired “at the oracle of Satan” rather than “of God” (v. 21)—was to get his new master to so conduct and commit himself that all hope of forgiveness by David would be out of the question. Third, but behind the scenes, was the overruling hand of God, fulfilling His own word (2 Sam. 12:11), and chastising David for his wickedness—that he had these “concubines” in addition to a plurality of wives, is a sad reflection upon the Psalmist.

“Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: and I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only: and I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest is as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace” (2 Sam. 17:1-3). It may be thought that this vile suggestion was prompted by the feelings of private animosity, for, as previously pointed out, Bathsheba was the grand-daughter of Ahithophel, and therefore he would desire to personally avenge the wrong done to his family. But whether this be the case or no, as a politic man Ahithophel would be quick to recognize that delay was dangerous, and that if Absalom desired the removal of David

from his path, there must be swift action, and a striking while his father and men were tired and low-spirited.

Those who surrounded the wicked Absalom at this time understood clearly that nothing short of the death of David and the seizing of the throne for himself would satisfy his covetousness: the only matter to be determined was the best way in which to accomplish this base design. Consequently, when Ahithophel voiced his evil counsel, there were none that raised hands of holy horror, none who so much as objected to the *gross injustice* of such a course. Not long ago Absalom himself had fled a crime, and David contented himself by allowing his son to remain in exile, though he deserved death; nay, he craved his return. But so utterly devoid was Absalom of natural affection, so incapable of gratitude, that he thirsts for David's blood. See, my reader, what human nature is capable of (yours and mine not excepted) when God leaves us entirely to ourselves. How far, far astray are they who deny the solemn truth of total depravity of fallen man!

The scheme propounded by Ahithophel had much to commend itself to a man of such a designing type as Absalom. It would not serve his purpose for there to be a wholesale massacre of his subjects—the Philistines were too near and numerous to unnecessarily weaken his forces. Let the king himself be smitten, and his followers will readily capitulate. "Smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered, and be an easy prey to the wolf" was the principle of Ahithophel's plan. It has been pointed out by others that there was a close resemblance (if not an actual foreshadowment) here to the policy suggested by Caiaphas: "Now consider that it is expedient for us, that *one man* should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (John 11:50). So too the language of others of Christ's enemies was "This is the Heir; come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours" (Mark 12:7).

"And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel" (2 Sam. 17:4). The desperate wickedness of the cold-blooded proposal of Ahithophel to "smite"—slay—God's anointed, so far from filling Absalom with horror, met with his hearty approval. If "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18), it is equally true that evil men and seducers wax worse and worse. The falling stone gathers momentum, and the further it rolls down the hill, the greater is its velocity. So it is with one who has thoroughly sold himself to the Devil—he gives his wretched victims no rest, but urges them on from crime to crime, until their cup of iniquity is full. Satan is a merciless taskmaster, who ever demands an increasing tally of bricks from his slaves. How earnestly we should pray to be delivered from the Evil One!

"Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith" (2 Sam. 17:5). This is surely very striking. In the previous instance Absalom had acted promptly on the evil counsel of Ahithophel (16:22), why, then, did he not do so now? The proposal made had "pleased him well," yet he hesitated and consulted with Hushai, the secret friend of David. It was not that Hushai took the initiative and pushed himself forward: it was Absalom himself who *sought* to know his mind. What a proof that "the king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever *He* will" (Prov. 21:1). "The Lord had appointed to defeat the good (politic) counsel of Ahithophel" (2 Sam. 17:14), yet He accomplished this not by physical force, but by the working of natural laws. Absalom appeared to act quite freely in following out the thought that had entered his mind, nevertheless a Divine hand was directing him, unknown to himself. Man is free to act only within the circumference of the Divine decrees.

It was at this critical moment, when the doom of David appeared to be as good as sealed, that his faithful follower was given the opportunity of befriending him. How blessedly God *times* His interventions. He is never too early, and never too late. It is the impatience of unbelief and the fretfulness of self-will which so often makes us think the Lord is tardy. Often God “waits that He may be gracious” (Isa 30:18) in order to bring us to the end of ourselves, and that the deliverance may more evidently appear to be from Himself. At other times, He delays His interposition on behalf of His own for the greater chagrin and dismay of their enemies. Hushai did not fail David at this critical moment, but by clever and plausible arguments caused Absalom to change his mind, and postpone an immediate attack upon the fugitive king. This accomplished his objective, for any delay on the part of Absalom afforded David an opportunity to rest his weary men, add to his forces, and station them to best advantages. But more of that in our next.—A.W.P.

### Experimental Preaching.

The mere *quoting* of Scripture in the pulpit is not sufficient—people can become familiar with the letter of the Word by reading it at home; it is the *expounding* of it which is so much needed today. “And Paul, as his manner was . . . reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, *opening* and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead” (Acts 17:2, 3). But to “open” the Scriptures helpfully to the saints requires more than a young man who has had a few months’ training in some “Bible Institute” or a year or two in a theological seminary. None but those who have been personally taught of God in the hard school of experience are qualified to *so* “open” up the Word that Divine light has cast upon the perplexing experiences of the believer, for while Scripture interprets experience, experience is often the best interpreter of Scripture. “The *heart* of the wise *teacheth* his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips” (Prov. 16:23), and *that* “learning” cannot be acquired in any of man’s schools.

As an example of what we have just referred to above, what would be the use of quoting, what benefit would be derived from simply hearing the words of such a passage as this?: “Give ye ear, and hear My voice; hearken, and hear My speech. Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rye in their place? For his God doth *instruct him to discretion*, and doth teach him. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working” (Isa. 28:23-29). Where are the preachers today endowed with wisdom from on High to “open” a Scripture like this one?

Obviously, the above passage is a parable: that which obtains in the natural world is made a similitude of what pertains to the spiritual realm. God’s Church upon earth is His “husbandry” (1 Cor. 3:9). The subordinate “husbandmen” are His ministers, who, instrumentally, break up the fallow ground of the hearts of His people. As the farmer *varies* his work as occasion requires, plowing, sowing, reaping, threshing, as the need arises, so the ministerial husbandman does likewise. The “seed” is the Word of God (Luke 8:11), and as God gives wisdom to the farmer to sow “wheat” or “barley” or “rye”—according as the soil be clayey, loamy, or sandy, so He teaches His ministers to preach according to the condition of the hearts of His people. Painful afflictions, both inward and outward, are God’s “threshing” instruments, to loosen from the world, to separate the wheat from the chaff in our souls, to fit us for His garner.

Now there are two ways of learning of Divine things—true alike for the preacher and hearer: the one is to acquire a letter knowledge of them from the Bible, the other is to be given an actual experience of them in the soul under the Spirit’s teaching. So many today suppose that by spending a few minutes on a good concordance they can discover what humility is, that by studying certain passages of Scriptures they may obtain an increase of faith, or that by reading and re-reading a certain chapter they may secure more love. But that is not the way those graces are experimentally developed. Humility is learned by a daily smarting under the plague of the heart, and having its innumerable abominations exposed to our view. Repentance is learned by feeling the load of guilt and the heavy

burden of conscious defilement bowing down the soul. Faith is learned by increasing discoveries of unbelief and infidelity. Love is learned by a personal sense of the undeserved goodness of God to the vilest of the vile.

It is thus with all the spiritual graces of the Christian. Patience cannot be learned from books: it is acquired in the furnace of affliction! "We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope" (Rom. 5:3, 4). Ah, my reader, we beg the Lord *to* teach us, but the fact is that we do not like His *method* of teaching us. Fiery trials, storms of persecution, the dashing of our carnal hopes, are indeed painful to flesh and blood; yet it is by them that the spirit is purged. We say that we wish to live to God's glory, but fail to remember that we can do so only as self is denied and the Cross be taken up. The crossing of our wills and the thwarting of our plans stirs up the enmity of the carnal mind, yet that makes way for our taking a lower place before God. God's ways of teaching His children are, like all His ways, entirely different from ours.

"I asked the Lord that I might grow in faith and love, and every grace; might more of His salvation know, and seek more earnestly His face. 'Twas He who taught me thus to pray, and He, I trust, has answered prayer; but it has been in such a way as almost drove me to despair. I hoped that in some favoured hour at once He'd answer my request, and by His love's constraining power subdue my will and give me rest. Instead of this, He made me feel the hidden evils of my heart; and let the angry powers of Hell assault my soul in every part. Yea, more, with His own hand He seemed intent to aggravate my woe; crossed all the fair designs I schemed; blasted my gourd, and laid me low. Lord, why is this? I, trembling, cried, wilt Thou pursue Thy worm to death? 'Tis in this way, the Lord replied, I answer prayer for grace and faith. These inward trials I employ from self and pride to set thee free, and break thy schemes of earthly joy, that thou mayest see thy all *in Me*" (John Newton). These lines (by the author of "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds in a Believer's Ear") may not suit the sentiments of a few of our readers, but we are sure they accurately express the actual experience of many of God's people.

The more we really grow in grace the more tender becomes the conscience, the more conscious we are of our corruptions, and the more distressing is the hiding of the Lord's countenance. The brighter the sun's shining into a room, the more apparent becomes any dust or cobwebs in it; and the greater the illumination granted by the Holy Spirit, the more will the filth of our hearts be manifested. So too when the Word of God is accompanied with life and power to the soul, it pierces "even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" (Heb. 4:12): that is, there is a separating between the wheat and the chaff, a dividing between what *God* has wrought and that which is merely *natural* religion. But an honest soul loves a searching ministry, even though it cuts him to the quick. He does not want to be soothed in his sins, and he dreads a false peace. His earnest prayer is "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts" (Psa. 139:23).

The more God searches us the more will He bring to light the "hidden things of darkness," and the more will we be made to loathe ourselves. As the conscience becomes more tender it increasingly *feels* the enormity of sin, and correspondingly grieves over the same. Then it is that "the heart knoweth its own bitterness" (Prov. 14:10), and like Hannah we become "of a sorrowful spirit" (1 Sam 1:15). And then it is, very often, that the Job's comforters of our day add to the grief of the groaning saint. They *unseasonably* prate to him of "the joy of the Lord," and tell him he should commend Christianity by a



glowing countenance and a cheerful demeanour. Well may we remind such meddlers into matters they understand not of those words, "As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart" (Prov. 25:20). My reader, God does not require us to play the part of hypocrites before others, nor to mock Him by singing when our hearts are full of heaviness.

It is not only the workings of indwelling sin which occasion the honest-hearted so much distress, but also *the feebleness of their graces*—yea, as it often seems, the total absence of them. The weakness and fickleness of his faith occasions the true Christian much exercise of heart. He knows that God is worthy of his fullest confidence, that His Word is inerrant and His promises sure; and it is a painful trial to him that he fails so sadly to trust Him more fully and count upon His covenant faithfulness more constantly. Herein his experience is quite different from that of the empty professor. That *natural* "faith," which stands only in the wisdom of men, knows no such fluctuations, ebbings and flowings, risings and sinkings, as those which characterize the faith which is of "the operation of God" (Col. 2:12). God is very jealous of His glory, and makes us realize that what He has given can only be exercised by *His* enabling. It is not within the Christian's power to call forth his faith into action when he has a mind to. In this, as in all things, God keeps us entirely dependent upon Himself.

The all-important matter in connection with faith is not the quantity, but the quality of it. An intellectual assent to the Divine Authorship and veracity of the Scriptures produces no spiritual fruits. A faith which is assured of the historicity of Christ, like it is of that of Augustus Caesar or Napoleon, is no evidence of regeneration. A faith which "could remove mountains and have not love" (1 Cor. 13:2) is worthless. It is because of this that an honest heart is so deeply exercised as to whether or not *his* faith be the "faith of God's elect" (Titus 1:1), or whether it be merely a product of the flesh; and the very fact that he is so often conscious that he has no faith at all in exercise, causes him to think the worst of himself. At this point, too, he stands in real need of definite help from the pulpit. Then let him be informed that a mere assent to the letter of Truth never yet melted the soul into godly sorrow for sin. If any of our readers have a "faith" which is *not* dampened and chilled by the ragings of indwelling sin, they are welcome to it.

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out" (Song. 4:16). This prayer of the Church's plainly intimates the acknowledgement of her own *helplessness*. It is the believer supplicating the Spirit (under the emblem of the "wind," cf. John 3:18) for His awakening and reviving influences. He begs Him to operate upon his "garden," that is, his soul, in order that "the spices thereof," which are a figure of his spiritual graces, may "flow forth." He realizes that only as the "north wind" blows, i.e., the Spirit chills his lusts and nips his corruptions, only as He, in power, rebukes his faults and reproves his failings, that he will tread more softly before God. He realizes that only as the "south wind" blows, i.e., as the Spirit breathes upon his soul and warms his graces, that faith, hope, love, patience, meekness, humility, will become active and fruitful.

"Lord, all *my desire* is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee" (Psa. 38:9). "Desire" signifies the longing, yearning, panting of a renewed heart. That soul ardently wishes to be right with God, to have a heart that is cleansed from the love and filth of sin, to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man, to be conformed to the image of Christ, to be in complete subjection to Him, to be fruitful unto His praise. Ah,

but such a “desire” is only very imperfectly realized in this life, and that causes disappointment and grief, hence the Psalmist added “and *my groaning* is not hid from Thee.” There is the “groaning” which the wounds of sin occasion, the groanings from the ceaseless conflict between the flesh and spirit, the groanings caused by Satan’s buffetings. And there is also the “groanings” over unrealized longings, unaccomplished ideals, unsatisfied attainments.

Ah, my reader, it is one thing to read in Scripture “For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Rom. 7:18), and quite another to have a personal corroboration of the same. But that is how God teaches His people, giving them an experimental acquaintance with the Truth, that they may “set to their seal that He is true.” It is one thing to receive as an “article of faith” that not only the unregenerate, but the regenerate also, are, in themselves, impotent unto holiness, but it is quite another to discover from painful experience—as poor Peter did—that “the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is *weak*” (Matt. 26:41). It is then that we pray in earnest, “*Quicken* us, and we will call upon Thy name” (Psa. 80:18); “*Draw* me, we will run after Thee” (Song. 1:4).

Do you, my reader, find your experience to be a bundle of contradictions: one day heartily thanking God for His mercies, the next day wickedly abusing them? one day fondly cherishing the hope that you have a little spiritual life, the next quite sure that you have none at all? If so, you know something of what it is to be “emptied from vessel to vessel” (Jer. 48:11). But if you do not, if on the contrary, your course is a smooth and easy one, your heart always light and cheerful, there is grave cause to conclude you belong to that class of whom it is said “because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God” (Psa. 55:19). As we have previously pointed out, Christian experience alternates between pain and pleasure, sorrow and joy: *pain* arising from a sense of our sinfulness, from manifold temptations, and the hidings of God’s face; *pleasure* from a sense of pardon, promises applied by the Spirit, communion with Christ.

It is only by degrees that believers are “established,” and even then that does not prevent them from being severely tried and grievously assaulted by their spiritual enemies. Satan causes many to doubt Christ’s willingness to save them, and if they receive a little encouragement from the Word, then he seeks to stir up afresh their corruptions, and renews their fears and doubtings. The most advanced Christian often experiences a sore conflict from his lusts; those who enjoy the most intimate communion with God are frequently attacked by Satan. If the Apostle Paul had to cry out “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom. 7:24), we must not be surprised if *we* have cause to do the same. But observe, that his next words were “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (v. 25). Ah, we never value *Christ* more highly than after a season of acute soul distress, as we never prize Divine *grace* so much as when we have been afflicted by indwelling sin. It is a sense of pollution and filth which moves us to turn again to the Fountain open for sin and for uncleanness.

Professing Christians are to be frequently exhorted to diligently examine the work of the Spirit in them, and compare the same with what is recorded of the saints in Scripture. Nor is there, as we have said before, any “legality” in this, for the work of the Spirit proceeds as truly from the everlasting Covenant of Grace as did the work of Christ, and the discovery of His operations enables the believer to “set to his seal that God is true” (John 3:33). A lively interest in the things which concern our eternal welfare, a trembling at

God's Word and being suitably affected thereby, hatred of sin, loathing of self, a child-like love for the Lord, are some of *the evidences* of God's work in the soul. Let it also be boldly affirmed that God exercises His high sovereignty even in the very *degrees of grace* granted us: if it be true that He endows His servants with talents, some more, some less, it is equally true that He bestows upon the rank and file of His people a different "measure" of His Spirit.

While the minister is to be much on his guard against building up the hope of empty professors, he must ever seek to encourage and comfort the mourners in Zion, urging them to *continue by* "the pool" (the means of grace), waiting for the moving of the waters; assuring them that if they do, sooner or later there will be a breaking in of the light of God's countenance, dispelling the darkness of the mind and melting the hard heart. Remind them of such a promise as, "For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD" (Jer. 30:17). Remind them of the case of Abraham "who against hope believed in hope" (Rom. 4:18). Tell them that though they may have but feeble apprehensions of God's *love*, nevertheless they can thank Him for His *longsufferance* to them.

Let us point out that *doctrinal* preaching also has its place and use in strengthening the experience of saints, and must never be pushed into the background. It is needful not only for instruction, but equally so for those who *have* knowledge of the Truth: "To write *the same* things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe" (Phil. 3:1). Our memories are very fickle; the impressions created by a sermon quickly pass away, so that there must be "line upon line, precept upon precept": it is the principal *means* used by the Spirit in feeding the soul, strengthening faith, fortifying against Satan. Make *Christ* pre-eminent in all your sermons. Do you, my reader, know something of Joseph Hart's experience when he wrote "I often poured out, in transports of blissful astonishment, 'Lord, 'tis too much, 'tis too much, surely my soul *was not worth* so great a price!' "

Finally, the Christian must be definitely warned against resting in his *present attainments*. Even though he now be rejoicing in the knowledge of sins forgiven. Press such a verse as "Then shall we know (have assurance), if we *follow on* to know the LORD" (Hosea 6:3): explaining its meaning, enforcing its duty. It is only little by little that the believer learns how to put on his armour and use spiritual weapons against his enemies. A regenerated soul longs to know more of the power of Christ's resurrection, for he so often feels sinking in the deadness of sin, and therefore those branches of Truth best calculated to quicken the heart are also to be oft set before him.

N.B. As example is better than precept, we have sought to prepare an experimental sermon on Philippians 1:6, which immediately follows this article.—A.W.P.

### Internal Salvation.

“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” (Phil. 1:6). These words set forth a fundamental aspect of salvation that is now widely ignored, and it is one of the vital points at which the pulpit needs testing, for if it be faulty *here*, then its trumpet gives forth an uncertain sound. Alas, most of the pulpits today are engaged in declaring what man must do: creature performances are the sum and substance of the great majority of modern sermons, the operations of God being relegated to the rear. True, there are those who have quite a little to say of what God has done *for* sinners, yet most of these men are radically defective in their conceptions of what has to be wrought *in* sinners before there can be any salvation for them. These men talk much about the “finished work of *Christ*,” and many are misled by them, for they are largely, if not wholly, silent upon the regenerating work of *the Holy Spirit*.

How few there are today who perceive that the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Spirit is as indispensable as is the sacrificial work of Christ. That is why we often hear untaught evangelists say, and read in the “tracts” of our day, “salvation is by the blood of Christ *alone*,” or “we are saved by faith alone”: statements which are unscriptural, most misleading, and highly dangerous because of their lopsidedness. A man may hold the most Scriptural views of the Atonement, and though that may evidence his “orthodoxy,” yet it is no proof at all that he is a new creature in Christ. He may highly honour faith and vehemently affirm that good works have no part or place in the saving of the soul, and yet be alienated from God. Unless the Holy Spirit has “begun a good work *in me*” then I am still dead in sins!

“He which hath begun a good work *in you*.” Ah, *that* is what draws the line of demarcation between the living and the dead: that is what distinguishes true possessor from empty professors. And why? because that “good work” is not in any of us by nature. That statement calls for a word or explanation and amplification. There still remains in fallen man the remnants of that “likeness” or “similitude of God” in which he was originally created, as is clear from James 3:9. The Apostle Paul hesitated not to declare that even the heathen “show the work of the Law written in their heart” (Rom. 2:15). The most depraved and wicked possess a conscience, which is “the candle of the Lord” (Prov. 20:27) within them. Nevertheless, the unregenerate are utterly devoid of even a “spark” of Divine life in them, and therefore is it said of them, “There is none that doeth good, no not one” (Rom. 3:12).

For our first main division we will consider *the nature* or character of this “good work” of which the Holy Spirit is the Agent. Under this head our text suggests four lines of thought. First, it is a *Divine* work: “He which hath begun a good work in you.” The Author of it is God, and not man. The creature contributes nothing whatever to it. The favoured subject thereof is entirely passive in it: “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy” (Rom. 9:16). This “good work” is a creative act on the part of God, and to talk of the creature “cooperating” with the Creator in connection with *creation*, is the language of imbecility. I was no more consulted about and had no more to do with my spiritual birth than I had with my natural. Nor does the preacher have any more hand in the resurrection of the soul (which is what this good work is) than he will have in the resurrection of the body. God, and God alone, is the Author of it.

Second, it is as yet an *incomplete* work: "He which hath *begun* a good work in you." This Divine miracle of grace is carried forward from stage to stage: "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear" (Mark 4:28). It is commenced at regeneration, it is continued by sanctification, it is consummated at glorification. It is highly important that the Christian should clearly grasp this fact: God has not finished with him yet. We are impatient creatures, and wish to fly before our wings are grown. Many of our expectations are as unwarrantable as they are unattainable. It is but the initial work that God has wrought in the believer, and it remains uncompleted throughout this life. Then let us not look for that in us or from us which will be realized only in Heaven. Sinless perfection in this world is a madman's delusion.

Third, it is an *internal* work: "He which hath begun a good work *in you*." This is the vital, necessary, indispensable sequel to what Christ did for them. The atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus avails them not until they exercise faith in it, and that is impossible so long as a person be dead in trespasses and sins. He must be born again before he can savingly believe and obtain forgiveness from God. The "good work," then, is wrought in *the heart*. It is no mere making clean the outside of the platter, while the inside be left all foul and filthy. A radical change is effected by the supernatural operations of God. A principle of spiritual life, a new nature is imparted, an "incorruptible seed" is placed within the soul, which radically affects all its faculties—the understanding, conscience, affections, and will.

Fourth, it is a *sovereign* work: "He which hath begun a good work in *you*"—it is not performed in all the members of Adam's race. And why? Because God disburses His charity and distributes His gifts according to the good pleasure of His own will. This "good work" is wrought in none but "God's elect." Nor is it wrought in them because they are any better or worthier than the non-elect, for they are not so. There was nothing whatever in them to induce God to perform a miracle of grace in their hearts. It was not because they desired or prayed for it, for "there is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:11). If it be asked *why* God favours them rather than others, the only answer forthcoming is, "Even so Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matt. 11:26).

For our second main division we will consider *the evidences* of this "good work." The great question which exercises every quickened soul is, Has this "good work" begun in *me*? This is a matter which causes him the deepest possible concern, far more so than anything connected with his temporal interests. All other considerations fade into utter insignificance before this momentous inquiry: Has a miracle of grace been wrought in *my* soul? Is it possible for me to be *sure*? Many answer, No, declaring that this is a profound mystery which it is impossible for any man to elucidate, insisting that assurance is but proud presumption. But God's Word declares, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16): against that Divine declaration all human objections are worthless.

Again, we read in the Word of Truth, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13): therefore assurance is both possible and desirable. In view of these passages it is clear that we *may* ascertain whether or not this good work has been wrought in us. But how? By *its effects*. Recall for a moment the nature of this "good work." It is *Divine*: therefore it must be far above anything the creature can produce. Yet it is *incomplete*: therefore we must not look for something already completed. It is *internal*: therefore it is

within—we must look if we are to identify it. This good work is wrought by the Holy Spirit in the heart: it is something which He imparts and produces there, and it is discoverable by the effects which the change makes *there*.

In developing this point we will endeavour to be very plain and simple. First, a *harrowed heart* is an inevitable effect of the Spirit's good work. By nature the heart of fallen man is as hard as sun-baked ground after a long drought. Its possessor is quite unconcerned about his eternal destiny, utterly indifferent whether God's smile or God's frown be upon him: thoroughly in love with sin, he is a total stranger to any grief occasioned by having displeased and dishonoured the Most High. But when a work of Divine grace is begun in him, all this is changed. It is like plentiful showers of rain falling upon and moistening the earth. His heart is softened and chastened. In consequence, he is deeply exercised as to his eternal destiny, greatly troubled over his past carelessness and wickedness, fearful that he has so sinned away his day of grace that he is beyond the reach of mercy. His heart is sore wounded at the realization he has offended so grievously against God.

Second, an *honest heart* is a sure proof that this good work has begun in him. "That on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it" (Luke 8:15)—this is what distinguishes them from the barren-ground believers. But note well the *order*: the heart must be made "honest" before it can rightly be designated "good." An honest heart is indeed a rare and wonderful thing. By nature our hearts are thoroughly deceitful and hypocritical: that is why we love to be flattered and fish for compliments; that is why when the preacher is conscious of having failed, he is most anxious to be told his sermon was an excellent one; that is why we are pleased when the photographer conceals our defects. Now that streak of deceitfulness is not removed at regeneration, but a *principle of honesty* is imparted.

Ah, that is the very thing I am exercised about, for who knows better than myself how two-faced I am! If I am to be weighed against the balance of genuine honesty, I am certain to be "found wanting." Not so fast, dear friend. Let me point out how you may discover whether this principle of honesty be in you. If it is, then you are greatly afraid of being deceived in soul matters, and you earnestly beg God to search you and show you your actual state. One with an honest heart desires to know *the worst* about himself! Measure yourself by *that* criterion: no unregenerate person can survive it, for he is determined to think well of himself, no matter what evidence there be to the contrary. One with an honest heart cries to the Lord, "If I am mistaken in supposing I am born again, reveal it to me; if I am deluded by Satan, open mine eyes before it be too late." No one who *lacks* an honest heart will ever sincerely pray thus!

Third, a *holy heart* evidences God's work in us. Ah, you say, that cuts me off entirely, for my heart is most unholy. Nothing you can say to the contrary can alter the fact: I am a spiritual leper, a mass of corruption, polluted at the very core of my being; and to say that such a vile creature as I am possesses a *holy heart* is both a mockery and a lie. Listen: the graces of the Spirit in our hearts are like lovely flowers growing amid rank and stinking weeds. This is the grand miracle of Divine grace, that purity is planted amid impurity, a Christ-like principle is placed in soil that is earthly, sensual, devilish. Nor does that holy principle eradicate or reduce the sin which surrounds it; nay, the one in whom it dwells frequently has occasion to cry "iniquities prevail against me" (Psa. 65:3). But neither the

presence nor the power of indwelling sin is any disproof of a principle of holiness in the heart.

That principle is evidenced by *loathing* the filth that surrounds it, and grieving because of inability to exterminate it. Again, that principle of holiness in the soul may be distinguished thus: a holy God is *delighted in*. You dare not say you delight in God? But do you not admire and adore His character? Do you not perceive and own His attributes are perfect? Do you not crave after and seek unto communion with Him? The unregenerate do not! that is the last thing *they* want! Are not your most joyous moments those which are spent in fellowship with God—a brief foretaste of Heaven? Do you not long to be conformed to His image? These are some of the certain marks of a principle of holiness in the heart, none of which are the products of mere nature, nor can they be attributed unto any refinings of the flesh. A work of grace must be wrought before the heart desires, seeks after, delights in God.

Fourth, *an humble heart* is another sure evidence of the “good work” having been performed in it. Necessarily so, for nothing is more characteristic of fallen man than self-complacency and self-satisfaction. If, then, a person genuinely loathes himself, if he frankly acknowledges his very righteousnesses are as filthy rags, then a miracle of grace must have been wrought within him. Yes, says the dubious reader, I freely endorse the truth of that, yet I certainly dare not lay claim to possessing an *humble* heart. How can I when fully conscious of the fact that I am so often filled with pride? Why, I am such a conceited creature that I take credit for the faithful discharge of duties, and pat myself on the back when I have had liberty at prayer. Even if I be chastened for a season, I congratulate myself on my growing humility. No, my heart is very far from being a lowly one.

Let it be pointed out, then, that the presence of spiritual humility does not destroy or even refine natural pride. No, not in that direction must we look for proofs of its existence. Where, then? Here: if regenerated you dare not, you cannot, you could not make yourself get alone with God and *boast before Him*. Yet the Pharisee does (Luke 18:11)! Then *you* are *not* a Pharisee, dear friend. When before God, you disown all worthiness of your own, and cast yourself upon His bare *grace*. Do you? yes; then that proves there *is* a principle of true humility in your heart. Are you not thoroughly convinced that if ever you be justified it must be by and because of the righteousness of Christ, and *that alone*? But no self-righteous person will allow that. Are you not deeply distressed over the workings of pride in your heart? You would not be so if there were no spiritual principle of humility in you. No unregenerate person ever grieves over the swellings of self-complacency.

“There is in some weaker Christians, I do not know well what name to call it by, it is an over modesty, a thinking and speaking over meanly of themselves; and which they affect to do, and carry things to too great a length very much this way, as if they had no faith, nor love, and scarce any hope; and are ready to express themselves in such sort as seems to border, at least, upon a denial of the work of grace upon their souls; and is like a tearing up by the roots, as much as in them lies, the very principles of grace in them; which should *never be encouraged*, but discountenanced; the least measure of grace should be *owned*, and men should be thankful for it, and pray for an increase of it” (John Gill). It is because of this we have spoken so plainly and frankly above, trusting that it

may please God to bless the same unto the establishing of some of His trembling little ones.

Now, dear reader, we have sought to show that the “good work” which the Spirit has begun in those whom He has brought from death unto life may be discovered *by the effects* which it produces upon its favoured subjects. Those effects we have summed up in a harrowed, honest, holy, and humble heart. These are the sure indexes, the marks, the infallible criteria by which we may *identify* the Spirit’s miracle of grace. Such lovely graces are not the native product of earth’s human soil; no, they come down from above and are planted in the soul at regeneration.

We have not left ourselves much space for the third main division, to consider *the completion* of this good work: “He which hath begun a good work in you *will finish it* until the day of Jesus Christ.” One of the things which occasion most concern unto those who have a little assurance is that the work of Divine grace within them is making such small progress, nay, it often seems, none at all; that there is no growth in grace, no fruitfulness. To those who mourn over this, the above is indeed a precious promise. First, it is an absolute and unconditional one; there are no provisos or stipulations attached to it. The good work proceeds as it began—altogether apart from creature worthiness or creature efforts. And, we may add, its continuation, like its beginning, is perceivably only by the *effects* which are produced.

Second, it is a promise made good by pure grace—notwithstanding innumerable failures and sins. In himself, the believer is just as unworthy at the close of his pilgrimage as he was when the good work was begun in him. It is *all of grace* from first to last. Third, this promise is one which issues from the eternal and immutable love of God, which is solemnly pledged in the Everlasting Covenant and guaranteed by the infinitely meritorious work of Christ. Fourth, this promise is secured by Divine omnipotence; despite indwelling sin, a hostile world, an opposing Devil, “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.” O what thanks and praise are due unto Him who enables the believer to say, “The LORD *will perfect* that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O LORD, endureth forever” (Psa. 138:8).—A.W.P.



## The Doctrine of Sanctification.

### 13. *Its Progress.*

Normal Christian experience is a progress in practical holiness. Where there is life there is growth, and even when growth ceases there is a development and maturing of what is grown, unto increasing fruitfulness or usefulness. We say “normal,” for even in the natural (which ever adumbrates the spiritual) there is such a thing as stunted growth and arrested development—alas that we so often see examples of this among the Lord’s people. Yet those very failures only emphasize the fact—testified to by every Christian conscience—that we *ought* to go on “from strength to strength” (Psa. 84:7), that we *should be* “changed into” the image of the Lord “from glory to glory” (2 Cor. 3:18), that is, from one degree of it to another. That such progress *is* our duty is clear from many passages: “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound *more and more*” (1 Thess. 4:1).

It seems strange that there are those who not only repudiate in toto any such thing as “progressive sanctification,” but who are bitterly opposed to those who contend for the same, even though our contention be scripturally and soberly conducted; stranger still that those very men belong to the same denomination as John Gill. They know quite well that those whom they condemn do not advocate any refining of the old nature or spiritualizing of the old man, nor have the slightest leanings to the evil dogma of fleshly perfection. Nevertheless, they continue to misrepresent and denounce them. It is quite true that the believer possesses a sanctification which is absolute and perfect, admitting of no degrees or improvements. Yet that does not alter the fact that there is another sense in which the believer’s sanctification is a relative and imperfect one, and that the pursuit of holiness is to be his chief quest. Why confuse two totally different aspects of the subject, and refuse to recognize they *both* exist?!

“The adjuncts or properties of sanctification. First, it is *imperfect* in the present state, though it will most certainly be made perfect; where the work is begun it will be performed. Sanctification in Christ is perfect, but sanctification in the saints themselves is imperfect: it is perfect with respect to parts, but not with respect to degrees. Sanctification, as a principle, which is the new creature or new man, has all his parts; though these are not grown up to the measure of the fullness of the stature of Christ, as they will do. Where there is one grace, there is every grace, though none perfect. There is a comparative perfection in the saints when compared with what they themselves once were, and others are; and when compared even with other saints, for one saint may have a greater degree of grace and holiness than another: ‘let us therefore, as many as be perfect’ (Phil. 3:15); and yet the greatest of those was not absolutely perfect, even the Apostle himself, who said so in Philippians 3:12” (John Gill).

That sanctification in the best of men *is imperfect* appears unmistakably from various considerations. First, from the continual wants of the saints. In this life they “hunger and thirst after righteousness” which shows they are not yet filled. They own themselves to be “poor and needy” (Psa. 86:11): their strength is feeble, and they constantly require fresh supplies of grace to subdue sin, resist temptation, perform duties, and persevere in faith and in obedience. True, the grace of God is sufficient for them, yet they are bidden to seek it (Heb. 4:16; James 1:5). Second, it appears from the confessions of the same: “*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect*” (Phil. 3:12). Third, it ap-

pears from the defects of their graces. Let us ask those who repudiate “progressive sanctification,” Is your faith such that there is no need for it to be increased; your love, hope, patience, meekness, goodness, self-control, such that there is no room for improvement?

But though our practical sanctification be imperfect, *it is progressive*: “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18). Various figures are employed in Scripture to set this forth. The increase of grace in the believer was likened by Christ to “first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” The Apostle John distinguishes the various stages of Christian growth by likening young converts to “little children,” whose knowledge is small and strength weak; then to “young men,” who are strong and vigorous and have overcome the Wicked One, and then to “fathers” in Christ, who are mature and fruitful (1 John 2:13, 14). At first, light and discernment is very dim, like the sight of the man whose eyes Christ opened: he saw men like trees walking, but later all things clearly (Mark 8:24, 25). There is such a thing as growing in grace, increasing in the knowledge of God, becoming more fruitful. To admit this, is to grant a progress in practical holiness.

*An increase of holiness* should be desired and sought by us above everything else. What a high price should we set upon closer conformity to Christ. How diligently should we hide God’s Word in our hearts that we sin not against Him. How earnestly and frequently should we pray for the cleansing of our hearts and the renewing of a right spirit within us. Heavenly grace is to be prized above all the comforts, honours, riches of this passing world. The approbation of God is to be greatly preferred to the good opinion of men. Trials and afflictions are to be valued if they promote (as they should) our practical sanctification. If we are willing to take bitter medicine for the removal of bodily disorders, shall we murmur at bitter experiences sent for the purging of our lusts? If we can bear the pain of lancing a festered limb, shall we fight against the knife of the Great Physician when He would let out some of our corruptions? Let, then, growth in grace be made the chief business of life, no matter what temporal sacrifices it involves.

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet *more and more* in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ. Being *filled* with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:9-11). Those prayers recorded in Scripture are the outbreathings of holy men, expressing their deepest longings after those things which the Spirit in them deemed to be most excellent. Here the Apostle besought God on behalf of the Philippian saints. First, for those graces in them which are the inward springs of holiness: love, and knowledge and judgment. Second, that they might perform their duties with sincere hearts and God’s approval to the end of their course. Third, that they might be increasingly fruitful.

“That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment” (v. 9). Why is love first. Do not faith and knowledge, in the order of nature, go before “love”? Must we not know and trust a person before we can love him? Ah, it is *the springs of holiness* which are here in view, and love is the more immediate, for “faith worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6). “Provoke one another unto love and to good works” (Heb. 10:24) is the order: stir up the principle of love till it be enkindled, and good works, as the flame, will arise. We are predestinated to be holy before Him in love (Eph. 1:4)—holiness arises from love, and therefore is love the fulfilling of the Law. It is love which

makes the Divine commandments to be “not grievous” unto us (1 John 5:3). Let us, then, see to it that our hearts be inflamed with the wondrous love of God for us.

The Apostle adds “that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge” (Phil. 1:9). Generally Christians have to pray that their love might keep pace with their knowledge; but here Paul prays that their knowledge might be equal unto their love. Usually, the believer’s intelligence is ahead of his affections; it was, it seems, otherwise with the Philippians. No doubt the reader has observed that there are, broadly speaking, two sorts of saints: affectionate souls, whose hearts are warm toward Christ and his people, but less intelligent in spiritual things; others more knowing, yet less passionate, though equally Christians. The primitive times give instances of each. The Corinthians were very intelligent (see 1 Cor. 4, 5), but they were short in love (1 Cor. 8:2, 3). The Thessalonian and Philippian saints were a more simple and affectionate sort of Christian, whose love exceeded their knowledge—hence this particular prayer on their behalf.

There is nothing more painful to behold than Christians, who are truly sincere in love and warm in zeal of God, falling into wrong courses through lack of needful light, by which to distinguish between truth and error, duty and sin, bringing dishonour upon the Lord and being a stumblingblock to their fellows. Yet so it sometimes happens: if there are those who possess much light and knowledge, who are not so exercised about the sincerity of their heart and the uprightness of their walk as they ought to be; there are others whose affections are warm and who are conscious of their sincerity, yet largely ignorant of God’s revealed will, nevertheless confident that their course is right, and unwilling to study the Word or listen to those who desire to teach them the way of the Lord more perfectly. It is the part of wisdom to be slow in engaging in any new course, for once we are committed to it, pride makes it very hard to acknowledge we are wrong.

Love, then, needs the adjunct of light. Our affections require *directing* if they are to issue in righteousness. A longing to please God is the first essential; willingness to be instructed by Him therein is the second. Therefore Paul here prayed for the Philippian saints that their love might “abound yet more and more in knowledge and all judgment,” that is, that they might ever be able to distinguish between right and wrong and discern their duty in every case, however dark and doubtful or disputable it might appear. That “knowledge” is only obtainable through the Scriptures, and effectual by the Spirit’s powerful application of the same. There is much fanaticism on this point today, which though having a pious sound is most dishonouring to God. We have personally heard more than one assert very emphatically that they were “prompted by the Spirit” to do a thing God has expressly forbidden. My reader, the Holy Spirit never prompts one to do anything which is contrary to the Scriptures, so a knowledge *of them* is essential if we are to ascertain whether *our* “prompting” be of the Spirit or the restless urge of the flesh.

The Apostle adds to knowledge “and in all judgment,” or as the margin gives (preferably, we believe) “sense.” This is where he places the emphasis—“in *all* sense”—to denote this is of the greatest importance: such “knowledge” as has sense added to it. Thomas Goodwin very helpfully suggested that this term has a threefold force. First, as added to “knowledge” the two words together signify the same as the term *faith*. What is “faith” but a spiritual perception of spiritual things? As God has placed in our bodies senses suited to the material objects we come into contact with, so at regeneration He communicates that which is suited to the spiritual realm. There is no bodily sense but what faith is expressed by it: “*Taste and see that the Lord is good*” (Psa. 34:8); “My sheep *hear* My

voice" (John 10:27); "which our hands have handled" (1 John 1:1)—all referring to actions of *faith*.

Second, by "sense" is meant *experience*, which is a distinct thing from faith, as is clear from Romans 5:1-4. "Tribulation worketh patience" or submission to God, "and patience, experience." Did we not find in our afflictions that, after we had submitted to God (humbly bowed to His rod), He either delivered us from them or manifestly supported us under them? Thereby faith was strengthened against the next trial, for experience breeds "hope" or a confidence that God will conduct us safely through this wilderness and land us eventually in Canaan. Experience, then, is an acquired knowledge based on sense. The possessor of it has learned for himself the reality of God and the sufficiency of His grace. Contrariwise, just so far as the tried Christian turns from God to self or the creature for help, will he discover how worthless it is to lean upon an arm of flesh. It is thus "by reason of use" that we learn to have our "*senses exercised* to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14).

Third, by "sense" is meant those deep and blessed *impressions* on the soul, over and above the light of faith or knowledge by ordinary experiences. Such impressions truly are sense rather than knowledge, as all find who are favoured with them. They are therefore said to "pass knowledge" (Eph. 3:19) and are entitled "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7). The same is hinted at in Romans 5. First, the believer through being justified by faith, has peace with God (v. 1). Later, his passing through tribulations develops his graces; patience is strengthened, hope is kindled, "and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit" (v. 5). This assurance of God's love, then, is not apprehended so much by knowledge, as it is *shed abroad*—not in the understanding, but in the heart! So too "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8): a high and heavenly sense of Christ is what is meant; compare John 14:21.

"That ye may approve things that are excellent" or (margin) "try things that differ" (Phil 1:10). An increase in love, knowledge and sense, issues in an enlarged ability in the understanding to discern, judge of, and approve spiritual things: there is more discretion to choose that which is best. What is here mentioned has reference to the capacity to detect counterfeits and contrary, with the additional idea of the judgment relishing, closing with and cleaving to that which is perceived to be good. The same term occurs again in "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may *prove* what is that good and acceptable and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2)—i.e., not only discern the will of God in its truth from falsehood, in all the latitude of it, but *approve* it. There is a variety and vastness in the duties commanded (and the sins forbidden), and to discern this, especially the spiritual part of them, calls for much holiness of heart and discernment of mind.

As there is a double meaning to the term "approve" (discern and esteem), so the objects approved may be understood in a twofold way. First, as "the things that are excellent," which agrees with "approve." Second, "things which differ" which corresponds to "try" or "discern" between good and evil. An increase of holiness in the heart enables the understanding to distinguish more readily between true and false doctrine, wherein so many go astray. Not only so, there is a choosing of and cleaving to the former, and a rejection of the latter. So very much depends upon the state of our hearts; where *that* is healthy and the understanding properly enlightened, there will be wisdom in matters doc-

trinal and prudence in matters practical. "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8) is the sure consequence of "love abounding yet more and more."

"That ye may be sincere" is the next consequence which follows from increasing holiness. Sincerity is opposed to what is counterfeit: "sincerity and truth" are joined together in 1 Corinthians 5:8. That is *sincere* which is genuine, right, true. "Sincere" (according to the derivation of our English word) means without mixture of wax; there is no pretense or mingling of the false with the true. In connection with piety, sincerity signifies a right intention Godwards. In 2 Corinthians 1:12 we read of "godly sincerity": a sincerity of which God is witness. It is joined there with "simplicity," which is explained in "if thine eye be *single*" (Matt. 6:22)—the same word. We cannot, as the whitewashed worldling desires, serve two masters or mix fleshly craftiness with spiritual purity. Sincerity, then, is uprightness of heart, purity in its motives, aiming solely at the pleasing and glorifying of God.

"And without offence till the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:10). The word for "offence" signifies the mistreadings, stumblings, and bruising of the feet in walking. As in "sincerity" the intention of the mind is compared to the ("single") *eye*, so our actions are likened unto *steppings*. To be "without offence" is to avoid such ways as would induce others to sin or be occasions of stumbling. It is to give no scandal. Second, it is to refrain from any action contrary to the principles we profess before others: hence we find Paul blaming Peter and others for their departing from the Truth of the Gospel and "not walking uprightly" (Gal. 2:14). Third, it is to keep from anything contrary to that light which the conscience has received to walk by. Now in order to this blameless walk we need to "exercise" ourselves (Acts 24:16), and promptly confess and seek cleansing (1 John 1:9) wherein we have failed.

"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness" is the final issue of increased holiness. Now a tree is said to be full of fruit when all its branches are laden therewith; a Christian is full of fruit when all the faculties of his soul and members of his body are active in obedience to God. As there is a superfluity of evil flowing from the unregenerate, so there should be an abounding of goodness from the regenerate: "unto *all* pleasing, being fruitful in *every* good work" (Col. 1:10). One virtue is to be added to another: 2 Peter 1:5-7. To be holy "in *all* manner of conversation" (1 Peter 1:15) is the standard at which we must aim; and that, not occasionally and spasmodically, but at all times, and that unto the very end of our earthly course; "till the day of Christ."

"Which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. Those fruits are "by Jesus Christ," first, because of our union with Him, as branches in the Vine. Second, because their life is that of the Spirit, which we have received from Christ. Third, because they are performed by motives drawn from Christ and are patterned after the example He has left us. Fourth, because it is for His sake God accepts them. And they are unto the "glory and praise of God" so far as that is our aim in them. Here, then, is what we understand by "progressive sanctification" or increasing holiness: our love for God and His principle waxing stronger and stronger, directed by spiritual knowledge and confirmed by spiritual perception; the result being that we have an enlightened understanding to perceive more clearly the path of duty, a heart that rings true before God, and a walk that is without scandal; making us fruitful both inwardly and outwardly, thereby honouring

Christ and pleasing God. (For part of the above we are indebted to Thomas Goodwin).—  
A.W.P.

### Welcome Tidings.

“For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). From the very beginning, the publishing of this magazine has been a work of faith—alas that unbelief has so often obtruded and marred it. We had no earthly organization behind us, no influential friends who guaranteed their support. Nor had a company of Christians offered to subscribe if we would print. We were the pastor of no church, belonged to no denomination, and were “in fellowship” with no “assemblies.” We had not a single reader in sight! We were cast entirely upon Him whom we believe put it into our heart to embark on this enterprise. And He did not fail us. That was in 1922. We set our hearts upon a thousand subscribers for the first year, and we obtained them with a number to spare: a few of which are still receiving the “Studies.”

Before the second year was ended the Lord made it plain that He would have us undertake this work single-handed, for we began it in cooperation with a friend. This was a severe trial of faith. Neither the editor nor his wife had any experience of typing. It took all my available time to compose the articles. My dear wife, in addition to her household duties, took up this work, and though she never had a lesson, by the Lord’s grace soon became able to type out all the articles. It may interest some of our friends to learn that all of my earlier books—Gleanings in Genesis, The Sovereignty of God, The Redeemer’s Return, etc.—were written out by hand.

After five years God led us to remove the subscription-price from the magazine, and trust Him to move the readers to send in sufficient by voluntary gifts to defray all expenses. Nor has He failed us. Sometimes the meal ran very low in the barrel, but it was never completely exhausted, and during the ten years we have been issuing it free, not a single bill has remained unpaid for forty-eight hours. Some of those who contributed most liberally in the earlier years have been called Home, yet we have suffered no lack; if we do not receive a few large donations, the Lord sends us in a greater number of smaller ones.

We are still called upon to walk by faith. More recently our severest trial is a decreasing circulation. At the close of the last year or two, when hundreds of names had to be dropped from our list (because they gave no evidence of being helped), it looked as though it would be impossible for us to continue another six months. The fact is that it has been, and now is, literally a “hand to mouth” experience in this matter of having enough readers to warrant our continuing to publish. At the end of June we again had to drop from our mailing-list quite a number, and where new ones will come from to take their places, we know not.

And is not this experience of ours in connection with the magazine duplicated in some form or another in the life of each Christian reader? God has so ordered it that “We walk by *faith*, not by sight.” In your case it may be finances: God keeps you in such circumstances that you are unable to look ahead and see where the next month’s rent is coming from. Or it may be a matter of failing health and the increasing infirmities of old age: competition grows keener each year and the battle of life harder, and so far as sight is concerned the outlook is dark—then plead Philippians 4:19! In the case of others, it is their loved ones: long since committed to the Lord, the subjects of countless prayers, yet so far there is no visible indication that God has heard. Then “*Continue* in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col. 4:2). Yes, each of God’s people is called upon to walk *by faith*.

But in our case God has graciously permitted us to see something of the fruits of our labours, granting encouragement along the way. Letters come to hand each week from readers in different parts of the earth, testifying to the help and blessing received from the "Studies." If there are many who dislike that which searches the heart, there are still a few left who are thankful for the same. If there are those who greatly prefer a magazine devoted to more sensational topics, there are some who would rather have that which is more substantial and satisfying to the soul. If there are those who prefer brief generalizations and complain because we are too wordy, there are others who thank us for entering fully into detail. The following extracts from letters received the past few months are cause for thanksgiving and praise.

"How very glad I am to be able to send the enclosed towards the printing of *Studies*. How one does praise the Lord that there is such a magazine to be had. They become more and more helpful to me as the months go by. My daily prayer is that God will richly bless you, and cause you to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That you may have that Divine skill and understanding which God gave to Daniel of old, that we His hungry children may be fed with heavenly manna and not stones, which is all that the ministers of today give us. Truly I would stay at home with my Bible and the Studies, and there drink in the truth; and as you say, it does us good to read the articles *two or three times*."

"I thank you most sincerely for the regular arrival of *Studies* during the past year, and would say how much I have enjoyed the various articles, and I trust profited by them. Personally I know of nothing apart from the Bible that comes any where near them for real spiritual and scriptural help. Nine bound volumes of them are among my most treasured books. The apostasy advances and the love of many is waxing cold. Wherever I go to preach I find dwindling congregations, and no exercise about it." . . . "It gives me joy to send you this expression of appreciation for your magazine. I feel greatly indebted for the help received from its pages. Your articles are so pregnant with the spirit of sympathy for the weak, and yet evenly balanced with searching truth." . . . "My eyesight is very bad, so that I cannot read as much as I like; but I feel I *must* have the *Studies* as they are such a help to me. The last two articles on Sanctification were a great comfort."

"Once again it is our privilege to thank you for the *Studies*. We have found much in them to profit. We are grateful for the soul-food we have had ministered to us—strong meat much needed in these dark days." . . . "The *Studies* are much appreciated, especially by father, who is not able to travel about as formerly, and it is our desire that you may long be spared to publish a magazine in which the emphasis is on 'Christian' and not on 'Denomination,' and in which no extraneous matter obtrudes." . . . "We thank you again for your part in bringing light and blessing into our life through your *Studies*, which I have read and *re-read*. May the Lord grant you wisdom and strength to carry on this wonderful work, not forgetting Mrs. Pink for her part in it." . . . "We trust you will be enabled to continue printing such a valuable magazine. We quite understand the reason that the demand is not greater. If it were a carnal magazine to suit the carnal appetite, there would be a demand for them. We should praise Himself there is still a number who relish such spiritual food."

"I have been taking this magazine for some time back and cannot do without it. It searches the heart, and I know I am a better Christian for it. I read every word in it, and then look forward with much pleasure to the coming of the next issues." "Your *Studies*



are a tonic to my soul, a rod for my back, and a guide for my feet. I greatly appreciate the fact that there is no sloppiness and no pandering to the flesh in them. We are soldiers, and in them we get our marching orders, are expected to keep our kit in trim, and are fed on soldier's fare. May God condescend to hear my prayer and bless you and your dear wife." . . . "I thank you heartily for the edification and cheer I receive from your writings, which are so much more profound and discriminating than what is usually found these days in religious magazines. I was greatly helped several years ago during a time of hard testing by your *Gleanings in Genesis*" (Lawyer). . . . "I gladly admit that while I find much comfort and great enlightenment in perusing the contents of the *Studies*, they sometimes cut very deep and cause great searchings of heart. I know I love the Truth, and amidst all the deceitfulness of my heart I can say (I believe out of my soul) I delight in the Law of God after the inward man." . . . "We enjoy the articles on The Life of David and Sanctification, indeed they are all so helpful, although they make me feel discouraged at times. Yet, I know the message is from God and meant to reveal the perfidy of the human heart (my heart): therefore it is a *true* blessing, for when the message brings us to our knees in reverence, humility, and contrition, it is truly the work of the blessed Spirit. We are still thanking God for bringing you into touch with us: what a difference (under His blessing) it has wrought in our lives."

"I want to say that the eight years I have been reading your *Studies* they are the most helpful reading I have ever found outside the Bible." "I am a sea-faring man, and I find your magazine a great help at sea, when I am not able to attend the means of grace." . . . "I get more help from the *Studies* than any other writings I can find. Thank Him for such help." . . . "I am still enjoying the old copies, and have some of the articles translated into Chinese. I am now starting to translate those upon 'Heart Work' which is, I believe, the message of pressing need for the present day" (Native Christian) . . . "We are more pleased with each issue. They cause one deep heart searching and the humiliating of the flesh, so that we often wonder as to our standing before Him. Yet we know whom we have believed." . . . "Your *Studies* always contain such helpful messages, especially if read with the thought of application to one's self of the many heart searching facts brought to our attention. They have always been a source of great blessing to me, and I know I have been drawn closer to my Lord and Saviour because of this instruction from your pen." To God alone be *all* the praise.—A.W.P.