

**May, 1936**  
**Studies in the Scriptures**  
**The Spirit Witnessing.**

Rightly did Jonathan Edwards affirm, “Many have been the mischiefs that have arisen from that false and delusory notion of the witness of the Spirit, that it is a kind of inward voice, suggestion, or revelation from God to man, that he is beloved of Him, and that his sins are pardoned—sometimes accompanied with, sometimes without, a text of Scripture; and many have been the false and vain (though very high) affections that have arisen from hence. It is to be feared that multitudes of souls have been eternally undone by it.” Especially was this so in the past, when fanaticism made much of the Spirit witnessing to souls.

An affectionate and dutiful child has within his own bosom the proof of the peculiar and special relationship in which he stands to his father. So it is with the Christian: his filial inclinations and aspirations after God prove that he is His child. In addition to this, the Holy Spirit gives assurance of the same blessed fact by shedding abroad in his heart the love of God (Rom. 5:5). The Holy Spirit’s indwelling of the Christian is the sure mark of his adoption. Yet the Spirit cannot be discerned by us in His essence: only by means of His operations is He to be known. As we discern His work, we perceive the Worker; and *how* His work in the soul can be *ascertained* without diligent examination of our inward life and a careful comparison of it with the Scriptures, we know not. The Spirit reveals Himself to us by that spirit which He begets in us.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16). Let it be carefully noted that this verse does not say the Spirit bears witness *to* our spirit (as it is so often misquoted), but “*with*”—it is a single word in the Greek (a compound verb) “beareth witness with.” It is deeply important to notice this distinction: the witness of the Spirit is not so much a revelation which is made to my spirit, considered as the recipient of the testimony, as it is a *confirmation* made in or with my spirit, considered as co-operating in the testimony. It is not that my spirit bears witness that I am a child of God, and that then the Spirit of God comes in by a distinguishable process with a separate testimony, to say Amen to my assurance; but it is that there is a single testimony which has a conjoint origin.

The “witness” of the Spirit, then, is *not* by means of any supernatural vision nor by any mysterious voice informing me I am a child of God—for the devil tells many a hypocrite that. “This is not done by any immediate revelation or impulse or merely by any text brought to the mind (for all these things are equivocal and delusory); but by coinciding with the testimony of their own consciences, as to their uprightness in embracing the Gospel, and giving themselves up to the service of God. So that, whilst they are examining themselves concerning the reality of their conversion, and find Scriptural evidence of it, the Holy Spirit from time to time shines upon His own work, excites their holy affections into lively exercise, renders them very efficacious upon their conduct, and thus puts the matter beyond all doubt” (T. Scott).

First, the Spirit’s witness is in strict accord with the teaching of Holy Writ. In the Word He has given certain marks by which the question may be decided as to whether or not I am a child of God: He has described certain features by which I may identify myself—see John 8:39, Romans 4:12 and 8:14 and contrast John 8:44 and Ephesians 2:2, 3. It is by the Truth that the Spirit enlightens, convicts, comforts, feeds, and guides the peo-

ple of God; and it is by and through the Truth that He bears witness with their spirit. There is a perfect harmony between the testimony of Scripture and the varied experiences of each renewed soul, and it is by revealing to us this harmony, by showing us the correspondency between the history of our soul and the testimony of the Word that He persuades us we are born again: "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him" (1 John 3:19).

Second, He works such graces in us as are peculiar to God's children, and thereby evidences our interest in the favour of God. He makes the Christian to feel "poor in spirit," a pauper dependent upon the charity of God. He causes him to "mourn" over much which gives the worldling no concern whatever. He bestows a spirit of "meekness" so that the rebellious will is, in part, subdued, and God's will is submitted unto. He gives a "hunger and thirst after righteousness" and gives the soul to feel that the best this perishing world has to offer him is unsatisfying and but empty husks. He makes him "merciful" toward others, counteracting that selfish disposition which is in us by nature. He makes him "pure in heart" by giving him to pant after holiness and hate that which is vile (Matt. 5:3-8, etc.). By His own fruit in the soul, the Spirit makes manifest His indwelling presence.

Third, He helps us to discern His work of grace in our souls more clearly. Conscience does its part, and the Spirit confirms the same. The conjoint witness of the Spirit gives vigour and certainty to the assurance of our hearts. When the flood-waters of a land mingle themselves with a river they make one and the same stream, but it is now more rapid and violent. In like manner, the united testimonies of our own conscience and of the Spirit make but one witness, yet it becomes such as to break down our fears and overcome our doubts. When the blessed Spirit shines upon His own work of grace and holiness in our souls, then in His light we "see light" (Psa. 36:9). Inward holiness, a filial spirit, an humble heart, submission to God, is something that the devil cannot imitate.

Fourth, He helps us not only to see grace, but to judge of the sincerity and reality of it. It is at this point many honest souls are most sorely exercised. It is much easier to prove that we believe, than to be assured that our faith is a saving one. It is much easier to conclude that we love Christ, than it is to be sure that we love Him in sincerity and for what He is in Himself. Our hearts are fearfully deceitful, there are such minglings of faith and unbelief (Mark 9:24), and grace in us is so feeble that we hesitate to pronounce positively upon our state. But when the Spirit increases our faith, rekindles our love, strengthens us with might in the inner man, He enables us to come to a definite conclusion. First He sanctifies and then He certifies.

The deceits of Satan, though often plausible imitations up to a point, are, in their tendency and outcome, always opposed to that which God enjoins. On the other hand, the operations of the Spirit are ever in unison with the written Word. Here, then, is a sure criterion by which we may test *which* spirit is at work within us. The three truths of Scripture which more directly concern us are, our ruin by nature, our redemption by grace, and the duties we owe by virtue of our deliverance. If then, our beliefs, our feelings, our assurance, tend to exalt depraved nature, depreciate Divine grace, or lead to a licentious life, they are certainly not of God. But if they have quite the opposite tendency, convincing us of our wretchedness by nature, making Christ more precious to us, and leading us into the duties He enjoins, they are of the Holy Spirit.

It only remains for us to ask, Why does not the Holy Spirit grant unto the Christian a

strong and comforting assurance of his Divine sonship *at all times*? Various answers may be given. First, we must distinguish between the Spirit's *work* and His *witness*: often it is His office to convict and make us miserable, rather than to impart comfort and joy. Second, His assuring consolation is often withheld because of our slackness: we are bidden to "make your calling and election sure" and "*be diligent* that ye may be found of Him in peace" (2 Peter 1:10 and 3:14)—the comforts of the Spirit drop not into lazy souls. Third, because of our sins: "The Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the Word" (Acts 10:44)—not while they were walking in the paths of unrighteousness. His witness is a *holy* one: He will not put a jewel in a swine's snout (Prov. 11:22). Keep yourselves in the love of God (Jude 21) and the Spirit's witness will be yours.—A.W.P.

### The Epistle to the Hebrews.

#### 101. *The Call to Hear*: 12:25, 26.

“See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from Heaven” (Heb. 12:25). In these words we find the Holy Spirit moving the Apostle to make a practical application unto his readers of what he had just brought before them in the previous verses. The degree or extent of the privileges enjoyed, is the measure of our responsibility: the richer the blessing God grants us, the deeper is our debt of obligation to Him. “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more” (Luke 12:48): it was of this principle and fact the Hebrews were now reminded.

The Apostle had just completed drawing his final contrast between Judaism and Christianity (vv. 18-24), in which he had again shown the immeasurable superiority of the latter over the former, and now he uses this on which to base an exhortation unto faith and obedience, or faithfulness and perseverance. Herein we have another example of the apostolic method of ministry: all their teaching had a *practical* end in view. Their aim was something more than enlightening the mind, namely, the moving of the will and ordering of the walk. Alas that there is so very little of this in present-day teaching and preaching. The design of the pulpit now seems to be entertaining the people, and rarely does it go further than instructing the mind—that which searches the conscience or calls for the performance of duty, that which is solemn and unpalatable to the flesh, is, for the most part, studiously avoided. May it please the Lord to grant His servants all needed grace for deliverance from a compliance with this “speak unto us *smooth* things.”

The grander the revelation which God is pleased to make of Himself, the more punctual the attendance and the fuller the response which He requires from us. In the verses which are now before us we find the Apostle improving his argument by pointing out the weighty implications of it. Therein he returns to his main design, which was to urge the professing Hebrews unto steadfastness in their Christian course and conflict, and to steadily resist the temptation to lapse back into Judaism. This deeply important and most necessary exhortation he had urged upon them again and again; see Hebrew 2:1, 3; 3:12, 13; 4:1; 6:4-6; 10:26-29; 12:1, 15. Therein the servant of God may learn another valuable lesson pointed by the example of the Apostle, namely, how God requires him to go over the same ground again and again where the *practical duties* of the Christian are concerned, and hesitate not to frequently repeat the *exhortations* of Holy Writ! This may not increase his popularity with men, but it will meet with the Lord’s approval; and no faithful minister can have both!

“See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.” The Greek word for “See” is rendered “take heed” in Hebrews 3:12; the word for “refuse” signifies “deprecate”—do not disregard, still less reject. Now not only is this argument based upon the statement made in the preceding verses, but *the motive* for complying with it is to be drawn therefrom. It is because we “are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire” (Heb. 12:18), that is, unto that order of things wherein the Divine righteousness was so vividly displayed in *judicial* manifestation; but because we “are come unto Mount Sion,” which speaks of pure *grace*, that we are now thus exhorted, for holiness ever becometh God’s house. It is in the realization of God’s wondrous grace that the Christian is ever to find his most effectual incentive unto a godly walk; see Titus 2:11, 12.

“See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh,” which is the negative way of saying “*Hear Him*”—*Heed Him*, by believing and yielding obedience to what He says. This exhortation looks back to “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not *hearken* unto My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him” (Deut. 18:18, 19) c.f. Acts 3:22; 7:37. This is what the Apostle now reminded the Hebrews of: take heed that ye hear Him, for if you fail to, God will consume you with His wrath. A similar charge was given by God after Christ became incarnate: “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; *hear ye Him*” (Matt. 17:5).

“This is the foundation of all Gospel faith and obedience, and the formal reason of the condemnation of all unbelievers. God hath given command unto all men to hear, that is, believe and obey His Son Jesus Christ. By virtue thereof, He hath given command unto others to preach the Gospel unto all individuals. They who believe them, believe in Christ; and they who believe in Christ through Him, believe in God (1 Peter 1:21), so that their faith is ultimately revolved into the authority of God Himself. And so they who refuse them, who hear them not, do thereby refuse Christ Himself; and by so doing, reject the authority of God, who hath given this command to hear Him, and hath taken on Himself to require it when it is neglected; which is the condemnation of all unbelievers. This method, with respect unto faith and unbelief, is declared and established by our Saviour: ‘he that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me’: Luke 10:16” (John Owen).

“See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh”—note carefully the *present* tense: not “that spoke.” Christ is still speaking through His Gospel, by His Spirit, and instrumentally through His own commissioned servants, calling upon all who come under the sound of His voice to serve and obey Him. There are many ways in which we may “refuse” to hear and heed Him. First, by neglecting to read daily and diligently the Scriptures through which He speaks. Second, by failing to attend public preaching where His Word is faithfully dispensed—if so be we live in a place where this holy privilege is obtainable. Third, by failing to comply with the terms of His Gospel and yield ourselves unto His authority. Fourth, by forsaking the Narrow Way of His commandments and going back again to the world. Fifth, by abandoning the truth for error, which generally ends in total apostasy. How we need to pray for an *hearing ear*, that is, for a responsive heart and yielded will.

“For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him speaketh from Heaven” (Heb. 12:5). In these words the Apostle continues to emphasise the contrast which obtains between Judaism and Christianity. What we have here is an echo from the keynote struck in the opening words of our Epistle: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past *unto the fathers* by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken *unto us* by His Son” (Heb. 1:1, 2). It is in the light of that statement our present verse is to be read and interpreted. The *Speaker* throughout is one and the same, namely, God (the Father), but the mouthpieces He employed differed greatly: under Judaism He spoke through mere men, the “prophets,” but in connection with Christianity He speaks in and by His own beloved “Son.”

This difference in the respective mouthpieces employed by God was in accord with and indicative of the relative importance of the two revelations given by Him. Judaism was but a religion for earth, and a temporary arrangement for the time being: accordingly,

human agents were God's instruments in connection therewith. But Christianity is a revelation which concerns a *heavenly* calling, heavenly citizenship, a heavenly inheritance, and exhibits *eternal* relations and realities: appropriately, then, was the everlasting Son, "the Lord from Heaven," the One by whom its grand secrets were disclosed. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). The primary reference there is a *dispensational* one. Under Judaism God dwelt behind the veil; but under Christianity "we all, with open face" behold, as in a glass, "the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Under the old covenant men were unable to go into God; but under the new covenant God has, in the person of Christ, come out to men.

But blessed and glorious as is the contrast between Judaism and Christianity, equally solemn and terrible is the contrast between *the punishment* meted out to those who refuse God's revelation under each. God speaks now from a higher throne than the one He assumed at Sinai: that was on earth, the one He now occupies is in Heaven. Therefore it must inevitably follow that the guilt of those who refuse to heed Him today is far greater, and their punishment must be the more intolerable. Not only do higher privileges involve increased obligations, but the failure to discharge those added obligations necessarily incurs deeper guilt and a heavier penalty. *This* is what the Apostle presses here, as he had in "For if the word spoken by angels (at Sinai) was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall *we* escape, if we neglect so great salvation"? (Heb. 2:2, 3). If, then, we in anywise fear God's vengeance or value His favour how it behooves us to most seriously heed the grace proffered in the Gospel!

Though Christianity has in it far less of what is terrifying than had Judaism and far more in it which exhibits the grace and mercy of God, nevertheless, apostasy from the one cannot be less terrible in its consequences than was apostasy from the other. There is as much to be dreaded in disregarding the authoritative voice of God now as there was then; yea, as we have pointed out, the rejection of His message through Christ involves a worse doom than despising of His Word through Moses and the Prophets. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much *sorer* punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?" (Heb. 10:28, 29). True, God does not now speak amid thunderings and lightnings, but rather by a tender appeal to our hearts; yet the rejection of the latter is fraught with more direful consequences than was the refusal of the former.

Alas that this weighty truth is so feebly apprehended today, and so little emphasised by the pulpit. Is it not a fact that the idea now generally prevailing is that the God of the New Testament is far more amiable and benevolent than the God of the Old Testament? How far from the truth is this. "I change not" (Mal. 3:6) is the Lord's express avowal. Moreover, it is under the new covenant (and not the old) that we find the most awe-inspiring and terror-provoking revelation of the righteous wrath of a sin-hating God. It was not through Moses or the prophets, but by the Lord Jesus that the everlasting fires of Hell were most vividly depicted: He it was who spoke the plainest and the most frequently of that fearful place wherein there is "wailing and gnashing of teeth." If Christ was the One to most fully reveal God's love, He was also the One who most fully declared His wrath.

"They escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth" (Heb. 12:25). No, even though they had enjoyed such unparalleled privileges. They had been brought out of the

house of bondage, delivered from the enemy at the Red Sea, ate of the heavenly manna and drank of the water from the smitten rock; yet we are told "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness" (1 Cor. 10:5). The Apostle had already reminded the Hebrews that it was of them God had declared, "They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known My ways. So I swear in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest" (Heb. 3:10, 11). And this was because "they *refused* Him that spake" to them. They were disobedient at Sinai, where, so far from submitting to the Divine authority to have "no other gods," they made and worshipped the golden calf. They were unbelieving at Kadesh Barnea, when they listened to the scepticism of the ten spies.

"Much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven" (Heb. 12:25). Again we say, how greatly at variance with this is the idea which now obtains so generally. The great majority of professing Christians suppose there is much *less* danger of those bearing the name of the Lord being severely dealt with under the milder regime of Christianity, than there was for renegades in the days of Moses. But our text says, "much *more* shall not we escape"! Though it be true that Christianity is essentially a system of *grace*, nevertheless the requirements of *holiness* and the claims of *justice* are not thereby set aside. The despisers of grace must be and will be as surely punished as were the despisers of Law; yea, "much more" so because *their* sin of refusal is more heinous. It is "the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:17) which the despisers of the Gospel—its invitations and its requirements—will have to reckon with: so far as Mount Sion excels Mount Sinai so will the punishment of Christ-scorners exceed that of those who despised Moses.

Ere passing on to our next verse we must anticipate a "difficulty" which our passage is likely to raise in the minds of some readers: How are we to harmonize the eternal security of the saints with this "much more shall not *we* escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from Heaven"? Alas, that such a question needs answering: those who frame it betray a lamentable ignorance of *what* the "security of saints" consists of. God has never promised any man to preserve him in the path of self-will and self-pleasing. Those who reach Heaven are they who follow (though stumblingly and with many falls) the only path which leads there, namely, the "Narrow Way" of *self-denial*. Or, to put it another way, the only ones who escape the everlasting burnings are they who *heed* Him that speaketh from Heaven, for "He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey* Him" (Heb. 5:9).

The writer believes firmly in the blessed truth of "the eternal security of the saints," but by no means all who profess to be Christians are "saints." This raises the question, how may I know whether or not I am a saint? The answer is, By impartially examining myself in the light of Holy Writ and ascertaining whether or no I possess *the character and conduct* of a "saint." The Lord Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27). A "saint" or "sheep" of Christ, then, is one who *hears* HIS voice above all the siren voices of the world, above all the clamourings of the flesh, and gives evidence that he does so by *following* Him, that is, by heeding His commandments, being regulated by His will, submitting to His Lordship. And to them, and to none other, Christ says, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:28).

Should it be asked, But was not the Apostle addressing the "saints," "sheep," "holy

brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb. 3:1) here in Hebrews 12:25? And if so, *why* did he present before *them* such an awful threat? First, these solemn words were addressed to *all* who come under the sound of the Gospel, and the response made by the hearer or reader serves as an admirable *test*. The proud and self-confident, who rely wholly upon a profession made by them years ago, ignore it to their own undoing, supposing those words have no application *to them*. Whereas the lowly and self-distrustful lay it to heart with trembling, and are thereby preserved from the doom threatened. Second, in the preservation of His people from destruction, God uses warnings and threatenings, as well as promises and assurances. He keeps His people in the Narrow Way by causing them to *heed* such an exhortation as this, “Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not *thee*” (Rom. 11:20, 21).

What is meant by *turning away from* “Him that speaketh from Heaven”? First, it describes the attitude of that large class who come under the sound of the Gospel and dislike its exacting terms: Christ is far too holy to suit their carnal hearts, His call for them to “forsake all and follow Him” pleases not their corrupt nature; so He is “despised and rejected” by them. Second, it depicts the conduct of the stony-ground hearers, who under the emotional appeals of high-pressure evangelists “receive the Word with joy,” yet have “no *root*” in themselves, and so they quickly “fall away”: the scoffing of their godless companions or the appeal of worldly pleasures are too strong for them to continue resisting. Third, it denotes the lapse of those who having “escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome” so that “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Peter 2:20). Fourth, it announces the apostasy of those who, under pressure of persecution, renounce the Faith.

“Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also Heaven” (Heb. 12:26). There are some points about this verse and the one immediately following which are far from easy to elucidate, yet their main purport is not difficult to determine. In ceasing to “speak on earth” and in now “speaking from Heaven” God gave therein intimation that the old covenant had been *supplanted* by the new: that He had done with Judaism and established the “better thing” in its place. This it was which the pious Hebrews found so hard to receive, for Judaism had been instituted by God Himself. Nevertheless, He only designed it to fulfill a temporary purpose “until the time of reformation” (Heb. 9:10), and that time had now arrived. It was to demonstrate and establish this important fact that God moved His servant to write this Epistle.

Once more we would call attention to the method employed: Paul did not simply press his Apostolic authority, though that had been sufficient of itself; instead, he referred his readers to *the written Word of God*, quoting from Haggai—in this too he has left an admirable example for all ministers of the Gospel to follow: the words of God Himself are far more weighty than any of ours. At every vital stage of his argument the Apostle had referred the Hebrews to the Old Testament Scriptures. When he affirmed that Christ was superior to the heavenly hosts, he quoted “Let all the angels of God worship Him” (Heb. 1:6). When he warned of the danger of apostasy, he referred them to Psalm 95 (Heb. 3:7-11). When he insisted that Christ’s priesthood excelled Aaron’s, he cited “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (7:17). When he declared that the old



covenant was an imperfect and temporary one, he reminded them that Jeremiah had foretold the “new covenant” (8:8-10).

When he dwelt upon Christ coming to earth with the express purpose of supplanting all the Levitical sacrifices by offering Himself unto God, the Apostle showed that Psalm 40 had fore-announced (10:5-7) this very truth. When he called upon the Hebrews to walk by faith, He quoted Habakkuk 2:4, and then devoted the whole of the 11th chapter to illustrate the fact that all of the Old Testament saints had so walked. When he admonished them for fainting under the chastening rod of God, he bade them remember the exhortation of Proverbs 3:11 (12:5). When he would prove to them the inferiority of Judaism to Christianity, he dwelt upon the Exodus record of the terrifying phenomena which accompanied the appearing of the Lord at Sinai, where He entered into covenant with their fathers (12:18-21). And now that he affirmed that God no longer spake to them “on earth,” but rather “from Heaven,” he appeals again to their own Scriptures to show this very change had been Divinely predicted.

What an amazing knowledge of the Scriptures Paul possessed! And what a splendid use he made of it! He did not entertain his hearers and readers with anecdotes or by relating some of the sensational experiences through which God had brought him, still less did he descend to “pleasantries” and jokes in order to amuse them. No, he constantly brought them face to face with the Holy Word of the thrice Holy God. And that, by grace, is the unvarying policy we have sought to follow in this magazine: not only do we sedulously avoid any cheapening of the glorious Gospel of Christ, but we endeavour to furnish a proof text for every statement we make; for we ask no one to believe any doctrine or perform any duty on *our* mere say so. Some may complain that there is “too much repetition” in our articles, or that they are “too introspective,” or “too Calvinistic,” but their quarrel is not with us, but with Him whose Word we expound and enforce.

“Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also Heaven” (Heb. 12:26). The simplest and surest way of discovering the meaning of this verse and the force of citing Haggai 2:6, is to keep in mind the particular design which the Apostle had before him. That was twofold: to enforce the exhortation he had just given in the previous verse, and to continue emphasising and demonstrating the superiority of Christianity over Judaism. We will consider its terms, then, from each of these viewpoints. First, Paul aggravates the terribleness of turning away from God in Christ: if He who “shook” the earth is to be feared, much more so is He who “shakes” Heaven! Then let us beware of ignoring His voice: by inattention, by unbelief, by disobedience, by apostasy.

“Whose voice then shook the earth” is a figurative reference to God’s omnipotence, for His “voice” here has reference to the mighty power of God in operation: let the reader carefully compare Psalm 29:3-9, where he will find the wondrous effects of Providence ascribed to the “voice” of God. In particular, the Apostle here alludes to the declaration of God’s authority and the putting forth of His great strength at the time the Law was given: Sinai itself was convulsed, so that “the whole mount quaked greatly” (Exo. 19:18). Yet more than the earthquake is included in the words of our text: the entire commotion involved, with all the particulars enumerated in Hebrews 12:18-21, is comprehended therein. It is designated “shook the *earth*” because it was all on the earth, and involved only earthly things—it did not reach to Heaven and eternal things.

“But now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also

Heaven.” This clause has presented a hard riddle to the commentators, and scarcely any two of them, ancient or modern, agree in the solutions they have offered. Personally, we think they created their own difficulties. First, through failing to perceive that the “but *now*” is to be understood in connection with *the subject* the Apostle was then discussing, and not as something God was *then* promising to make good in the future. Second, through failing to give proper attention and weight to the term “promised,” which is surely enough to show that the final destruction of this scene (when the doom of the wicked will be sealed) cannot be the subject of which Haggai was prophesying. Third, through a slavish adherence to literalism—recent writers especially—which caused many to miss the meaning of “the earth” and “Heaven” in this passage. But these are points of too much importance to dismiss hurriedly, so we must leave their consideration till the next article.—A.W.P.

## The Life of David.

### 53. *His terrible Sin.*

David's fearful fall into committing adultery with Bathsheba was now followed by a crime yet more odious. His unlawful child, soon to be born, he had sought to father upon Uriah; but his efforts had failed. A desperate situation now confronted him. He knew that if Uriah lived, he must discover his wife's unfaithfulness, and this the king was determined to prevent at all costs. Even though it meant adding sin to sin and sinking more deeply into the mire of evil, David must preserve his reputation before men. Here, again, we see the likeness between him and Pilate: each sought to preserve innocent blood *and* the world (a position of honour in it) for himself at the same time, and surrendered the former for the latter when they could not both be retained—the "pride of life" was so strong that to maintain it, the death of another was not scrupled at.

Once a man, even though he be a believer, disregards the claims of God, he is very liable to ignore the claims of human friendship. It was so in the sad case here before us. David now shrank not from going to any length. First, he had tempted Uriah to break his vow (2 Sam. 11:11). Second, he had made him drunk, thinking that would cause him to break it (11:13). And now he deliberately plotted the death of his devoted subject. He had rather that innocent blood be shed, and his whole army be threatened with defeat, than that his *own* good name should be made a scandal. See to what incredible lengths sin will urge even a child of God once he yields to its clamourings: adultery now occasioned murder! Oh my reader, what very real need there is for begging God to enable you to "pass the time of your sojourning here *in fear*" (1 Peter 1:17).

"When a man has so far given place to the Devil as not only to commit scandalous sins, but to use disingenuous and base means of concealing them, and with sure prospect of having the whole exposed to public view; what would prevent his being pushed forward, by the same influence and from the same motives, to treachery, malice, and murder, till crimes are multiplied and magnified beyond computation, and till every nobler consideration is extinguished?" (T. Scott). Thus it was here: no matter what happened, David was resolved to maintain *his own* reputation. Sure proof was this that, at the time, he was completely dominated by Satan, as is shown by those words "lest being lifted up with *pride*, he fall into the condemnation of the Devil" (1 Tim. 3:6). How we need to pray that God would mercifully "*hide pride from*" us (Job 33:17)!

Further proof that David was then thoroughly in the toils of Satan may be seen in the subtle and vile tactics which he now resorted to. Thoroughly determined to cover his awful sin of adultery by committing still greater wickedness, he resolved to have poor Uriah put out of the way. "That innocent, valiant, and gallant man, who was ready to die for his prince's honour must die by his prince's hand" (Matthew Henry). Yes, but not directly; David was too cunning for that, and too anxious to preserve his own good name before men. He would not kill Uriah by his own hand, nor even bid his servants assassinate him, for his reputation had been destroyed by such a step. He therefore resorted to a more serpentine measure, which, though it concealed his own hand, was none the less heinous. The bravery of Uriah and his zeal for this country, suggested to the king the method of dispatching him.

"And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die" (2 Sam. 11:14,

15). With cold-blooded deliberation David penned a note to the commander of his army, commanding him to station his faithful soldier in the place where he would be the most exposed to the assaults of the foe, and then leave him to his cruel fate. The king's letter, decreeing his death, was carried by Uriah himself, and delivered to Joab. The general did as his master had bidden, and Uriah was slain. David's abominable plan succeeded, and he whose accusations he so much feared now lay silent in death—committed to an honourable grave, while his murderer's honour was sullied as long as this world lasts.

This terrible sin of David's was more laid to his charge by God than any other he committed: not only because of its gravity, and because it has given occasion to so many of His enemies to blaspheme, but also because it was more a deliberate and premeditated crime than an involuntary infirmity acting suddenly. How many of his failures are left on record: his lie to Abimelech (1 Sam. 21:2), his dissimulation before the king of Gath (1 Sam. 21:12), his rash vow to destroy Nabal (1 Sam. 25:33), his unbelieving "I shall one day perish at the hand of Saul" (1 Sam. 27:1), his injustice in the matter of Mephibosheth and Ziba (2 Sam. 16:4), his indulgence of Absalom (2 Sam. 14), his numbering of the people (2 Sam. 24); yet after his death God said, "David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any thing that He commanded him all the days of his life, *save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite*" (1 Kings 15:5).

The immediate sequel is as sad and awful as is what had just been before us. When he received the tidings that his vile plot had succeeded, David callously said to the messenger, "Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another" (2 Sam. 11:25). There was no compunction that a loyal supporter had been cruelly murdered, no horror of heart at his own guilt in connection therewith, no grief that others besides Uriah had been sacrificed for his crime; instead, he pretended that it was but "the fortunes of war," and to be taken stoically. Disregarding the massacre of his soldiers, David complimented Joab on the execution of his abominable order, and bade the messenger return "and encourage thou him."

"And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband" (v. 26). What a vile mockery! Only God knows how often the outward "mourning" over the departed is but a hypocritical veil to cover satisfaction of heart for being rid of their presence. Even where that be not the case, the speedy re-marriage of weeping widows and widowers indicates how shallow was their grief. "And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD" (v. 27). David had pleased himself, but he had grievously displeased the Lord! "Let none therefore encourage themselves in sin by the example of David, for if they sin as he did, they will fall under the displeasure of God as he did" (Matthew Henry).

The question has been asked, "Can a person who has committed such atrocious crimes, and so long remains impenitent, be indeed a child of God, a member of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit, and an heir of everlasting glory? Can one spark of Divine life exist unextinguished in such an ocean of evil?" Were we left to our own unaided judgment to make reply, most probably every last one of us would promptly answer, *No*, such a thing is unthinkable. Yet in the clear light of Holy Writ it is plain that such things *are* possible. Later, David made it manifest that he was a truly regenerated person by the sincerity and depth of his contrition and confession. Yet, let it be said that, no man while guilty of such sins, and before he *genuinely* repents of the same, can have any warrant-

able evidence to conclude that *he* is a believer; yea, everything points to the contrary. Though grace be not lost in such an awful case, Divine consolation and assurance is suspended.

But now the question arises, *Why did God permit* David to fall so low and sin so terribly? The first answer must be, To display His high and awe-inspiring *sovereignty*. Here we approach ground which is indeed difficult for us to tread, even with unshodden feet. Nevertheless it cannot be gainsaid that there is a marvelous and sovereign display of the Lord's grace toward His people in this particular respect, both before their calling and after. Some of the elect are permitted to sin most grievously in their unconverted state, whilst others of them, even in their unregenerate days, are wondrously preserved. Again; some of the elect after their conversion have been Divinely allowed to awfully fall into the most horrible impieties, whilst others of them are so preserved as never to sin willfully against their consciences from the first conviction to the very close of their lives (Condensed from S.E. Pierce on Hosea 14:1).

This is a high mystery, which it would be most impious for us to attempt to pry into: rather must we bow our heads before it and say, "Even so, Father, for *so* it seemeth good in Thy sight." It is a solemn fact, from which there is no getting away, that some sin more before their conversion, and some (especially those saved in early life) sin worse after their conversion. It is also a plain fact that with some saints God most manifests His *restraining grace*, and with others His *pardoning grace*. Three things are to be steadily borne in mind in connection with the sins of the saints. God never regards sin as a trifle: it is *ever* that "abominable thing which He hates" (Jer. 44:4). Second, it is never to be excused or extenuated by us. Third, God's *sovereignty* therein must be acknowledged: whatever difficulties it may raise before our minds, let us hold fast the fact that God does as He pleases, and "giveth not account of any of His matters" (Job 33:13).

A second answer to the question, Why did God permit David to fall so fearfully and sin so grievously? may be: that we might have set before our eyes the more clearly the awful fact that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9). Unmistakably plain as is the meaning of those words, uttered by Him who cannot lie, yet how very slow we all are to *really* receive them at their face value, and acknowledge that they accurately describe the natural state of every human heart—that of the Man Christ Jesus alone excepted. But God has done more than make this bare statement: He has placed on record in His Word illustrations, exemplifications, demonstrations of its verity—notably so in allowing us to see the unspeakable wickedness that still remained in the heart of *David*!

Third, by suffering David to fall and sin as he did, God has graciously given a most solemn warning to believers in middle life—and elder Christians also. "Many conquerors have been ruined by their carelessness after a victory, and many have been spiritually wounded after great successes against sin. David was so; his great surprisal into sin was after a long profession, manifold experiences of God, and watchful keeping himself from his iniquity. And hence, in particular, hath it come to pass that the profession of many hath declined in their old age or riper time: they have given over the work of mortifying sin *before* their work was at an end. There is no way for us to pursue sin in its unsearchable habitation but by being endless in our pursuit. The command God gives in Colossians 3:5 is *as necessary* for them to observe who are toward the end of their race, as those who are but at the beginning of it" (John Owen).

Fourth, the fearful fall of David made way for a display of the amazing grace of God in recovering His fallen people. If we are slow to receive what Scripture teaches concerning the depravity of the human heart and the exceeding sinfulness of sin, we are equally slow to *really* believe what it reveals about the covenant-faithfulness of God, the efficacy of Christ's blood to cleanse the foulest stain from those for whom it was shed, and the superabounding grace of Him who is "the Father of mercies." Had David never sinned so grievously and sunken so low, he had never known those infinite depths of mercy which there are in the heart of God. Likewise, had his terrible sin, his subsequent broken-hearted confession, and his *pardon* by God, never been placed upon Divine record, not a few of God's people throughout the centuries had sunk in abject despair.

Fifth, to furnish a fatal stumbling-block to blatant rebels. "It is certain that thousands through succeeding generations have, by this fall of 'the man after God's own heart,' been prejudiced against true religion, hardened in infidelity, or emboldened in blasphemy; while others have thence taken occasion to commit *habitual wickedness* under a religious profession, and with presumptuous confidence, to the still greater discredit of the Gospel. It should, however, be considered, that all these have been, previously, either open enemies to true religion, or hypocritical pretenders to it: and it is the righteous purpose of God, that stumbling-blocks should be thrown in the way of such men, that they may 'stumble, and fall, and be snared, and taken, and perish.' It is His holy will thus to detect the secret malignity of their hearts, and to make way for the display of His justice in their condemnation. On the other hand, thousands, from age to age, have by this awful example been rendered more suspicious of themselves, more watchful, more afraid of temptation, more dependent on the Lord, and more fervent in prayer; and by means of David's fall, have, themselves, been preserved from falling" (T. Scott).

God, then, had wise and sufficient reasons, both for permitting David to sin so heinously and for placing the same upon imperishable record. Nor has any opposer or despiser of the Truth any just ground to sneeringly ask, Are *those* the fruits of grace and faith? We answer, No, they are not; instead, they are the horrible works of the flesh, the filth which issues from corrupt human nature. How strong must those inclinations be to evil, when they, at times, succeed in overcoming the oppositions of truth and grace dwelling in the heart of an eminent saint of God! And in the light of the context (2 Sam. 11:1, 2) how it behooves us to watch against the *beginnings* of negligence and self-indulgence, and keep at the utmost distance from that precipice over which David fell; begging God that it may please Him to deliver us from all forbidden objects.

But this incident presents another difficulty to some, namely, how to harmonize it with the declaration made in 1 John 3:15: "Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." It is really surprising that so many have experienced trouble in reconciling this with the case of David: as usual, the difficulty is self-created through ignoring the context. In 1 John 3:1 the Apostle takes up the subject of the Christian's love one for another, whereby they make it manifest that they are *brethren* in Christ. The world (1) loves them not (2) hates them (3) will murder them whenever they dare—as Cain did Abel. But no real Christian has *such* a hatred in his heart against any "brother" in Christ. Nor had David. Uriah was not an Israelite, but an "*Hittite*" (2 Sam. 11:3, 1 Kings 15:5)!

In conclusion, let us point out some of the solemn lessons which we may learn from this sad incident. 1. Beware of the *beginnings* of sin: who had imagined that taking his ease when he should have been at the post of duty on the battlefield had led to adultery

and ended in murder. 2. See how refusal to put one serious wrong right, preferring concealment to confession, gives Satan a great advantage over us, to lead into yet worse evil! 3. Learn therefrom that there is no security in years, and that no *past* communion with God will safeguard us against temptations when we are careless in *the present*. 4. How fickle is poor human nature: David's heart smote him when he cut off Saul's skirt, yet later he deliberately planned the murder of Uriah. 5. Mark what fearful lengths pride will go to in order to maintain a reputation before men. 6. Behold how callous the heart will become once the strivings of consciences are disregarded. 7. Though he may succeed in escaping the wrath of our fellows, sin always meets with the displeasure of the Lord.—A.W.P.

### Grace Preparing for Glory.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:11-13). The opening “For” looks back to verse 10. In the immediate context the Apostle had exhorted servants to walk amiably and faithfully, so that they “adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” It is deeply important that we should be *sound* in doctrine, for error acts upon the soul the same as poison does upon the body. Yes, it is very necessary that we be sound in the Faith, for it is dishonouring to God and injurious to ourselves to believe the Devil’s lies, for that is what false doctrine is. Then let us not despise *doctrinal* preaching, for “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine” (2 Tim. 3:16).

But there is something else which is equally important as being sound in doctrine, namely, that we *adorn* it by our conduct. The sounder I am in doctrine, the more loudly I advertise my orthodox views, the more do I bring that doctrine into reproach if my life be worldly and my walk carnal. How earnestly we need to pray for Divine enablement that we may “adorn the doctrine in all things.” We need the doctrine of Scripture written upon our hearts, molding our character, regulating our ways, influencing our conduct. We “adorn” the doctrine when we “walk in newness of life,” when we live each hour as those who must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. And we are to “adorn the doctrine in *all things*”: in every sphere we occupy, every relation we sustain, every circle God’s providence brings us into.

The Apostle now enforces what he said in Titus 2:10 by reminding us that “the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” This is in blessed contrast from the Law, which brings naught but “condemnation.” But the grace of God bringeth *salvation*, and that in a twofold way: by what Christ has done *for* His people, and by what He works *in* them. “He shall save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21): save from the guilt and penalty of sin, and from the love or power of sin. This grace of God “hath appeared”: it has broken forth like the light of the morning after a dark night. It has “appeared” both objectively and subjectively—in the Gospel and in our hearts: “when it pleased God . . . to reveal His Son *in me*” (Gal. 1:15, 16); “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined *in our hearts*” (2 Cor. 4:6).

The grace of God—His lovingkindness, His goodwill, His free favour—hath appeared “to all men.” That expression is used in Scripture in two different senses: sometimes it means all *without exception*, as in “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” In other passages it signifies all *without distinction*, as it does here—to the bondsmen, as well as the free, to the servant as the master, to the Gentiles as to the Jews; to all kinds and conditions of men. But how may I know that the grace of God which bringeth salvation has appeared to *me*? A vitally important question is that, one which none who really values the eternal interest of his or her soul will treat lightly or take for granted. There are many who profess to be “saved” but they give *no evidence* of it in their lives. Now here is the inspired answer.

“Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts.” Divine grace teaches its favoured recipients subjectively as well as objectively, effectually as well as theoretically. Grace in the heart prevents us from abusing grace in the head: it delivers us from making grace the lackey of sin. Where the grace of God brings salvation to the soul, it



works effectually. And *what is it* that grace teaches? *Practical holiness*. Grace does not eradicate ungodliness and worldly lusts, but it causes us *to deny* them. And what but “Divine grace” can? Philosophy cannot, nor ethics, nor any form of human education or culture. But grace *does*, by the impulsive power of gratitude, by love’s desire to please the Saviour, by instilling a determination to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called” (Eph. 4:1).

Alas, many who are glad to hear of the grace which brings salvation, become restless when the preacher presses the truth that God’s grace teaches us to DENY. That is a very unpalatable word in this age of self-pleasing and self-indulgence; but turn to Matthew 16:24, “Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him *deny* himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” And again, “Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:27): that is the unceasing demand of Christ, and naught but Divine grace working within can enable any one to meet it.

Grace teaches *negatively*: it teaches us to renounce evil. Dagon must first be cast down before the Ark of God can be set up. The leaven must be excluded from our houses before the Lamb can be fed upon. The old man has to be put off if the new man is to be put on. Grace teaches a Christian to *mortify* his members which are upon the earth: “to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.” Grace teaches the believer to resist these evils by preventing the flesh from *ruling* over him, and that, by refusing to allow sin to dominate his heart.

“Ungodliness” is failing to give *God* His due place in our hearts and lives. It is disregarding His precepts and commands. It is having preference for the creature, loving pleasure more than holiness; being unconcerned whether my conduct pleases or displeases the Lord. There are many forms of “ungodliness” besides that of open infidelity and the grosser crimes of wickedness. We are guilty of “ungodliness” when we are prayerless. We are guilty of “ungodliness” when we look to and lean upon the creature; or when we fail to see God’s hand in providence—ascribing our blessings to “luck” or “chance.” We are guilty of “ungodliness” when we grumble at the weather.

“And worldly lusts”: these are those affections and appetites which dominate and regulate the man of the world. It is the heart craving worldly objects, pleasures, honours, riches. It is an undue absorption with those things which serve only a temporary purpose and use. “Worldly lusts” cause the things of Heaven to be crowded out by the interests and concerns of earth. This may be done by things which are quite lawful in themselves, but through an immoderate use they gain possession of the heart. “Worldly lusts” are “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16).

Now Divine grace is teaching the Christian to “*deny* ungodliness and worldly lusts.” It does this by putting upon him “the fear of the Lord,” so that he departs from evil. It does this by occupying the heart with a superior Object: when Christ was revealed to the heart of the Samaritan woman she “*left* her waterpot” (John 4:28). It does this by supplying powerful motives and incentives to personal holiness. It does this by the indwelling Spirit resisting the flesh (Gal. 5:17). It does this by causing us to subordinate the interests of the body unto the higher interests of the soul.

Grace teaches *positively*. It is not sufficient that we “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,” we must also “*live* soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” “Soberly” comes first because we cannot live righteously or godly without it: he who takes to

himself more than is due or meet will not give men or God their portion. Unfortunately the word “sober” is now generally restricted to the opposite of inebriation, but the Christian is to be sober in *all* things. Sobriety is the moderation of our affections in the pursuit and use of earthly things. We are to be temperate in eating, sleeping, recreation, dress. We need to be sober-minded, and not extremists. Only Divine grace can effectually teach sobriety, and if I am growing in grace, then I am becoming more sober. Grace does not remove natural inclinations and affections, but it *governs* them—it bridles their excess. The first thing, then, that grace teaches us positively is *self-control*. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that *ruleth his spirit* than he that taketh a city” (Prov. 16:32).

“Righteously.” This concerns our dealings with our fellows. It is giving to each his due, dealing honourably with all; injuring none, seeking the good of all. To live “righteously” is doing unto others as we would have them do unto us; it is being truthful, courteous, considerate, kind, helpful. “Do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10), must be our constant aim. This is the second half of the Law’s requirement, that we should “love our neighbor as ourselves.” Only Divine grace can effectually “teach” us this. Naught but Divine grace can counteract our innate *selfishness*.

“Godly.” This is the attitude of our hearts towards God, ever seeking His glory. Godliness is made up of three ingredients, or more accurately, it issues from three springs: faith, fear, love. Only by *faith* can we really apprehend God: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of *unbelief*, in *departing from* the living God” (Heb. 3:12). Forty years ago we often heard the expression, so and so is “a God-fearing man”: the fact we rarely hear this now is a bad sign. Now there are two kinds of *fear*, a servile and a filial—a dread of God and an awe of God. The first kind was seen in Adam when he was afraid of the Lord and hid himself. The second kind was exemplified by Joseph when tempted by the wife of Potiphar: reverential fear restrained him. Only Divine grace can “teach” us this. While *love* constrains unto obedience: “If ye love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). It is only love’s obedience which is acceptable unto God: the heart melted by His goodness, now desiring to please Him.

“Looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Now this must not be divorced from its context, for there we are shown the necessary pre-requisite—*Grace preparing for Glory*. The passage as a whole is made up of three parts: in the past, the grace of God brought salvation to the believer; in the present, Divine grace is teaching him, both negatively and positively, how to live acceptably unto God; third, in the future, the work of Divine grace will be perfected in the believer, at the return of Christ.

Verse 13, then, is the necessary *sequel* to what has been before us in verses 11, 12. My head may be filled with Prophecy, I may be an ardent Pre-millenarian, I may think and say that I am “looking for that blessed Hope,” *but*, unless Divine grace is teaching me to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts” and to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,” then I am *deceiving myself*. Make no mistake upon that point. To be *truly* “Looking for that blessed Hope” is a *spiritual* attitude: it is the longing of those whose hearts are right with God. Thus, our text may be summed up in three words: grace, godliness, glory.

Now our “Hope” is something more than a future *event* concerning the details of

which there may be room for considerable difference of opinion. Our Hope is something more than the *next item* on God's prophetic program. It is something more than a *place* in which we are going to spend eternity. The Christian's hope is a PERSON. Have you noticed how prominently and emphatically that fact is presented in the Scriptures? "I will come again, and receive you *unto myself*" (John 14:3); "This *same Jesus*, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner" (Acts 1:11); "We look *for the Saviour*" (Phil. 3:20); "The coming *of the Lord* draweth nigh" (James 5:8)—not the great Tribulation draweth nigh, not the Millennium draweth nigh, nor even the Rapture draweth nigh, but the *coming of the Lord*. It is with His own blessed Person that our poor hearts need to be occupied.

Here is a poor wife whose husband has been away for many months in distant lands, whose duty required him to go there. News arrives that he is coming back home: the devoted wife is filled with joy at the prospect of the return of her husband. Is she puzzling her brains as to what will be his program of action after he arrives? No, the all-absorbing thing for her is *himself*—her beloved is soon to appear before her. Now do not misunderstand me: I am not saying that the plan of prophecy holds little of interest, or that it matters nothing to us what course Christ will follow; but that which I am seeking to emphasise is that the primary and grand point of the whole subject is having our prepared hearts fixed upon Christ Himself. God would have us occupied not so much with prophetic details, as with the blessed Person of His dear Son.

That "blessed Hope," then, which the Christian is "looking for" is not an event, but a Person: Christ Himself. "And this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. 23:6)—the Lord is our righteousness. "For He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14)—the Lord is our peace. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear" (Col. 3:4)—the Lord is our life. "By the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope" (1 Tim. 1:1)—the Lord is our hope. To me "that blessed Hope" is summed up in three things. First, that Christ is coming to receive me unto Himself. Second, that Christ will then make me like Himself—for nothing less than *that* will satisfy Him or the renewed heart. Third, that Christ is going to have me forever with Himself—an eternity of bliss spent in His own immediate presence. Then will be answered His prayer "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory" (John 17:24).

Now "*looking for* that blessed Hope," for Christ Himself, is *an attitude of heart*. The Christian "looks" with the eyes of *faith*, and faith always rests alone upon God and His Word. Faith is not influenced by sensational items from the newspapers about the latest doings of Hitler and Mussolini, etc. Scripture says, "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James 5:8), and faith believes it. The Christian "looks" with the eyes of *hope*, joyously anticipating perfect fellowship with its Beloved. The Christian "looks" with the eyes of *love*, for nothing but His personal presence can satisfy him. It is an attitude of *anticipation*: Christ has given His sure promise that He *is coming*, but the exact *time* is withheld—that we may be in constant readiness. It is an attitude of *expectation*, for we do not "look for" something we know will never happen. It is an attitude of *supplication*, the heart's response "Even so, *come*, Lord Jesus."

A final word upon Christ's title here: "The glorious appearing of *the great God* and our Saviour Jesus Christ," or as Bagster's Interlinear more correctly renders it, "And appearing of the glory, the great God and Saviour, of our Lord Jesus Christ." Three things

are suggested to us by Christ's being here called "the great God." First, it points a contrast from His first advent, when He appeared in humiliation and lowliness as the "Servant." Second, it shows us He is called "God" not by way of courtesy, but by right of His Divine nature. Third, it evidences the fact that the Saviour is in no wise inferior to the Father, but His co-equal, "the great God."—A.W.P.

N.B. The above is an address recently given by the editor in the Berkeley Hall of Glasgow, under the auspices of the Advent Testimony and Preparation Movement.

## Union and Communion.

### 8. *Experimental.*

We have now arrived at the last and, in some respects, the most blessed aspect of our theme: for what does our mystical, legal, vital, saving, and practical union with Christ amount to, unless it issues in experimental, intimate, precious oneness of heart with Him? This is really the simplest branch of our many-sided subject, yet not a few find it the most difficult: not because of its intellectual intricacy, but because they find it so hard to believe, and harder still to carry out into practice. It seems too good to be true, too blissful for realisation in this life, too far above the reach of poor worms of the dust wriggling in the mire. Was it not thus when, as an awakened and convicted sinner, you first heard that Christ was an all-sufficient Saviour?—ah, but *not for ME*. Later, what difficulties presented themselves to your mind: your vileness, your utter unworthiness, your unbelief! What penances, reformations, labours, you supposed were necessary to qualify you for His salvation! But when the Spirit communicated faith, you were amazed at the simplicity of what before had baffled you.

It is much the same in the history of many Christians concerning experimental union and communion with Christ—a conscious, intimate, joyous fellowship with Him who is Altogether Lovely. When they hear or read of this, they conclude that such a blissful experience is not for *them*. Sin is too powerful, too active within, to ever hope for close fellowship with the Holy One in this life. Others may be more favoured, their corruptions may be more Divinely subdued, but as for *me*, I can only expect to go halting and mourning the rest of my earthly pilgrimage. At best, I can only hope that God will not utterly cast me off, that He will mercifully preserve me from open transgressions which would bring dishonour upon His cause, that He will graciously bear with my innumerable failures, and at last take me to Heaven for *Christ's sake*; but that He should grant me any more than an occasional smile, a sip of His love by the way, is too much for me to expect.

“Ye were called unto the *fellowship* of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). To whom were those words first addressed? To those who in their unregenerate days had been preserved from flagrant sins? No indeed, some of them had been guilty of the grossest crimes, but they were “washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (see 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Were they, then, now living unblemished lives, walking in flawless obedience to God’s commands? No, far from it; read through the Epistle, and observe the many offences which the Corinthian saints had committed. Nevertheless, to them the Apostle was moved to say “Ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son.” and if *they* were, rest assured Christian readers, that *we* are, too. Though so utterly unworthy in ourselves, still having the flesh unchanged within us, sin ever harassing and tripping us up; *yet* “called unto the fellowship of His Son”!

Alas that so few understand of what that “fellowship” should consist of. Alas that any Christian should conclude that indwelling sin, with its daily activities, outbursts, and defilements, make “fellowship” with Christ an *impossibility*. Alas that so many suppose that this “fellowship” consists only of an ecstatic experience on the mountain-tops, enjoyed solely by those who gain a constant victory over indwelling corruptions and outward temptations. Were *that* the actual case, the writer would not be penning these lines; rather would he completely despair of attaining unto such “fellowship” with Christ in this life. Ah, my reader, it is those who are still vile sinners in themselves, who find *no* good

thing dwelling in their flesh, who are called unto fellowship with God's Son! Surely *that* is indeed "good news." Blessed be His name, the Lord is "a very present help *in trouble*": for those who are troubled by their futile efforts to heal the plague of their own hearts; troubled over un-answered prayers for grace to subdue their iniquities. Yes, Divine love has made full provision for *such* to enjoy experimental fellowship with Christ in this life.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*; of whom I (not "was," but) *am* chief (1 Tim. 1:15), and it is equally true, blessedly true, that He has *fellowship* with SINNERS. If it were not so, there would be none in this world with whom He could have fellowship, for "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Eccl. 7:20). True, the ineffably holy Christ will not have any fellowship with us in our *sins*, and no renewed heart would desire Him to do so. Nevertheless, it is equally true that He *does* have "fellowship" with sinners: saved sinners, yes; but *sinners* all the same. Did He not have the most intimate fellowship with the Apostles? and were they not men of like passions with us?—very far from sinless perfection were they.

But let us now attempt to define *the nature* or character of experimental union and communion with Christ. "There is a Friend which *sticketh closer* than a brother" (Prov. 18:24) makes known *His* side of this union; "there was *leaning on Jesus' bosom* one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23) exhibits *our* side of this communion. The first of these remarkable and inexpressibly blessed Scriptures presents to us an aspect of Truth which some find it difficult to lay hold of and enjoy. In certain circles the exalted dignity of Christ's Person has received such emphasis, that a proportionate presentation has not been given of the intimate relations which He sustains to His people: a balance has not been preserved between that in Christ which *awes* and that which *melts* the heart. It is possible to become so occupied with the Lordship of Christ, as to almost (if not quite) lose sight of His Friendship: to be so engaged in rendering to Him the honours which are due Him as God, as to overlook the tender sympathy and compassion which He has for His people as Man.

We are not unmindful of the fact that, in other circles, there has been a deplorable lack of the reverence and homage to which Immanuel is entitled, a fearful cheapening of the truth concerning Him, a light and unbecoming alluding to Him as "Jesus," "our Friend," "our elder Brother," which grates upon the ears and grieves the hearts of those who have been better taught. Yet in our revolt from this unholy familiarity with the Lord of Glory and the almost total absence of giving to Him the worship which is His due, there is no sufficient reason why we should swing to the opposite extreme, and view Christ as so far above us as to preclude free approaches to and intimate fellowship with Him. He *is* our Lord, and as such we must prostrate ourselves before Him in the dust, and address Him with holy awe. He is *also* our Friend, and as such we should open our hearts to Him with the utmost freedom, casting all our care upon Him, knowing that He careth for us (1 Peter 5:7).

Experimental union with Christ is made possible by and is to issue from our *practical* union with Him, that is, our "walking together" in agreement with His revealed will. Experimental communion with Christ is exercised in happy subjection to Him as our Lord, and in intimate intercourse with Him as our Friend. Christ Himself is that "Friend which sticketh closer than a brother." This term "Friend" tells of the *closeness* of that relationship which Divine grace has established between the Redeemer and the redeemed. It re-

veals the warm throbbings of His heart unto His own. It gives them full warrant for the fullest confidence and the most unreserved dealings with Him; as it assures of His loving sympathy and deep interest in all that concerns them. There is no aloofness on His part, and there should be no reserve on our part. There should be a readier unburdening of ourselves *to Him* than to our dearest earthly friend or nearest relative.

There are three things requisite in order to our having close communion with one of our fellows. First, that person must be real and present to us: fellowship is not possible with one we know not, or who is far removed from us. Second, we must have a free access to that person, with confidence and boldness toward him: fellowship is not possible where formalities bar our approach and where fear or awe dominates the soul. Third, there must be mutual affection and esteem. Fellowship is not possible where loves exists not or where it has cooled off. Now apply all of this to our present subject. If the soul is to enjoy real experimental union and communion with Christ, He must be a living reality to the heart; faith must bring Him near and give freedom of approach to Him: and the affections must be kept warm and active toward Him; otherwise our religion will quickly degenerate into a mechanical routine, devoid of reality and joy.

In the next place, let it be as definitely insisted upon that, our communion with God and His Christ must be *in the light*. "This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another" (1 John 1:5-7). We cannot now give an exposition of this important passage, but must confine ourselves to that which bears directly upon what we are now treating of, namely, the character of experimental communion with Christ. What is it "to walk in darkness"? and what is it to "walk in the light"? The question is one: though viewed from both the negative and positive sides.

The first and most obvious answer must be that, to "walk in darkness" is to conduct ourselves unholy, to follow a course of sin: the works of darkness are the works of the flesh. But we must press the matter more closely home to our consciences. In order to do this, let us consider the leading characteristic of light. The most prominent property of light is its transparency and translucency: it is patent, open, always and everywhere so, as far as its free influence extends. The entrance of light spreads reality all around. Clouds and shadows are unreal: they breed and foster unreality. Light, then, is the naked truth: it makes manifest, it exposes things. Thus the chief conception which this metaphor of "light" conveys is, that of *openness*, clearness, transparency, reality. And that is what God is; that is what Christ—"the light of the world"—is; that is what the Word of Truth is—"a light shining in a dark place."

"The Light shineth in darkness" (John 1:5). He who is the Light came to seek and to save those who "sat in darkness" (Matt. 4:16). "For ye were sometime darkness" (Eph. 5:8): what a word is that!—not only that in our unregenerate days we dwelt in darkness, but we *were* in ourselves "darkness." By the Fall we lost that element of clearness, brightness, openness, in which we were created at first. Sin entered, and with sin, shame. The clear and open sunshine of the presence and countenance of Him who is Light became intolerable; the covering of fig leaves and the hiding-place of the trees of the garden was preferred. Henceforth, to fallen and unregenerate man, light became offensive: darkness is upon the face of the deep of his heart. Henceforth, darkness is his element: he

loves darkness rather than light (John 3:19). Therefore, deception, insincerity, hypocrisy, concealment, characterize him in his attitude toward God.

But at regeneration a miracle of grace takes place: Divine light shines in the heart (2 Cor. 4:6), and the consequence is "but now are ye light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8). The result of this is revolutionizing. Not only is the soul now enabled to see things, and to see itself, in God's light, but he renounces the works of darkness, "the hidden things of dishonesty." He throws off his cloak of pretense, he comes out into the open and truthfully confesses to God what he is. He no longer attempts to cover his sins, or pose as a good and righteous person; but honestly owns himself to be a polluted leper, an incorrigible rebel, an inveterate transgressor, a hell-deserving sinner! "An *honest and* good heart" (Luke 8:15) is now his: previously he thought highly of himself and wished others to flatter him; now, he loves *the truth*, and abhors deception and hypocrisy. And, as pointed out in the last article, the believer must *continue* as he began.

It is into the fellowship of Him who is "light" the believer has entered, and if real communion is to be preserved there must be openness and genuineness on his part. Christ will not tolerate any deception: any attempt at concealment or disguise is certain to displease Him. It is both our madness and our loss to try and hide anything from Him. But He is no hard taskmaster; instead, He is full of love and tender mercy. It is written "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench" (Isa. 42:3). His ears are ever open unto the cries of His erring people, and their tears of repentance are precious in His sight (Psa. 56:8). Perfect openness and transparent honesty in our dealings with Him, is what He requires; deceit and insincerity He will not tolerate. We cannot walk in the darkness of pretense and have fellowship with Him who is the Light!

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another" (1 John 1:7). Note it is not now "as He *is* light" (as in v. 5), but "as He is *in* the light." The thought here is that, the same clear and transparent atmosphere surrounds them both: we walk in the light in which God is: it is the light of His own pure truth, His own nature, of absolute reality. The light in which God dwells is His own light: the light which He *is* Himself. In that light He sits enthroned: in that light He sees and knows, surveys and judges all things. And the light in which we are to walk is identically the same light as that in which God is. The same pure medium of vision is given to us: "In *Thy* light shall *we* see light" (Psa. 36:9). In other words, we must measure everything by God's pure truth and judge ourselves in the light of His holiness.

The same clear-shining, transparent atmosphere of holiness, truth, and love is to surround us, penetrating our inner man and purging our mind's eye, our soul's eye, our heart's eye, that it may see sin as *God* sees it—as "this abominable thing that I hate" (Jer. 44:4); that we may see holiness as *God* sees it—as the inestimable thing which He loves; that all things, all events, all men, all our motives, thoughts, words, deeds, may appear exactly to us as what they appear to Him. It is into a fellowship of *light* we are invited to walk. If there is to be a *real* fellowship, it must be a fellowship of *light*, where there is no compromise, no pretense, no insincerity: where the things of darkness and dishonesty are renounced. But can I, who am so full of sin and corruption, go forth into that light, which is so pure and piercing? Not apart from the cleansing blood of Christ! Thank God for the perfect and ever-availing provision of Divine grace, providing for the removal of every obstacle which my depravity might interpose against walking in the light.

Experimental communion with Christ is the blessed goal towards which all the other



unions lead: that the Lord's people may have personal, conscious, intimate, joyous union with Him who loved them and gave Himself for them—an experience beginning in this life, continuing (more perfectly) throughout the endless ages of eternity. The grand end of our vital, saving, and practical union with Christ is to bring us into *experimental oneness* with Him: that we may drink into His spirit, have His mind, share His joy. Of all the experiences of God's saints on earth *this* approximates nearest to the heavenly bliss. Experimental union consists of knowing, loving, enjoying Christ: it is having plain, practical, personal dealings with Him. A deeper and fuller knowledge of Christ will increase our confidence and joy in Him. The more we are enabled to realise Christ's relation to us and His changeless love for us, the easier and freer will be our approaches to Him.

Experimental union is based upon *faith's realisation* of Christ's relation to us and of our relation to Him, enabling the soul to say, "my Beloved is mine, and I am His" (Song. 2:16). It is faith, and nothing but faith, which makes God in Christ real, yea, present, to the soul: "*seeing* Him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). It is faith, and faith alone, which brings Christ down unto us: "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph. 3:17). It is faith which gives freedom of approach to Him: "we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him" (Eph. 3:12)—the faith of which He is both the Author and the Object. It is only by faith we can enjoy the fact that we were loved by Him from all eternity, and that He now bears us on His heart in the immediate presence of God. "*I live by the faith* of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20) contains the sum total of all spiritual life and spirituality.

Yet the cementing band of this union is *love*. Faith unites savingly; love, experimentally. Love is as truly a uniting grace as is faith, though it does not unite in the same way. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16). Where two persons really love each other, their mutual affection makes them to be one: they are wrapped up in each other. So there is a mutual, hearty, reciprocal love, between Christ and believers; He loves them, and they Him; and by virtue of that mutual love there is an intimate, experimental union between them. The husband and wife are one not merely by the marriage covenant—the legal tie and external relationship—but also and chiefly because of the love and affection there is between them. So it is betwixt Christ and His saints: love, stronger than death, knits them together.

Experimental communion with Christ, then, consists in basking in the sunshine of His conscious presence: sitting at His feet and receiving from Him as Mary did (Luke 10:39), leaning upon His bosom as John did (John 13:23). The more we are engaged in contemplating and resting in His wondrous and changeless love for us, the more will our poor hearts be warmed and our affections drawn out unto Him. Our daily aim should be a more full and free acquaintance with the Lover of our souls; and this, not so much in a doctrinal way, as in a personal and experimental way, in actual communion with Him. It is in real intercourse with our friends, and in their converse with us, that we get most and best acquainted with them. It is even so with the Lord Jesus Christ, our best Friend. Open your heart freely to Him, and beg Him to graciously open His heart freely to you. Humbly remind Him of His words, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you *friends*; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15).—A.W.P.

## The Doctrine of Sanctification.

### 9. *Its Securer.*

The Christian has been sanctified by the triune Jehovah: infinite wisdom and fathomless grace so ordered it that he is indebted to each of the Eternal Three. The Lord God designed that all the Persons in the blessed Trinity should be honoured in the making holy of His people, so that each of Them might be distinctively praised by us. First, the Father sanctified His people by an eternal decree, choosing them in Christ before the foundation of the world and predestinating them unto the adoption of children. Second, the Son sanctified His people by procuring for them a perfect and inalienable standing before the Judge of all, the infinite merits of His finished work being reckoned to their account. Third, God the Spirit makes good the Father's decree and imparts to them what the work of Christ procured for them: the Spirit is the actual Securer of sanctification, *applying it* to their persons. Thus the believer has abundant cause to adore and glorify the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

It is very remarkable to observe the perfect harmony there is between the different operations of the Eternal Three in connection with the making holy of the elect, and the threefold signification of the term "sanctification." In an earlier article we furnished proof that the word "to sanctify" has a threefold meaning, namely, to separate, to cleanse, to adorn. First, in Scripture a person or thing is said to be sanctified when it is consecrated or set apart from a common to a sacred use. So in the eternal decree of the Father, the elect were separated in the Divine mind from the countless millions of our race which were to be created, and set apart for His own delight and glory. Second, where those persons and things are unclean, they must be purified, so as to *fit* them for God's pleasure and use. That was the specific work assigned to the Son: His precious blood has provided the means of our purification. Third, the persons or things sanctified need to be beautified and adorned for God's service: this is accomplished by the Holy Spirit.

It is also striking and blessed to note the relation and order of the several acts of the Holy Three in connection with our sanctification. The *source* of it is "the eternal purpose" or decree of God: "by the which *will* we are sanctified" (Heb. 10:10). The *substance* of it was brought forth by Christ, when He fully accomplished God's will on our behalf: "that He might sanctify the people with His own blood" (Heb. 13:12). The *securer* of it is the Holy Spirit, who by His work of grace within applies to the individual the sanctification which the Church has in its Head: "being sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:16). It is not until the Comforter takes up His abode in the heart that the Father's will begins to be actualised and the Son's "work" evidences its efficacy toward us. This glorious gift, then, is let down to us from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit.

If we consider the nature of Christ's work for His people and the perfection of their standing in Him before God, it could not for a moment be supposed that this having been accomplished by the grace, wisdom, and power of God, that their *state* should be left unaffected—that their position should be so gloriously changed, yet their condition remain as sinful as ever; that they should be left in their sins to take comfort from their immunity to Divine wrath. The degradation, pollution, and utter ruin of our nature; our estrangement from God, spiritual death, and our whole heritage of woe, are the immediate consequences of *sin*. And what would forgiveness, justification, and redemption in Christ mean, if *deliverance from* all those consequences did not directly and necessarily follow? Our being made the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21) would be but an empty

name, if it does not imply and entail recovery from all that sin had forfeited and deliverance from all that sin had incurred. Thank God *that*, in the end (when we are glorified), will be perfectly effected.

It is true that when Christ first seeks out His people He finds them entirely destitute of holiness, yea, of even desire after it; but He does not leave them in that awful state. No, such would neither honour Him nor fulfill the Father's will. Glorious as is the triumph of Divine grace in the justification of a sinner, through the work of Christ as Surety, yet even that must be regarded as a means to an end. See how this is brought out in every Scriptural statement of the purpose of grace concerning the redeemed, or the design of the mission and sufferings of the Redeemer: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10); "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14); "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4); "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1).

Since we are made the righteousness of God *in Christ*, the result of this *in the Christian*, must, ultimately, correspond with that perfection. In other words, nothing short of perfect fellowship with the Father, and with His Son can answer to His having died on account of our sins and risen again on account of our justification; and having risen, become the Head and Source of an entirely new life to all who believe on Him. The aim of the Father's love and of the Son's grace, was not only that we might have restored to us the life which we lost in Adam, but that we should have "life *more abundantly*"; that we should be brought back not merely to the position of servants—which was the status of unfallen Adam—but be given the wondrous place of *sons*; that we should be fitted not simply for an earthly paradise, but for an eternity of joy in the immediate presence of God in Heaven.

Now it is on the ground of what Christ did and earned for His people, and with a view to the realization of the Father's purpose of their glorification, that the Holy Spirit is given to the elect, and it makes much for His praise and for their peace that they obtain a clear and comprehensive view of His work within them; nor can that be secured by a hurried or superficial study of the subject. As our cover-page articles for the last three years indicate, His operations are very varied and manifold; yet all proceeding from one foundation and all advancing toward one grand end. That which we are now to consider is the "sanctification of the Spirit," an expression which is found both in 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and 1 Peter 1:2. The connection in which the expression occurs in the two passages just mentioned, clearly intimates that the sanctification of the Spirit is an integral part of our salvation, that it is closely associated with our "belief of the truth," and that it precedes our practical obedience.

John Owen's definition of the Spirit's sanctification, based on 1 Thessalonians 5:23 is as follows, "Sanctification is an immediate work of the Spirit of God on the souls of believers, purifying and cleansing of their natures from the pollution and uncleanness of sin, renewing in them the image of God, and thereby enabling them from a spiritual and habitual principle of grace, to yield obedience unto God, according unto the tenor and terms of the new covenant, by virtue of the life and death of Jesus Christ. Or more briefly: it is the universal renovation of our natures by the Holy Spirit, into the image of

God, through Jesus Christ.” Full and clear though this definition be, we humbly conceive it is both inadequate and inaccurate: inadequate, because it leaves out several essential elements; inaccurate, because it confounds the effects with the cause. Later, he says, “In the sanctification of believers the Holy Spirit doth work in them, in their whole souls—their minds, wills, and affections—a gracious supernatural habit, principle, and disposition of living unto God, wherein the substance or essence, the life and being, of holiness doth consist.”

In an article thereon (published in *Studies*, May 1930) S. E. Pierce said, “Sanctification, or Gospel-holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord, comprehends the whole work of the Spirit of God within and upon us, from our regeneration to our eternal glorification. It is the fruit and blessed consequence of His indwelling us, and the continued effect of spiritual regeneration: i.e., in begetting within us a nature suited to take in spiritual things, and be properly affected by them. Regeneration is the root, and sanctification is the bud, blossom and fruit which it produces. In our regeneration by the Holy Spirit we are made alive to God, and this is manifested by our faith in Christ Jesus. Our lusts are mortified because we are quickened together with Christ. And what we style the sanctification of the Spirit, which follows after regeneration hath taken place within us, consists in drawing forth that spiritual life which is conveyed to our souls in our new birth, into acts and exercise on Christ and spiritual things, in quickening our graces, and in leading us to walk in the paths of holiness, by which proof is given that we are alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” This, we believe is preferable to Owen’s, yet still leaving something to be desired.

Exactly what is the sanctification of the Spirit? Personally we very much doubt whether that question can be satisfactorily answered in a single sentence, for in framing one, account needs to be taken of the change which is produced in the believing sinner’s relationship to God, his relationship to Christ as the Head of the Church, his relationship to the unregenerate, and his relationship to the Divine law. *Positionally*, our sanctification by the Spirit results from our being vitally united to Christ, for the moment we are livingly joined to Him. His holiness becomes ours, and our standing before God is the same as His. *Relatively*, our sanctification of the Spirit issues from our being renewed by Him, for the moment He quickens us we are set apart from those who are dead in sins. *Personally*, we are consecrated unto God by the Spirit’s indwelling us, making our bodies His temples. *Experimentally*, our sanctification of the Spirit consists in the impartation to us of a principle (“nature”) of holiness, whereby we become conformed to the Divine law. Let us consider each of these viewpoints separately.

Our *union to Christ* is the grand hinge on which everything turns. Divorced from Him, we have nothing spiritually. Describing our unregenerate condition, the Apostle says, “at that time ye were *without Christ*,” and being without *Him*, it necessarily follows “being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having *no hope*, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). But the moment the Holy Spirit makes us livingly one with Christ, all that He has becomes ours, we are then “joint-heirs with Him.” Just as a woman obtains the right to share all that a man has once she is wedded to him, so a poor sinner becomes holy before God the moment he is vitally united to the Holy One. Everything which God requires from us, everything which is needed by us, is treasured up for us in Christ.

By our union with Christ we receive a new and holy nature, whereby we are capaci-

tated for holy living, which holy living is determined and regulated by our practical and experimental fellowship with Him. By virtue of our federal union with the first Adam we not only had imputed to us the guilt of his disobedience, but we also received from him the sinful nature which has vitiated our souls, powerfully influencing all our faculties. In like manner, by virtue of our federal union with the last Adam, the elect not only have imputed to them the righteousness of His obedience, but they also receive from Him (by the Spirit) a holy nature, which renews all the faculties of their souls and powerfully affects their actions. Once we become united to the Vine, the life and holy virtue which is in Him flows into us, and brings forth spiritual fruit. Thus, the moment the Spirit unites us *to Christ*, we are “sanctified *in Christ Jesus*” (1 Cor. 1:2).

It is axiomatic that those whom God separates unto Himself must be suited to Himself, that is, they must be *holy*. Equally clear is it from the Scriptures that whatsoever God does He is determined that the crown of honour for it should rest upon the head of Christ, for *He* is the grand Centre of all the Divine counsels. Now both of these fundamental considerations are secured by God’s making us partakers of *His own* holiness, through creating us anew in Christ Jesus. God will neither receive nor own any one who has the least taint of sin’s defilement upon him, and it is only as we are made new creatures in Christ that we can fully measure up to the unalterable requirements of God. Our *state* must be holy as well as our *standing* and as we showed in the last three articles Christ Himself *is* our sanctification so now we seek to point out that we are actually sanctified *in Christ*—personally and vitally.

“But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. 1:30)—“of Him” by the power and quickening operation of the Spirit. Christians are supernaturally and livingly incorporated with Christ. “For we are His workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus*” (Eph. 2:10): that new creation is accomplished in our union with His Person. *This* is our spiritual *state*: a “new man” has been “*created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Eph. 4:24), and this we are exhorted to “put on” or make manifest. *This* is not at all a matter of progress or attainment, but is true of every Christian the moment he is born again. The terms “created in righteousness (our justification) and true holiness” (our sanctification) describe what the “new man” is in Christ. It is not simply something which we are to pursue—though that is true, and is intimated in the “put ye on”; but it is what all Christians actually *are*: their sanctification in Christ is an accomplished fact: it is just because Christians *are* “saints” they are to lead saintly lives.

The believer *begins* his Christian life by having been perfectly sanctified in Christ. Just as both our standing and state were radically affected by virtue of our union with the first Adam, so *both* our standing and state are completely changed by virtue of our union with the last Adam. As the believer has a perfect standing in holiness before God because of his federal union with Christ, so his state is perfect before God, because he is now vitally united to Christ: he is in Christ, and Christ is in him. By the regenerating operation of the Spirit we are “joined unto the Lord” (1 Cor. 6:17). The moment they were born again, *all* Christians were sanctified in Christ with a sanctification to which no growth in grace, no attainments in holy living, *can add one iota*. Their sanctification, like their justification, is “complete in Him,” (Col. 2:10). Christ Himself is their “life,” and He becomes such by a personal union to Himself which nothing can dissolve. From the moment of his new birth every child of God is a “*saint in Christ Jesus*” (Rom. 1:7), one of the “*holy brethren*” (Heb. 3:1); and it is just because they *are* such, they are called upon

to live holy lives. O what cause we have to adore the grace, the wisdom, and the power of God!

When one of God's elect is quickened into newness of life a great change is made *relatively*, that is, in connection with his relation to his fellow-men. Previously, he too was both in the world and of it, being numbered with the ungodly, and enjoying their fellowship. But at regeneration he is born into a new family, even the living family of God, and henceforth his standing is no longer among those who are "without Christ": "Who hath delivered us from the Power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. 1:13). Thus, when one is made alive in Christ by the Holy Spirit, he at once becomes *separated* from those who are dead in trespasses and sins and therefore this is another aspect of the "sanctification of the Spirit." This was typed out of old. When the Lord was revealed unto Abraham, the word to him was "*Get thee out* of thy country, and from thy kindred" (Gen. 12:1). So again it was with Israel: no sooner were they delivered from the Angel of Death by the blood of the lamb, than they were required to leave Egypt behind them.

*Personally* we are sanctified or consecrated unto God by the Spirit's indwelling us and making our bodies His temples. As He came upon Christ Himself ("without measure") so, in due time, He is given to each of His members: "ye have an Unction (the Spirit) from the Holy One"—Christ; "the Anointing (the Spirit) which ye have received of Him (Christ) abideth in you" (1 John 2:20, 27)—it is from this very fact we receive our name, for "Christian" means "an *anointed* one," the term being taken from the type in Psalm 133:2. It is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit which constitutes a believer a holy person. That which made Canaan the "holy" land, Jerusalem the "holy" city, the temple the "holy" place, was *the presence* and appearing of the Holy One there! And that which makes any man "*holy*" is the perpetual abiding of the Spirit within him. Needless to say, His indwelling of us necessarily produces *fruits* of holiness in heart and life—this will come before us in the sequel.

Amazing, blessed, and glorious fact, the Holy Spirit *indwells* the regenerate so that their bodies become the temples of the living God. "The Holy Spirit descends on them and enters within them, *in consequence of* their union with Christ. He comes from Heaven to make known this union between Christ and them. He is the Divine *Manifester* of it. He dwells in us as a well of water springing up into everlasting life. He abides with us as our Divine Comforter, and will be our Guide even unto death, and continue His life-giving influences in us and dwell in us, filling us with all the fullness of God in Heaven for ever" (S.E. Pierce).

This indwelling of the Spirit is, in the order of God, subsequent to and in consequence of our being sanctified by the blood of Jesus; for it is obvious that God could not "dwell" in those who were standing under the imputation of their guilt. The Holy Spirit, therefore, from the very fact of making our bodies His temples, attests and evidences the completeness and perpetuity of the sanctification which is ours by the sacrifice of Christ. He comes to us not to procure blessings which Christ hath already purchased for us, but to make them known to us: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Cor. 2:12). He comes to sustain those in whom the life of Christ now is.—A.W.P.

### Duty-Faith.

It is the bounden duty of all who hear the Gospel to savingly trust in Christ, otherwise their rejection of Him would be no *sin*. Many of our readers will be surprised to hear that this self-evident truth is denied by some who are, otherwise, sound in the Faith. They *reason* that it is "inconsistent" to call upon the spiritually dead to perform spiritual duties. A certain denomination in England have the following among their Articles of Faith: "We deny duty-faith and duty-repentance—these terms signifying that it is every man's duty to spiritually and savingly repent and believe (Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Matt. 15:19; Jer. 17:9; John 6:44, 65). We deny also that there is any capability in man by nature to any spiritual good whatever. So that we reject the doctrine that men in a state of nature should be exhorted to believe in or turn to God (John 12:29, 40; Eph. 2:8; Rom. 8:7, 8; 1 Cor. 4:7). Therefore, that for ministers in the present day to address unconverted persons, or indiscriminately all in a mixed congregation, calling upon them to savingly repent, believe, and receive Christ, or perform any other acts dependent upon the new creative power of the Holy Spirit, is, on the one hand, to imply creature power, and, on the other, to deny the doctrine of special redemption."

As some of our readers have imbibed this error, we are anxious to be of help to them. We have therefore decided to follow the article by John Newton on "Ministerial Address to the Unconverted" in the March issue by first giving brief quotations from the writings of the Reformers and Puritans, to show how the framers of those Articles of Faith *departed from* the path and policy followed by so many eminent saints of God who preceded them.

"The mercy of God is *offered equally* to those who believe and to those who believe not, so that those who are not Divinely taught within are rendered inexcusable" (John Calvin—1552—"The Eternal Predestination of God" p. 95). "A slight acquaintance with Paul will enable anyone to understand, without tedious argument, how easily he reconciled things which they pretend to be repugnant to each other. *Christ commands men to believe* in Him, yet His limitation is neither false nor contrary to His command when He says 'No man can come to Me except it were given him of My Father.' Let preaching therefore have its force to bring men to faith" (Calvin's "Institutes" Book 3, chap. 18, par. 13).

"The first part then of Christianity is the preaching of repentance, and the knowledge of ourselves . . . A man, therefore, is made a Christian not by working but by hearing; wherefore, he that will exercise himself to righteousness must first *exercise himself* in hearing the Gospel. Now, when he hath heard and received the Gospel, let him give himself to God with a joyful heart, and afterwards let him exercise himself in those good works which are commanded in the law" (Martin Luther—1540—on Galatians, pp. 104 and 185).

"When we meet with a precept, we should simply endeavour to obey it, without inquiring into God's hidden purpose . . . Notwithstanding God's predestination is most certain and unalterable, so that no elect person can perish, nor any reprobate be saved, yet *it does not follow* from thence that all reproofs and exhortations on the part of God, or prayers on the part of men, are *useless*" (J. Zanchius—1562—"The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination," pp. 49 and 120).

"With the promises there is joined an exhortation or command to believe, which is more general than the promise; because the promise is only made to believers; but the

commandment is given to believers and unbelievers also. For the elect are mingled with the wicked in the same assemblies, and therefore the ministers of the Gospel ought indiscriminately *to exhort all and every one to repent*." "In very truth, if thou goest forth of this world being no repentant sinner, thou goest damned to Hell: *wherefore delay not one minute* of an hour longer, but with all speed repent and turn unto God" (W. Perkins—1595—Vol. 1, p. 379; Vol. 2, p. 692).

"Let us be stirred up *to repent immediately*. Doth not God now warn you? Is it not dangerous living one hour in a state that we would not die in? May God justly strike us on the sudden? Do but purpose to live in sin one quarter of an hour; may we not be taken away in that quarter?" (R. Sibbes—1620—Vol. 6, p. 212).

"We are expressly commanded to believe, and that upon the highest promises, and under the greatest penalties. This command is that which makes believing formally a duty. Faith is a grace as it is freely wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, the root of all obedience and duties, as it is radically fixed in the heart. But as it is *commanded* it is a *duty*; and these commands, you know, are several ways expressed, by invitations, exhortations, propositions" (John Owen—1650—Vol. 14, p. 223).

"I say there is no simulation at all of God in this: that which He proposeth is but this; 'Whosoever believeth shall be saved, and whosoever believeth not shall be damned.' He sends His ministers to preach this, and *to beseech them* to believe, and to be reconciled unto God, yea, *all* they meet with." "He commands them to preach promiscuously unto all, persuade all, exhort all, unto faith and repentance" (W. Twisse—1653—"The Riches of God's Love" pp. 73 and 169).

"My counsel (to his unsaved hearers) is this: Stir up your souls to lay hold on the Lord Jesus and look up to Him, wait on Him from whom every good and perfect gift comes, and give Him no rest till He hath given thee that jewel *faith*" (Thomas Brooks—1653—Vol. 1, p. 144).

"This condition of faith and repentance is suited to the consciences of men. The law of nature teaches us that we are bound to believe every revelation from God when it is made known to us; and not only to assent to it as true, but *embrace it* as good." "Our rejection of Christ, and the way of His appointing, is a high contempt of God . . . It is a 'making light' of a rich feast of God's providing" (S. Charnock—1660—Vol. 3, pp. 68 and 469).

John Bunyan (1675) in his "The Heavenly Footman"; or a "Description of the man that gets to Heaven," which is addressed to "All the slothful and careless people," being an exposition and application of "So run that ye may obtain" (1 Cor. 9:24), closes with, "If thou dost not know the way, inquire at the Word of God; if thou wantest company, cry for God's Spirit; if thou wantest encouragement, entertain the promises. But be sure thou *beginnest betimes*; get into the way, run apace, and hold out to the end, and the Lord give thee a prosperous journey."

"Preach the Gospel to every creature: yet this is not the Gospel to be preached—that God hath promised to save every creature; though upon promulgation of them, it becomes *the duty of everyone* to come to Christ, and a command is laid upon men to do it" (T. Goodwin—1680—Vol. 8, p. 245).

"Fire burneth where it meeteth with matter combustible, but a reasonable creature needeth *to be exhorted* to perform acts agreeable to his principles" (T. Manton—1670—Vol. 19, p. 247).



“It is our duty to endeavour what is impossible by our own endeavours to attain—so sin has made it; to avoid all sin, to perform perfect obedience, to love with all the heart” (David Clarkson, associate pastor with John Owen—1682—Vol. 2, p. 131).

“But you will say, if unregenerate men be dead men, to what purpose is it to persuade them to arise and stand up? This difficulty is solved in this very text (Eph. 5:14): *though the duty is ours*, yet the power is God’s” (J. Flavell—1680—Vol. 2, p. 423).

“It is the known duty of a sinner under the Gospel to turn to God through Christ; and it is also declared in the same Gospel that none can of themselves turn to God and believe in His Son without the help of special efficacious grace; it must hereupon be a man’s *duty* also to pray for that grace which may enable him thereto” (J. Howe—1690—Vol. 2, p. 346).

“This (Gospel) call contains the command of faith by which all men without exception, to whom God vouchsafes the same, are enjoined to believe in Christ, in that way and manner which is revealed in the Gospel: ‘look unto Me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth’: Isaiah 45:22” (H. Witsuis—1690—Vol. 3, p. 353).

“Neither will this assertion make it a vain thing to preach the Gospel to *natural* people, and to exhort them to true repentance and faith in Christ for their conversion and salvation” (W. Marshall—1692—“The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification,” so highly commended by James Hervey, p. 121).

“And even not coming to Christ, and believing in Him in this *spiritual* manner, when He is revealed in the external ministry of the Word, as God’s way of salvation, *is criminal* and blameworthy, notwithstanding men’s want of both will and power” (John Gill—1735—“The Cause of God and Truth,” p. 87).

We could add quotations from others, but the above are from well known, representative, sound, Calvinistic divines; several of them *high* Calvinists. Yet their holding firmly to the spiritual inability of the natural man, to unconditional election, particular redemption, and the effectual call of the Spirit, *did not tie their hands* in preaching the Gospel freely, pressing upon their hearers their responsibility, and calling upon them to repent and believe.—A.W.P.