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**STUDIES**  
**IN THE**  
**SCRIPTURES**

*“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39*

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EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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

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# STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

*“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39*

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EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### *4. The Titles of the Holy Spirit*

Right views of the divine character lie at the foundation of all genuine and vital godliness. It should, then, be one of our chief quests to seek after the knowledge of God. Without the true knowledge of God, in His nature and attributes, we can neither worship Him acceptably nor serve Him aright. Now the three persons in the Godhead have graciously revealed themselves through a variety of names and titles. The nature of God we are utterly incapable of comprehending, but His person and character may be known. Each name or title that God has appropriated unto Himself is that whereby He reveals Himself unto us and whereby He would have us know and own Him. Therefore, whatever any name of God expresses Him to be, *that He is*, for He will not deceive us by giving Himself a wrong or false name. On this account He requires us to trust in His name, because He will assuredly be found unto us all that His name imports.

The names of God, then, are for the purpose of expressing Him unto us. They set forth His perfections and make known the different relations which He sustains unto the children of men and unto His own favored people. Names are given for this intent, that they might declare what the thing is, to which the name belongs. Thus, when God created Adam and gave him dominion over this visible world, He caused the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air to pass before him, that they might receive names from him (Gen 2:19). In like manner, we may learn of what God is through the names and titles He has taken. By means of them, God spells out Himself to us, sometimes by one of His perfections, sometimes by another. A very wide field of study is here introduced to us, yet we can now say no more than that the prayerful and diligent searcher will find it a highly profitable one to investigate.

What has been said above serves to indicate the importance of the present aspect of our subject. What the Holy Spirit is in His divine person and ineffable character is made known unto us by means of the many names and varied titles which are accorded to Him in Holy Writ. A whole volume, rather than a brief article, might well be devoted to their contemplation. May we be divinely guided in using the limited space which is now at our disposal in writing that which will both magnify the third person in the blessed Trinity, and serve as a stimulus unto our readers to give more careful study and holy meditation to those titles of His which we cannot here consider. Possibly we can help our friends most by devoting our attention to those which are more difficult to apprehend.

The Holy Spirit is designated by a great many names and titles in Scripture which clearly evidence both His personality and deity. Some of these are peculiar to Himself, others He has in common with the Father and the Son, in the undivided essence of the divine nature. While in the wondrous scheme of redemption the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are revealed unto us under *distinct* characters, by which we are taught to ascribe certain operations to one more immediately than to another, yet the agency of each is not to be considered as so detached but that they *cooperate and concur*. For this reason, the third person of the Trinity is called the Spirit of the Father (Joh 14:26) and the Spirit of the Son (Gal 4:6), because, acting in conjunction with the Father and the Son, the operations of the one are in effect the operations of the others and altogether result from the indivisible essence of the Godhead.

First, He is designated, "The Spirit," which expresses two things. First, His divine nature, for "God is a Spirit" (Joh 4:24), as the Thirty-nine Articles of the Episcopal Church well express it, "without body, parts, or passions." He is essentially pure, incorporeal Spirit, as distinct from any material or visible substance. Second, it express His mode of operation on the hearts of the people of God, which is compared in Scripture to a "breath" or the movement of the "wind"—both of which adumbrate Him in this lower world. Suitably so, inasmuch as they are invisible and yet vitalizing elements. "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live" (Eze 37:9). Therefore was it that, in His public descent on the day of Pentecost, "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting" (Act 2:2).

Second, He is called by way of eminency, "The Holy Spirit," which is His most usual appellation in the New Testament. Two things are included. First, respect is had unto His nature. As Jehovah is distinguished from all false gods thus, "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness" (Exo 15:11), so is the Spirit called Holy to denote the holiness of His nature. This appears plainly in Mark 3:29-30, "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost" hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation. Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit"—thus opposition is made between His immaculate nature and that of the unclean or unholy spirit. Observe too, how this verse also furnishes clear proof of His personality, for the "unclean spirit" is a person, and if the Spirit were not a person, no comparative opposition could be made between them. So also we see here His absolute deity, for only *God* could be "blasphemed"! Second, this title views His *operations* and that in respect of *all* His works,

for every work of God is holy—in hardening and blinding, equally as in regenerating and sanctifying.

Third, He is called God's "good spirit" (Neh 9:20), "Thy spirit is good" (Psa 143:10). He is so designated principally from His nature, which is essentially good for "There is none good but one, that is, God" (Mat 19:17). So also from His operations, for "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Eph 5:9). Fourth, He is called the "free Spirit" (Psa 51:12), so designated because He is a most generous giver, bestowing His favors severally as He pleases, liberally and upbraiding not. Also because it is His special work to deliver God's elect from the bondage of sin and Satan and bring them into the glorious liberty of God's children. Fifth, He is called "the Spirit of Christ" (Rom 8:9) because sent by Him (Act 2:33), and as furthering His cause on earth (Joh 16:14). Sixth, He is called "the Spirit of the Lord" (Act 8:39) because He possesses divine authority and requires unhesitating submission from us.

Seventh, He is called, "the *eternal* Spirit" (Heb 9:14). "Among the names and titles by which the Holy Spirit is known in Scripture, that of 'the eternal Spirit' is His *peculiar* appellation—a name, which in the very first face of things, accurately defines His nature, and carries with it the most convincing proof of Godhead. None but 'the High and Holy One, which inhabiteth eternity,' can be called *eternal*. Of other beings, who possess a derivative immortality, it may be said, that as they are created for eternity, they may enjoy, through the benignity of their Creator, a future eternal duration. But this differs as widely as the east is from the west, when applied to Him of whom we are speaking. He alone, who possesses an underived, independent, and necessary self-existence, 'who was, and is, and is to come,' can be said, in exclusion of all other beings, to be eternal" (Robert Hawker, 1753-1827).

Eighth, He is called "the Paraclete" or "the Comforter" (Joh 14:16), than which no better translation can be given, providing the English meaning of the word be kept in mind. Comforter means more than Consoler. It is derived from two Latin words, *com*—"alongside of" and *fortis*—"strength." Thus a "comforter" is one who stands alongside of one in need, to strengthen. When Christ said He would ask the Father to give His people "another Comforter," He signified that the Spirit would fill His own place, doing for the disciples what He had done for them while He was with them on earth. The Spirit strengthens in a variety of ways—consoling when cast down, giving grace when weak or timid, guiding when perplexed.

We close this article with a few words from the pen of the late J.C. Philpot (1802-1869), "Nor let anyone think that this doctrine of the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit is a mere strife of words, an unimportant matter, or an unprofitable discussion, which we may take or leave, believe or deny, without any injury to our faith or hope. On the contrary, let this be firmly impressed on your mind, that if you deny or disbelieve the personality of the blessed Spirit, you deny and disbelieve with it the grand foundation truth of the Trinity. If your doctrine be unsound, your experience must be a delusion, and your practice an imposition."

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### 64. *The Reward of Faith (11:15-16)*

Once more we would remind ourselves of the particular circumstances those saints were in to whom our epistle was first addressed. Only as we do so are we in the best position to discern the meaning of its contents, and best fitted to make a right application of the same unto ourselves. It is not that the Hebrews were Jews according to the flesh and we Gentiles, for they, equally with us, were "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (Heb 3:1). No, it is the peculiar position which they occupied, with the pressing temptations that solicited them, which we need to carefully ponder. Divine grace had called them out of Judaism (Joh 10:3), but divine judgment had not yet fallen upon Judaism. The temple was still intact and its services continued, and as long as they did so, an appeal was made to the Hebrews to return thereunto.

Now that historical situation adumbrated a moral one. The Christian has been called out from the world to follow Christ, but the judgment of God has not yet fallen upon the world and burned it up. No, it still stands, and we are yet in it, and as long as this is the case, Satan seeks to get us to return thereunto. It is this which enables us to see the force of those verses which are now engaging our attention. Keeping in mind what has just been said, the reader should have no difficulty in discerning why the apostle reminds us, first, that the patriarchs lived on earth as strangers and pilgrims and secondly, that they went not back again to the land of their birth. As we saw in our last article, that which was typified by the patriarchs living in separation from the Canaanites and their "dwelling in tents," was the Christian's renunciation of this world. That which was foreshadowed by their refusal to return unto Chaldea was the Christian's *continued* renunciation of the world and his actual winning through to heaven.

In the verses which are now to be before us, clear light is thrown upon an essential element in the Christian life. They present to us an aspect of truth which, in some circles, is largely ignored or denied today. There are those who have pressed the blessed truth of the eternal security of the saints with a zeal that was not always according to knowledge. They have presented it in a way that suggests God preserves His people altogether apart from their use of means. They have stated it in a manner as to virtually deny the Christian's responsibility. They have implied that, having committed my soul unto the keeping of the Lord, I have no more to do with its safety, than I have with money which I have entrusted to the custody of a bank or the government. The result has been that many who have accepted this false presentation of the truth have felt quite at ease in a course of careless and reckless living.

So one-sided is the teaching we refer to that its advocates will not allow for a moment that there is the slightest danger of a real Christian apostatizing. If a servant of God insists that there is, and yet he also affirms that no real saint of God has perished or ever will, they consider him inconsistent and illogical. They seem unable to recognize the fact that, while it is perfectly true from the side of God's eternal counsels, the value of Christ's redemption, the efficacy of the Spirit's work, that none of the elect can be finally lost, yet it is equally true from the side of the Christian's frailty, the existence of the flesh still within,

his being subject unto the assaults of Satan, and his living in a wicked world, that real (not theoretical or imaginary) danger menaces him from every side. No, they fondly imagine that there is only one side to the subject, the divine side.

But the verses we are now to ponder show the fallacy of this. So far from affirming that there was no possibility of the patriarchs going back again to that country which they had left—which, in type, would mean returning to the world—the apostle boldly affirms (caring not who might charge him with being inconsistent with himself) that if their hearts had been set upon Chaldea, they “might have had opportunity to have returned.” Had they grown weary of dwelling in tents and moving about from place to place in a strange land, and purposed to retrace their steps to Mesopotamia, what was there to hinder them so doing? True, *that* would have been an act of unbelief and disobedience, a despising and relinquishing of the promises, yet, from the human side, the way for them so to act was always open. Let us now weigh the details of our passage.

“And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned” (Heb 11:15). There is a threefold connection between these words and that which immediately precedes. First, at the beginning of verse 13, the apostle had affirmed that all those to whom he was referring (and to whom he was directing the special attention of the Hebrews) had “died in faith.” In all that follows to the end of verse 16, he furnishes proof of his assertion. Second, in verse 15, the apostle continues the inference he had drawn in verse 14 from the last clause of verse 13. The confession made by the patriarchs manifested that their hearts were set upon heaven, which was further evidenced by their refusal to return to Chaldea. Third, he anticipates and removes an objection. Seeing that God had commanded them to take up their residence in another land (Canaan), they were “strangers” there by necessity. No, says the apostle, they were “strangers and pilgrims” (Heb 11:13) by their own consent, too—their hearts as well as their bodies were separated from Chaldea.

The patriarchs’ remaining in a strange land was quite a voluntary thing on their part. And this brings us unto the very heart of what is a real difficulty for many. They do not see that when God “draws” a person (Joh 6:44), He does no violence to his will, that though exercising His sovereignty, man also retains his freedom. Both are true and hold good of the Christian life at every stage of it. Conversion itself is wholly brought about by the mighty operations of divine grace, nevertheless, it is also a free act on the part of the creature. Those who are effectually called by God out of darkness into His marvelous light, do, at conversion, surrender their whole being to Him, renouncing the flesh, the world, and the devil, and vow to wage (by His grace) a ceaseless warfare against them. The Christian life is the habitual continuance of what took place at conversion, the carrying out of the vow then made, the putting of it into practice.

Immediately before conversion a fierce conflict takes place in the soul. On the one side is the devil, seeking to retain his captive by presenting to it the pleasures of sin and the allurements of the world, telling the soul that there will be no more happiness if these be relinquished and the rigid requirements of Christ’s commandments be heeded. On the other side is the Holy Spirit, declaring that the wages of sin is death, that the world is doomed to destruction, and that unless we renounce sin and forsake the world, we must eternally perish. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit presses upon us that nothing short of a wholehearted

surrender to the Lordship of Christ can bring us into "*the way of salvation*." Torn between these conflicting impressions upon his mind, the soul is bidden to sit down and "count the cost" (Luk 14:28), to deliberately weigh the offers of Satan and the terms of Christian discipleship, and to definitely make his choice between them.

It is not that man has the power within himself to refuse the evil and choose the good. It is not that God has left it for the creature to determine his own destiny. It is not that the temptations of Satan are equally powerful with the convictions of the Holy Spirit and that *our* decision turns the scale between them. No indeed, not so do the Scriptures teach and not so does this writer believe. Sin has robbed fallen man of all *power* to do good, yet not his *obligation* to perform it. The destiny of all creatures has been unalterably fixed by the eternal decrees of God, yet not in such a way as to reduce them to irresponsible automations. The operations of the Holy Spirit in God's elect are invincible, yet they do no violence to the human will. But while salvation, from beginning to end, is to be wholly ascribed to the free and sovereign grace of God, nevertheless, it remains that conversion itself is the voluntary act of man, his own conscious, and free surrendering of himself to God in Christ.

Now the same diverse factors enter into the Christian life itself. Necessarily so, for, as said above, the Christian life is but a progressive continuance of how we begin. Repentance is not once and for all, but as often as we are conscious of having displeased God. Believing in Christ is not a single act which needs no repeating, but a constant requirement, as the "believeth" of John 3:16, and the "coming" of 1 Peter 2:4 plainly shows. So too our renunciation of the world is to be a daily process. The same objects which enthralled us before conversion are still on hand, and unless we are much upon our guard, unless our hearts are warmed and charmed by the loveliness of Christ through maintaining a close fellowship with Him, they will soon gain power over us. Satan is ever ready to tempt, and unless we diligently seek grace to resist him, will trip us up.

"And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned," (Heb 11:15) but as the next verse shows, they did not do so. In this they were in striking and blessed contrast from Esau, who sold his birthright, valuing temporal things more highly than spiritual. In contrast from the children of Israel who said one to another, "Let us make a captain, and let us return to Egypt" (Num 14:4). In contrast from the Gadarenes, who preferred their hogs to Christ and His salvation (Mar 5). In contrast from the stony-ground hearers who "have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luk 8:13). In contrast from the apostates of 2 Peter 2:20-22, the latter end of whom is "worse with them than the beginning." Solemn warnings are these which each professing Christian needs to take to heart.

Note how positively the apostle expressed it, "And truly" or "verily." "If they had been mindful," which means, had their minds frequently dwelt upon Chaldea, had their hearts desired it. How this shows the great importance of girding up the loins of our minds (1Pe 1:13), of disciplining our thoughts, for as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Pro 23:7). "It is in the nature of faith to mortify, not only corrupt and sinful lusts, but our natural affections, and their most vehement inclinations, though in themselves innocent, if they are any way uncompliant with duties of obedience to the commands of God—yea herein lies



the principal trial of the sincerity and power of faith. Our lives, parents, wives, children, houses, possessions, our country, are the principal, proper, lawful objects of our natural affections. But when they or any of them, stand in the way of God's commands, if they are hindrances to the doing or suffering any thing according to His will, faith doth not only mortify, weaken, and take off that love, but gives us a comparative hatred of them" (John Owen, 1616-1683 ).

"They might have had opportunity to have returned." (Heb 11:15) They knew the way, were well furnished with funds, had plenty of time at their disposal, and health and strength for the journey. The Canaanites would not have grieved at their departure (Gen 26:18-21), and undoubtedly their old friends would have heartily welcomed them back again. In like manner (as we have said before), the way back was wide open for the Hebrews to return unto Judaism. It was their special snare and a constant and habitual renunciation of it was required of them. So too if *we* choose to return unto the world and engage again in all its vain pursuits, there are "opportunities" enough, enticements abound on every hand, and worldly friends would heartily welcome us to their society if we would but lower our colors, drop our godliness, and follow their course.

But the patriarchs did not go back again to that country from whence they came out, instead, they persevered in the path of duty and despite all discouragements followed that course which the divine commandments marked out for them. In this they have left us an example. They hankered not after the wealth, honours, pleasures, or society of Chaldea. Their hearts were engaged with something vastly superior. They knew that in heaven they had "a better and enduring substance," and therefore they disdained the baubles which once had satisfied them. Divine grace had taught them that those sources of joy, which they had once so eagerly sought, were "cisterns that can hold no water" (Jer 2:13), but that in Christ they had an ever-flowing well that springeth up unto everlasting life. Grace had taught them that it is sinful to make material things the chief objects of this life. They sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

So little did Abraham esteem Chaldea that he would not go thither in person to obtain a wife for his son, nor suffer Isaac to go, but sent his servant and made him swear that he would not bring her thither, if she were unwilling to come—another illustration that nothing is more voluntary than godliness. So it is with the Christian when he is first converted. The world has lost all its attractions for him, nor can it regain its hold upon his heart so long as he walks with God. The acutest test comes in seasons of prosperity. "David professeth himself to be a stranger and a pilgrim, not only when he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, but when he was in his palace, and in his best estate. We are not to renounce our comforts and throw away God's blessings, but we are to renounce our carnal affections. We cannot get out of the world when we please, but we must get the world out of us. It is a great trial of grace to refuse the opportunity. It is the most difficult lesson to learn how to abound, more difficult than to learn how to want and to be abased, to have comforts and yet to have the heart weaned from comforts, not to be necessarily mortified, but to be voluntarily mortified" (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677).

It is not the absence of temptations, but the resisting of and prevailing over them which evidences the efficacy of indwelling grace. The power of voluntary godliness is manifested in the conflict, when we have the "opportunity" to go wrong, but decline it. Joseph had not

only a temptation, but the “occasion” for yielding to it, yet grace forbade (Gen 39:9). It was the command of God which held back the patriarchs from returning to Chaldea and the same controls the hearts of all the regenerate. “It is easy to be good when we cannot be otherwise or when all temptations to the contrary are out of the way. All the seeming goodness there is in so many, they owe it to the want of a temptation and to the want of an opportunity of doing otherwise” (Thomas Manton). Not so with the real Christian.

“But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city” (Heb 11:16). The first half of this verse gives the positive side of what has been before us and amplified what was said in verse 14. It is not enough to renounce the world, but we must also have our hearts carried forth unto better things. We must believe in and seek heaven itself. There are some who disdain worldly profits, but instead of seeking the true riches, are immersed in worldly pleasures. Others while despising fleshly recreations and dissipations, devote themselves to more serious occupations, yet “labour for that which satisfieth not” (Isa 55:2). But the Christian, while passing through it, makes a sanctified use of the world and has his affections set upon things above.

“But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly” (Heb 11:16). It helps us to link together the four statements made concerning this. First, Abraham *looked for* a country which denotes faith’s expectations of blessedness to come. It was not a mere passing glance of the mind, but a serious and constant anticipation of celestial bliss. Second, “They *seek* a country” (v. 14). They make it the great aim and business of their lives to avoid every hindrance, overcome every obstacle, and steadfastly press forward along the narrow way that leads thither, “Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1Ti 6:19). Third, “They *desire* a better country” (v. 16). They long to be relieved from the body of this death, removed from this scene of sin, and be taken to be forever with the Lord, “We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:23). He that has had a taste of heaven in the joy of the Spirit, his heart cries, “When shall I come to the full enjoyment of my inheritance!” Fourth, they “*declare plainly* that they seek a country” (v. 14). Their daily walk makes it manifest that they belong not to this world, but are citizens of heaven.

One of the best evidences that we are truly seeking heaven is the possession of hearts that are weaned from this world. None will ever enter the Father’s house on high in whose soul the first fruits of heavenly peace and joy does not grow now. He who finds his satisfaction in temporal things is woefully deceived if he imagines he can enjoy eternal things. He whose joy is all gone when earthly possessions are snatched from him, knows nothing of that peace which “passeth all understanding” (Phi 4:7) And yet, if the auto, radio, newspaper, money to go to the movies, were taken away from the average “church member,” what would he then have left to make life worth living? O how few can really say, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab 3:17-18).

“Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God” (Heb 11:16). “The word ‘therefore’ denotes not the procuring or meritorious cause of the thing itself, but the consequent or what ensued thereon” (John Owen). God will be no man’s debtor, “Them that honour me I will honour” (1Sa 2:30 and cf. 2Ti 2:21) is His sure promise. By confessing they were strangers and pilgrims, the patriarchs had avowed their supreme desire for and hope of a portion superior to any that could be found on earth. Hence, because they were willing to renounce all worldly prospects so as to follow God in an obedient faith, for the sake of an invisible but eternal inheritance, He did not disdain to be known as their Friend and Portion. “We are hence to conclude that there is no place for us among God’s children except we renounce the world and that there will be for us no inheritance in heaven except we become pilgrims on earth” (John Calvin, 1509-1564 ).

“God is not ashamed to be called their God” (Heb 11:16). Here was the grand reward of their faith. So well did God approve of their desire and design, He was pleased to give evidence of His special regard unto them. “Not ashamed” literally signifies that He had no cause to “blush” because He had been disgraced by them—it is God speaking after the manner of men. It is the negative way of saying that He made a joyous acknowledgment of them, as a father does of dutiful children. When we think not only of the personal unworthiness of the patriarchs (fallen, sinful creatures), but also of their contemptible situation—“dwelling in tents” (Heb 11:9) in a strange land—we may well marvel at the infinite condescension of the Maker of the universe identifying Himself with them. What incredible grace for the divine Majesty to avow Himself the God of worms of the earth!

Ah, those who renounce the world for God’s sake shall not be the losers. But observe it was not simply, “God is not ashamed *to be* their God,” but “to be *called* their God” (Heb 11:16). He took this very title in a peculiar manner. Unto Moses He said, “I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exo 3:6). Thus, to be “called their God” means that He was their covenant God and Father. Not only is He the God of His children by creation and providence, but He is also unto them “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10), as He is the God of Christ and all the elect in Him. This He manifests by quickening, enlightening, guiding, protecting, and making all things work together for their good. He continues to be such a God unto them through life and in death, so that they may depend upon His love, be assured of His faithfulness, count upon His power, and be safely carried through every trial, till they are landed on the shores of eternal bliss.

“God is not ashamed to be called their God” (Heb 11:16). The wider reference is to all the elect, who have a special interest in Him. These are known, first, by the manner of their coming into this relation. God brings His people into this special relation by effectually calling them and then when He has taken possession of their hearts, they choose Him for their all-sufficient portion, and completely give up themselves to Him. Their language is, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psa 73:25). Their surrender to Him is evidenced by, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do”? (Act 9:6). Second, by their manner of living in this relation. They glorify God by their subjection to Him, love for Him, trust in Him. Unto those who have renounced all idols, God is not ashamed to be known as their God.

Now if God be our “God” how *contented* we should be! “The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in

pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage” (Psa 16:5-6). This should ever be our language. How *confident* we should be! “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psa 23:1). This should ever be our boast. How *joyful* we should be! “Because Thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee” (Psa 63:3). This should ever be our confession. “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.” (Psa 16:11). When brought home to glory we shall better understand what this connotes—“*their* God.”

How may I know that God is *my* “God”? Did you ever enter into covenant with Him? “Was your spirit ever subdued to yield to Him? Do you remember when you were bond-slaves of Satan, that God broke in upon you with a mighty and powerful work of grace, subduing your heart, and causing you to yield, to give the hand to Him, to come and lie at His feet, and lay down the weapons of defiance? Didst thou ever come as a guilty creature, willing to take laws from God? Though it be God’s condescension to capitulate with us, yet we do not capitulate with Him as equals, but as a subdued creature, who is taken captive and ready to be destroyed every moment, and is therefore willing to yield and cry quarter. How do you behave yourselves in the covenant? Do you love God as the chiefest good? Do you see His glory as the utmost end? Do you obey Him as the highest Lord? Do you depend on Him as your only Paymaster? This is to give God the glory of a God” (Thomas Manton).

“For he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb 11:16). Here is the crowning evidence that He *is* their “God.” The “city” is heaven itself. It is spoken of as “prepared” because God did, in His eternal counsels, appoint it, see Matthew 20:23, 1 Corinthians 2:9. But sin entered? True, and Christ has put away the sins of His people, and has entered heaven as their Representative and Forerunner. Therefore has He gone there to “prepare” a place for us (Joh 14:3), having laid the foundation for this in His own merits, and hence we read of “the purchased possession” (Eph 1:14). He is now in heaven possessing it in our name. O what cause have we to bow in wonderment and worship.

## THE LIFE OF DAVID

### *16. His Victory over Saul*

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Pro 16:32). A man who is “slow to anger” is esteemed by the Lord, respected by men, is happy in himself, and is to be preferred above the strongest giant that is not master of self. Alexander the Great conquered the world, yet in his uncontrollable wrath, slew his best friends. Being “slow to anger” is to take time and consider before we suffer our passions to break forth, that they may not transgress due bounds, and he who can thus control himself is to be esteemed above the mightiest warrior. A rational conquest is more honourable to a rational creature than triumph by brute force.

The most desirable authority is self-government. The conquest of ourselves and our own unruly passions, requires more regular and persevering management than does the obtaining of a victory over the physical forces of an enemy. The conquering of our own spirit is a more important achievement than the taking of a foe's fortress. He that can command his temper is superior to him that can successfully storm a fortified town. Natural courage, skill and patience, may do the one, but it requires the grace of God and the assistance of the Holy Spirit to do the other. Blessedly was all this exemplified by David in that incident which has occupied our attention in the last two articles. He had been sorely provoked by Saul, yet when the life of his enemy was in his hand, he graciously spared him and returned good for evil.

"A soft answer turneth away wrath" (Pro 15:1). Strikingly was this illustrated in what is now to be before us. A child of God is not to rest satisfied because *he* has not originated strife, but if others begin it, he must not continue it, but endeavor to end it by mollifying the matter. Better far to pour oil on the troubled waters, than to add fuel to the fire. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (Jam 3:17). We are to disarm resentment by every reasonable concession. Mild words and gentle expressions, delivered with kindness and humility, will weaken bitterness and scatter the storm of wrath. Note how the Ephraimites were pacified by Gideon's mild answer (Jdg 8:1-13). The noblest courage is shown when we withstand our own corruptions and overcome enemies by kindness.

"Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us" (Luk 11:4). Wherein does this forgiving of others consist? First, in withholding ourselves from revenge. "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any" (Col 3:13): Forbearing and forgiving are inseparably connected. Some men will say, "We will do to him as he has done to us," but God bids us, "*Say not*, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work" (Pro 24:29). Corrupt nature thirsts for retaliation and has a strong inclination that way, but grace should check it. Men think it a base thing to put up with wrongs and injuries, but this it is which gives a man a victory over himself and the truest victory over his enemy, when he forbears to revenge.

By nature there is a spirit in us which is turbulent, revengeful, and desirous of returning evil for evil, but when we are able to deny it, we are ruling our own spirit. Failure so to do, being overcome by passion, is moral weakness, for our enemy has thoroughly overcome us when his injuring of us prevails to our breaking of God's laws in order to retaliate. Therefore we are bidden, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21). Then is grace victorious and then do we manifest a noble, brave, and strong spirit. And wondrously will God bless our exemplifications of His grace, for it is often His way to shame the party that did the wrong, by overcoming him with the meekness and generosity of the one he has injured. It was thus in the case of David and Saul, as we shall now see.

"And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept" (1Sa 24:16). Though his mind was so hostile to David, and he had cruelly chased him up

and down, yet he now saw that the one he was pursuing had forborne revenge when it was in his power, he was moved to tears. In like manner, when the captains of the Syrians, whom the prophet had temporarily blinded, were led to Samaria, fully expecting to be slain there, we are told that the king “prepared great provisions for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away.” And what was the sequel to such kindness unto their enemies? This—it so wrought upon their hearts, their bands “came no more into the land of Israel” (2Ki 6:20-23). May these incidents speak loudly into each of our hearts.

“And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept” (1Sa 24:16). Let us pause and adore before the restraining power of God. Filled with wrath and fury, so eager to take David’s life, Saul, instead of attempting to kill him, had stood still and heard David’s speech without an interruption. He who commands the winds and the waves, can, when He pleases, still the most violent storm within a human breast. But more—Saul was not only awed and subdued, but melted by David’s kindness. Observe the noticeable change in his language. Before, it was only “the son of Jesse,” (1Sa 22:13) now he says, “my son, David.” So deeply was the king affected, that he was moved to tears, yet like those of Esau, they were not tears of real repentance.

“And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil” (1Sa 24:17). Saul was constrained to acknowledge David’s integrity and his own iniquity, just as Pharaoh said, “I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you” (Exo 10:16), and as many today will own their wrongdoing when shamed by Christians returning to them good for evil or when impressed by some startling providence of God. But such admissions are of little value if there is no change for the better in the lives of those who make them. Nevertheless, this acknowledgment of Saul’s made good that word of God’s upon which He had caused His servant to hope, “He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday” (Psa 37:6). They who are careful to maintain “a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward man” (Act 24:16), may safely leave it unto Him to secure the credit of it.

“This fair confession was sufficient to prove David innocent, even his enemy himself being judge, but not enough to prove Saul himself a true penitent. He should have said, ‘Thou art righteous, and I am wicked,’ but the utmost he will own is this, ‘Thou art more righteous than I.’ Bad men will commonly go no farther than this in their confessions. They will own they are not so good as some others are. There are those that are better than they, more righteous” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Ah, it takes the supernatural workings of divine grace in the heart to strip us of all our fancied goodness and bring us into the dust as self-condemned sinners. It requires too the continual renewings of the Holy Spirit *to keep us in the dust*, so that we truthfully exclaim, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake” (Psa 115:1).

“And thou hast shown this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not” (1Sa 24:18). This is striking. Even the most desperate sinners are sometimes amenable to acts of kindness. Saul could not but own that David had dealt far more merciful with him, than he would have done with David if their position had been reversed. He acknowledged that he had

been labouring under a misapprehension concerning his son, for clear proof had been given that David was of a far different stamp than what he had supposed. "We are too apt to suspect others to be worse affected towards us than they really are, and then perhaps they are proved to be and when afterwards our mistake is discovered, we should be forward to recall our suspicions as Saul doth here" (Matthew Henry).

"And thou has showed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not" (1Sa 24:18). In view of the later sequel, this is also exceedingly solemn. Saul not only recognizes the magnanimity of David, but he perceives too the providence of God. He owns that it was none other than the hand of Jehovah which had placed him at the mercy of the man whose life he had been seeking. Thus it was plain that God was *for* David and who could hope to succeed *against* him! How this ought to have deterred him from seeking his hurt afterwards, yet it did not. His "goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away" (Hos 6:4). Alas, there are many who mourn for their sins, but do not truly repent of them, weep bitterly for their transgressions, and yet continue in love and league with them, discern and own the providences of God, yet do not yield themselves to Him.

"For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?" (v. 19). No, this is not the customary way among men. "Revenge is sweet" to poor fallen human nature and few indeed refuse to drink from this tempting cup when it is presented to them. And if there be more lenity shown unto fallen enemies today than there was in past ages, it is not to be ascribed unto any improvement in man, but to the beneficent effects of the spread of Christianity. That this is the case may be clearly seen in the vivid contrasts presented among nations where the Gospel is preached and where it is unknown. The "dark places" of the earth are still "full of the habitations of cruelty" (Psa 74:20).

"For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day" (v. 19). Strange language this for a would-be murderer! Yes, even the reprobate have spurts and flashes of seeming piety at times and many superficial people (who "believeth every word," Pro 14:15) are deceived thereby. "Seemingly pious" we say, for after all, those fair words of Saul were empty ones. Had he really meant what he said, would he not personally and promptly have rewarded David himself? Of course he would. He was king, he had power to, it was his bounden duty to reinstate David in the bosom of his family, and bestow upon him marks of the highest honour and esteem. But he did nothing of the sort. Ah, dear reader, do not measure people by what they say. It is *actions* which speak louder than words.

"And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand" (v. 20). The realization that God had appointed David to succeed him on the throne was now forced upon Saul. The providence of God in so remarkably preserving and prospering him, his princely spirit and behavior, his calling to mind of what Samuel had declared, namely, that the kingdom should be given to a neighbour of his, better than he (1Sa 15:28)—and such David was by his own confession (v. 17), and the portion cut off his own robe—which must have been a vivid reminder of Samuel rendering his mantle, when he made the solemn prediction. All combined to convince the unhappy king of this. Thus did God encourage the heart of His oppressed

servant and support his faith and hope. Sometimes He deigns to employ strange instruments in giving us a message of cheer.

“Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father’s house” (v. 21). Under the conviction that God was going to place David upon the throne of Israel, Saul desired from him the guaranty of an oath, that he would not, when king, extirpate his posterity. What a tribute this was unto *the reality* of David’s profession! Ah, the integrity, honesty, veracity of a genuine child of God is recognized by those with whom he comes into contact. They who have dealings with him know that *his* word is his bond. Treacherous and unscrupulous as Saul was, if David promised in the name of the Lord to spare his children, he was assured that it would be fulfilled to the letter. Reader, is *your* character thus known and respected by those among whom you move?

“Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father’s house” (1Sa 24:21). How tragically this reveals the state of his heart. Poor Saul was more concerned about the credit and interests of his family in this world, than he was of securing the forgiveness of his sins before he entered the world to come. Alas, there are many who have their seasons of remorse, are affected by their dangerous situations, and almost persuaded to renounce their sins. They are convinced of the excellency of true saints, as acting from superior principles to those which regulate their own conduct, and cannot withhold from them a good word. Yet are they not thereby humbled or changed and sin and the world continue to reign in their hearts until death overtakes them.

“And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up into the hold” (1Sa 24:22). David was willing to bind himself to the promise which Saul asked of him and accordingly swore to it on oath. Thus he has left us an example to “be subject unto the higher powers” (Rom 13:1). His later history evidences how he respected his oath to Saul, by sparing Mephibosheth, and in punishing the murderers of Ishbosheth. It is to be noted that David did not ask Saul to swear unto him, that he would no more seek his life, knowing him too well to trust in a transient appearance of friendliness and having no confidence in his word. Nor should we deliberately place a temptation in the way of those lacking in honour, by seeking to extract from them a definite promise.

“And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold” (v. 22). David did not trust Saul, whose inconstancy, perfidy, and cruel hatred, he full well knew. He did not think it safe to return unto his own house, nor to dwell in the open country, but remained in the wilderness, among the rocks and the caves. The grace of God will teach us to forgive and be kind unto our enemies, but not to trust those who have repeatedly deceived us, for malice often seems dead, when it is only dormant, and will ere long revive with double force. “They that, like David, are innocent as doves, must thus, like David, be wise as serpents” (Matthew Henry). Note how verse 22 pathetically foreshadowed John 7:53 and 8:1.

Here then is the blessed victory that David gained over Saul, not by treacherous stealth or by brute force, but a moral triumph. How complete his victory was that day is seen in the extent to which that haughty monarch humbled himself before David, entreating him to be kind unto his offspring, when he should be king. But the great truth for us to lay hold of,



the central lesson here recorded for our learning, is that David first gained the victory over himself before he triumphed over Saul. May writer and reader be more diligent and earnest in seeking grace from God that we may not be overcome by evil, but that we may “overcome evil with good.”

## COMING TO CHRIST

### *Part 4*

#### *IV. With the Will*

The man within the body is possessed of three principal faculties—the understanding, the affections, and the will. As was shown in the first article, all of these were radically affected by the Fall. They were defiled and corrupted, and in consequence, they are used in the service of self and sin, rather than of God and of Christ. But in regeneration, these faculties are quickened and cleansed by the Spirit, not completely, but initially, and continuously so in the life-long process of sanctification and perfectly so at our glorification. Now each of these three faculties is subordinated to the others by the order of nature, that is, as man has been constituted by his Maker. One faculty is influenced by the other. In Genesis 3:6 we read, “The woman saw [perceived] that the tree was good for food”—that was a conclusion drawn by the understanding, “and that it was *pleasant* to the eyes”—there was the response of her affections, “and a tree to be desired”—there was the moving of the will, “she took”—there was the completed action.

Now the motions of divine grace work through the apprehensions of faith in the understanding, these warming and firing the affections, and they in turn influencing and moving the will. Every faculty of the soul is put forth in a saving “coming to Christ.” “If thou believest with *all* thine heart, thou mayest”—be baptized (Act 8:37). “Coming to Christ” is more immediately an act of the will, as John 5:40 shows, yet the will is not active toward Him until the understanding has been enlightened and the affections quickened. The Spirit first causes the sinner to perceive his deep need of Christ and this, by showing him his fearful rebellion against God and that none but Christ can atone for the same. Secondly, the Spirit creates in the heart a desire after Christ and this, by making him sick of sin and in love with holiness. Third, as the awakened and enlightened soul has been given to see the glory and excellency of Christ and His perfect suitability to the lost and perishing sinner, then the Spirit draws out the will to set the highest value on that excellency, to esteem it far above all else, and to close with Him.

As there is a divine order among the three persons of the Godhead in providing salvation, so there is in the applying or bestowing of it. It was God the Father’s good pleasure appointing His people from eternity unto salvation, which was the most full and sufficient *impulsive* cause of their salvation, and every whit able to produce its effect. It was the incarnate Son of God whose obedience and sufferings were the most complete and

sufficient *meritorious* cause of their salvation, to which nothing can be added to make it more apt and able to secure the travail of His soul. Yet neither the one nor the other can *actually* save any sinner except as the Spirit *applies* Christ to it. His work being the *efficient* and immediate cause of their salvation. In like manner, the sinner is not saved when his understanding is enlightened and his affections fired. There must also be the act of the will, surrendering to God, and laying hold of Christ.

The order of the Spirit's operations corresponds to the three great offices of Christ, the Mediator, namely, His prophetic, priestly, and kingly. As Prophet, He is first apprehended by the understanding, the truth of God being received from His lips. As Priest, He is trusted and loved by the heart or affections, His glorious person being first endeared unto the soul by the gracious work which He performed for it. As Potentate, our will must be subdued unto Him, so that we submit to His government, yield to His scepter, and heed His commandments. Nothing short of the throne of our hearts will satisfy the Lord Jesus. In order to this, the Holy Spirit casts down our carnal imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2Co 10:5), so that we freely and gladly take His yoke upon us, which yoke is, as one of the Puritans said, "lined with love."

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (Joh 6:44). This "drawing" is accomplished by the Spirit—first, in effectually enlightening the understanding; secondly, by quickening the affections; third, by freeing the will from the bondage of sin and inclining it toward God. By the invincible workings of grace, the Spirit turns the bent of that will, which before moved only toward sin and vanity, unto Christ. "Thy people," said God unto the Mediator, "shall be willing in the day of thy power" (Psa 110:3). Yet though divine power be put forth upon a human object, the Spirit does not infringe the will's prerogative of acting freely. He morally persuades it. He subdues its sinful intractability. He overcomes its prejudice, wins and draws it by the sweet attractions of grace.

"God never treats man as though he were a brute. He does not drag him with cart ropes. He treats men as men and when He binds them with cords, they are the cords of love and the bands of a man. I may exercise power over another's will and yet that other man's will may be perfectly free, because the constraint is exercised in a manner according with the laws of the human mind. If I show a man that a certain line of action is much for his advantage, he feels bound to follow it, but he is perfectly free in so doing. If man's will were subdued or chained by some physical process, if man's heart should, for instance, be taken from him and be turned round by a manual operation, that would be altogether inconsistent with human freedom or indeed with human nature, and yet I think some few people imagine that we mean this when we talk of constraining influence and divine grace. We mean nothing of the kind. We mean that Jehovah Jesus knows how, by irresistible arguments addressed to the understanding, by mighty reasons appealing to the affections, and by the mysterious influence of His Holy Spirit operating upon all the powers and passions of the soul, so to subdue the whole man, that whereas it was once rebellious it becomes obedient. Whereas it stood stoutly against the Most High, it throws down the weapons of its rebellion and cries, 'I yield! I yield! subdued by sovereign love and by the

enlightenment which Thou hast bestowed upon me, I yield myself to Thy will” (C. H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892, on John 6:37).

The perfect consistency between the freedom of a regenerated man’s spiritual actions and the efficacious grace of God moving him thereto is seen in 2 Corinthians 8:16-17. “But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being moved forward, of his own accord he went unto you.” Titus was moved to that work by Paul’s exhortation and was “willing of his own accord” to engage therein, and yet it was “God which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus” for them. God controls the inward feelings and acts of men without interfering either with their liberty or responsibility. The zeal of Titus was the spontaneous effusion of his own heart and was an index to and element of his character, nevertheless, God wrought in him both to will and to do of *His* good pleasure.

No sinner savingly “comes to Christ,” or truly receives Him into the heart, until the will freely consents (not merely “assents” in a theoretical way) to the severe and self-denying terms upon which He is presented in the Gospel. No sinner is prepared to forsake all for Christ, take up “the cross,” and “follow” Him in the path of universal obedience until the heart genuinely esteems Him “The fairest among ten thousand,” and this none ever do before the understanding has been supernaturally enlightened and the affections supernaturally quickened. Obviously, none will espouse themselves with conjugal affections to that person whom they account not the best that can be chosen. It is as the Spirit convicts us of our emptiness and shows us Christ’s fullness, our guilt and His righteousness, our filthiness and the cleansing merits of His blood, our depravity and His holiness, that the heart is won and the resistance of the will is overcome.

The holy and spiritual truth of God finds nothing akin to itself in the unregenerate soul, but instead, everything that is opposed to it (Joh 15:18, Rom 8:7). The demands of Christ are too humbling to our natural pride, too searching for the callous conscience, too exacting for our fleshly desires. And a miracle of grace has to be wrought within us before this awful depravity of our nature, this dreadful state of affairs, is changed. That miracle of grace consists in overcoming the resistance which is made by indwelling sin and creating desires and longings Christward, and then it is that the will cries,

*“Nay but I yield, I yield,  
I can hold out no more;  
I sink, by dying love compell’d,  
And own Thee Conqueror.”*

A beautiful illustration of this is found in Ruth 1:14-18. Naomi, a backslidden saint, is on the point of leaving the far country and (typically) returning to her Father’s house. Her two daughters-in-law wish to accompany her. Faithfully did Naomi bid them “count the cost” (Luk 14:28), instead of at once urging them to act on their first impulse, she pointed out the difficulties and trials to be encountered. This was too much for Orpah. Her “goodness” (like that of the stony-ground hearers and myriads of others) was only “as a morning cloud,” and “as the early dew” it quickly went away (Hos 6:4). In blessed contrast from this we read, “But Ruth clave unto her...And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee,

or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

What depth and loveliness of affection was here! What whole-hearted self-surrender! See Ruth freely and readily leaving her own country and kindred, tearing herself from every association of nature, turning a deaf ear to her mother-in-law's begging her to return to her gods (Ru 1:15) and people. See her renouncing idolatry and all that flesh holds dear, to be a worshipper and servant of the living God, counting all things but loss for the sake of His favor and salvation, and her future conduct proved her faith was genuine and her profession sincere. Ah, naught but a miraculous work of God in her soul can explain this. It was God working in her "both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure" (Phi 2:13). He was drawing her with the bands of love—grace triumphed over the flesh. This is what every genuine conversion is—a complete surrender of the mind, heart, and will to God and His Christ, so that there is a desire to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (Rev 14:4).

The relation between our understanding being enlightened and the affections quickened by God and the resultant consent of the will, is seen in Psalm 119:34, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart." "The sure result of regeneration, or the bestowal of understanding, is the devout reverence for the law and a reverent keeping of it in the heart. The Spirit of God makes us to know the Lord and to understand somewhat of His love, wisdom, holiness, and majesty and the result is that we honour the law and yield our hearts to the obedience of the faith. The understanding operates upon the affections. It convinces the heart of the beauty of the law, so that the soul loves it with all its powers, and then it reveals the majesty of the law-Giver and the whole nature bows before His supreme will. He alone obeys God who can say 'my Lord, I would serve Thee, and do it with all my heart,' and none can truly say this till they have received as a free grant the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit" (C.H. Spurgeon).

Ere turning to our final section, a few words need to be added here upon 1 Peter 2:4-5, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone...ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house." Has the sovereign grace of God inclined me to come unto Christ? then it is my duty and interest to "abide" in Him (Joh 15:4). Abide in Him by a life of faith and letting His Spirit abide in me without grieving Him (Eph 4:30) or quenching His motions (1Th 5:19). It is not enough that I once believed on Christ, I must live in and upon Him by faith daily, Galatians 2:20. It is in this way of continual coming to Christ that we are "built up a spiritual house." It is in this way the life of grace is maintained, until it issue in the life of glory. Faith is to be always receiving out of His fullness "grace for grace" (Joh 1:16). Daily should there be the renewed dedication of myself unto Him and the heart's occupation with Him.

#### V. Tests.

Unto those who never savingly "come to Christ," He will yet say, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mat 25:41). The contemplation of those awful words ought to almost freeze the very blood in our veins, searching our consciences and aweing our hearts. But alas, it is much to be feared that Satan will blunt their piercing force unto many of our readers, by assuring them that *they have already* come to Christ and telling them they are fools to doubt it for a moment. But O dear friend, seeing that there is no less than your immortal soul at stake, that whether

you spend eternity in heaven with the blessed or in hell with the cursed, hinges on whether or not you really and truly “come to Christ,” will you not read the paragraphs which follow with double care.

1. How many rest on their sound doctrinal views of Christ. They believe firmly in His deity, His holy humanity, His perfect life, His vicarious death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension to God’s right hand, His present intercession on high, and His second advent. So too did many of those to whom James addressed his epistle, but he reminded them that the “devils also believe, and tremble” (Jam 2:19). O my reader, saving faith in Christ is very much more than assenting to the teachings of Scripture concerning Him. It is the giving up of the soul unto Him to be saved, to renounce all else, to yield fully unto Him.

2. How many mistake the absence of doubts for a proof they have savingly come to Christ. They take for granted that for which they have no clear evidence. But reader, a man possesses not Christ by faith as he does money in a strong-box or title-deeds of land which are preserved by his lawyer and which he never looks at once in a year. No, Christ is as “bread” which a man feeds upon, chews, digests, which his stomach works upon continually, and by which he is nourished and strengthened, John 6:53. The empty professor feeds upon a good opinion of himself, rather than upon Christ.

3. How many mistake the stirring of the emotions for the Spirit’s quickening of the affections. If people weep under the preaching of the Word, superficial observers are greatly encouraged, and if they go forward to the “mourners’ bench” and sob and wail over their sins, this is regarded as a sure sign that God has savingly convicted them. But a supernatural work of divine grace goes much deeper than that. Tears are but on the surface and are a matter of temperamental constitution—even in nature, some of those who feel things the most give the least outward sign of it. It is the weeping of the heart which God requires. It is a godly sorrow for sin which breaks its reigning power over the soul that evidences regeneration.

4. How many mistake a fear of the wrath to come for a hatred of sin. No one wants to go to hell. If the intellect be convinced of its reality and the unspeakable awfulness of its torments are in a measure believed, then there may be great uneasiness of mind, fear of conscience, and anguish of heart, over the prospect of suffering its eternal burnings. Those fears may last a considerable time, yea, their effects may never completely wear off. The subject of them may come under the ministry of a faithful servant of God, hear him describe the deep plowing of the Spirit’s work, and conclude that he has been the subject of them, yet have none of that love for Christ which manifests itself in a life, all the details of which seek to honour and glorify Him.

5. How many mistake a false peace for a true one. Let a person who has had awakened within him a natural dread of the lake of fire, whose own conscience has made him wretched, and the preaching he has heard terrify him yet more, then is he not (like a drowning man) ready to clutch at a straw. Let one of the false prophets of the day tell him that all he has to do is believe John 3:16 and salvation is his and how eagerly will he—though unchanged in heart—drink in such “smooth things.” Assured that nothing more is required than to firmly believe that God loves him and that Christ died for him, and his burden is gone—peace now fills him. Yes, and nineteen times out of twenty, that “peace” is nothing but Satan’s opiate, drugging his conscience and chloroforming him into hell.

“There is no [true, spiritual] peace, saith my God, to the wicked,” (Isa 57:21).and unless the heart has been purified no man will see God (Mat 5:8).

6. How many mistake self-confidence for spiritual assurance. It is natural for each of us to think well and hope well of ourselves and to imagine with Haman, “I am the man whom the King delighteth to honour.” Perhaps the reader is ready to say, “That is certainly not true of me. So far from having a high esteem, I regard myself as a worthless, sinful creature.” Yes, and so deceitful is the human heart and so ready is Satan to turn everything to his own advantage, these very lowly thoughts of self may be feasted on and rested on to assure the heart that all is well with you. The apostate king Saul began by having a lowly estimate of himself (1Sa 9:21).

7. How many make a promise the sole ground of their faith and look no further than the letter of it. Thus the Jews were deceived by the letter of the law, for they never saw the spiritual meaning of Moses’ ministry. In like manner, multitudes are deceived by the letter of such promises as Acts 16:31, Romans 10:13, etc., and look not to Christ in them. They see that He is the jewel in the casket, but rest upon the superscription without and never lay hold of the treasure within. But unless the *person* of Christ be apprehended, unless there be a real surrendering to His Lordship, unless He be Himself received into the heart, then believing the letter of the promises will avail nothing.

The above paragraphs have been written in the hope that God may be pleased to arouse some empty professors out of their false security. But lest any of Christ’s little ones be stumbled, we close with an excerpt from John Bunyan’s *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*, “How shall we know that such men are coming to Christ? Answer: do they cry out at sin, being burdened with it, as an exceedingly bitter thing? Do they fly from it, as from the face of a deadly serpent? Do they cry out of the insufficiency of their own righteousness, as to justification in the sight of God? Do they cry out after the Lord Jesus to save them? Do they see more worth and merit in one drop of Christ’s blood to save them, than in all the sins of the world to damn them? Are they tender of sinning against Jesus Christ? Do they favor Christ in this world and do they leave all the world for His sake? And are they willing (God helping them) to run hazards for His name, for the love they bear to Him? Are His saints precious to them? If these things be so, these men *are* coming to Christ.”

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## DISPENSATIONALISM

### 2. *The Purpose of God (Continued)*

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Eph 1:3-4). As we stated in the first section of this article (March issue), it is a great mistake to approach the study of God’s purpose and plan (His program for this world) by making the creation of Adam our starting point. That is to commence at the middle instead of the beginning. No, rather must we take as the foundation of all God’s dealings with the earth what is affirmed in Ephesians 1:3-4. Nor must the terms of those verses be restricted unto the New Testament saints. Instead, they speak of the entire election of grace, the sum of that people which God gave unto Christ to be redeemed by Him.

Probably it will at once be objected to what has just been said that the Old Testament saints were *not* “Blessed with all *spiritual* blessings in the *heavenlies* in Christ,” but rather that they were blessed with *temporal* blessings *on earth* in Abraham. So it may appear from much of the letter of the Old Testament Scriptures, but if we allow the New Testament to open the mystery contained in them, we are forced to come to an entirely different conclusion. As this is a vital point of interpretation, and one which is now so little understood, we feel obliged to labour it at some length. Of course carnal men can only perceive the external meaning of God’s Word, but inasmuch as some of God’s own children have been “carried away” by their fleshly reasonings, we trust that our efforts may be used of the Lord in dispelling the mists of error from the minds of some of His own people.

The apostle Paul, in the 3rd chapter of Galatians, when treating of the blessings of Abraham (that is, the things God promised to Abraham and in him to all nations, vv. 8, 9) does in the fourteenth verse clearly explain that “blessing” to be a *spiritual* one, affirming “that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” The words “that we might receive the promise of the Spirit” are a manifest exegesis of “that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles.” Now the promise and gift of the Spirit is the substance and sum of all spiritual blessings, for He is the root and fountain of them. To say we have the Spirit given unto us is all one has to declare that we have all spiritual blessings conveyed. This is clear from a comparison of Luke 11:13 with Matthew 7:11. What Christ in the former calls the Father giving “the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him,” in the latter He terms “give good things to them that ask Him,” that is, the things which are truly “good” which the Spirit brings with Him.

As Calvin long ago pointed out in his commentary on that epistle, the above interpretation is established and fixed by two expressions in that verse. First, the apostle did not say, “The Spirit of promise,” which would have thrown the emphasis upon the person of the Blessor, but “the promise of the Spirit,” which is a Hebraism for spiritual blessings, in opposition to things outward and material. Second, the confirming words “by

faith," that is, those blessings of which *faith* is sensible and appropriate, receiving and taking in *spiritual* things, being a divinely implanted principle suited to the reception of just such things. Thus it is one and the same "blessing" which comes on the Gentiles (who had not the promise of a literal Canaan) and upon God's elect among the Jews—which is the apostle's theme and scope in Galatians 3. The things promised to Abraham consisted in things *spiritual* and therefore the Gentiles as well as the Jews were capable of them.

In further proof of this, we would appeal to an incident which has greatly puzzled those of our moderns who have given any serious thought to it. We refer to Jacob being blessed by Isaac, wherein both in God's intention and Isaac's apprehension such a vast and great difference was put between Jacob's portion and Esau's. Yet if the whole of Genesis 27 be carefully read, no such difference is perceivable, for the whole legacy of blessings bequeathed to Jacob was but outward and earthly in the letter of it, "Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be everyone that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee" (Gen 27:28-29).

Now compare with this the blessing estated upon Esau, "Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck" (Gen 27:39-40). From the point of earthly blessings, was not that well-nigh as full a portion as that which was promised Jacob? Why, then, should Isaac be so sorrowful (v. 33) that Jacob rather than his favourite son Esau was the recipient of such immeasurably greater blessing, if there was no deeper and grander content in the promises made to him than the outward letter of them denoted? And why should Esau's hatred be so stirred up against Jacob (v. 41), unless his own portion was greatly inferior to his brother's?—which it could not have been had Jacob's consisted merely of "corn and wine" (v. 37)!

But the difficulty which so many have felt in connection with the above, disappears at once when we discern the mystery contained in the language of that divine blessing which Isaac pronounced upon Jacob. Once it is clearly recognized that (oftentimes) in the Old Testament heavenly things were referred to in earthly terms, that spiritual blessings were set forth under the figure of material things, then many a passage at once becomes luminous. That there is no forced or arbitrary interpretation of ours is seen from Hebrews 12:17, where the Holy Spirit Himself has forever settled the meaning of the terms used in Genesis 27. Unless the *spiritual* blessings promised to God's elect in Christ had been typically signified and mystically intended under those earthly things unto Jacob, the apostle had never been moved to say that Jacob inherited "*the* blessing" and Esau was "rejected," for all such earthly blessings Esau *did* inherit in common with Jacob.

Is it not plain, then, dear reader, that there was *another* sort of "blessings," which were latent and hid, even a substantial though invisible and spiritual kind of blessings for evermore, whereof the "corn and wine" promised Jacob, were but the shadows, and that it was *this* which made the tremendous and vital difference between the temporal things granted unto Esau? That is why Jacob's portion is called "*the* blessing" (Heb 12:17). Observe too the emphasis made by Isaac in Genesis 27:33, I "have blessed him, yea, and



he shall be blessed,” which imports that the same spiritual blessing God promised to Abraham was now made over by him to Jacob, for Jehovah had employed the same language when blessing the father of all believers, saying, “In blessing I will bless thee” (Gen 22:17). Still further evidence of the identity of Abraham’s and Jacob’s portion is seen in the last words of Isaac concerning him, “Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee” (Gen 27:29)—omitted in what he said to Esau—being part of the very words God originally used to Abraham, *see* Genesis 12:2-3.

How low and mean are the thoughts which are now entertained by so many of the portion which God gave unto His people in the earlier ages of the world. What gross ignorance is betrayed by those who suppose that being blessed “in basket and in store” was the best that the *spiritual* in Israel received from God. Even the Old Testament itself contains much which condemns so gross a conception. Take the Psalms. There we read again and again of the “Blessed” man. Who is he? one possessing much land and great flocks and herds? No indeed. If you will read David’s description of him, says Paul, here it is, “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom 4:7-8).

In the New Testament dispensation, the mystery hidden beneath the letter of the Old Testament—which was always known to the spiritual, but which was hidden from the natural man—is plainly expounded. Examples of this fact have been given above and they might easily be multiplied, but we will add one more. At the beginning of this dispensation, Peter, addressing his brethren after the flesh from the porch of the temple, said, “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be *blessed*” (Act 3:25). To Peter’s hearers those words signified little or nothing more than they do unto the literalists of our day, understanding by them simply a reference to Canaan and temporal things. Therefore does Peter expound and say, “Unto you first God, having raised up [by incarnation] his Son Jesus, sent him to *bless* you, *in* turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Act 3:26).

In their gross carnality the Jews, whose eyes were veiled by the outward letter of promises earthly, looked for a Messiah who was to usher in an earthly kingdom, vested with material pomp and glory. But Peter announces something infinitely more blessed than if God should make all of His hearers mundane kings and emperors, namely deliverance from the penalty and power of sin. He mentions that one blessing for all the rest, to show what sort they are all of, and also because the one he specifies is the first and forerunner of all the others. In this the apostle was but following in the steps of his Master, for almost at the beginning of His ministry Christ had announced that the “blessed” were not the holders of high earthly offices or the possessors of much silver and gold, but the “poor in spirit,” the “meek,” the “pure in heart,” etc. (Mat 5).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3). The “in heavenly places” or “in the heavenlies” in addition to “all spiritual blessings” calls for close attention. That this is not a synonymous addition as expressing God’s blessings by two words that signify one and the same thing is evident, because it is not said “spiritual” *and* “heavenly” nor “spiritual” *or* “heavenly.” All those blessings are spiritual and all were in the heavenlies in

Christ. What, then, is the further and separate thought included by “in the heavenly places”? The “Dispensationalists” say it is in contrast from the earthly blessings which pertained unto the nation of Israel. But that is a mistake. The key which opens the answer to our question is found in the final words, “in the heavenly places *in Christ*.” Now when “in Christ” is used contrastively, it is always antithetical to “in Adam,” and never to Israel or the earth.

All the race was seminally in Adam’s loins. Moreover, he was placed in Eden as the federal head and legal representative of his posterity. We were all created in Adam and we were all blessed in Adam, “and God *blessed* them, and said,” etc. (Gen 1:28). Adam being made in God’s image after his likeness (Gen 1:26) was, in that respect, a spiritual man, for such is the image of God, see Colossians 3:10. Adam’s being in God’s image was the foundation of that charter of blessing to him and his posterity. His graces were all spiritual and his life and communion with God was spiritual, and so of him it may be truly said that he was “blessed with spiritual blessings,” as well as things which were earthly (“have thou dominion,” etc.), yet, but as “flesh and blood” can in an earthly condition be capable of. And since we were then all of us “in Adam,” we too were all blessed with spiritual blessings.

Nevertheless, Adam in his unfallen condition was but “flesh and blood” and an earthly man and could not enjoy God as He is to be seen and enjoyed in heaven. Hence the distinction drawn in 1 Corinthians 15:47, “The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.” And as that earthly man was, such should we that are of him have remained had he not fallen, never advancing higher, 1 Corinthians 15:48. But Christ being the Lord from heaven, a heavenly Man, and we being “blessed” in Him and together with Him, are blessed in heavenly things or with heavenly blessings, and are raised up to heavenly places with Him (Eph 2:6), for as in the heavenly Man, Christ, such are (in status and state) those in Him. Heaven is Christ’s native country, He is the Lord of it, and we being united to Him by covenant relationship and joined to Him in one spirit, must share His inheritance. Therefore has He affirmed “that where I am, there ye may be also” (Joh 14:3). Thus, God’s favoured people are blessed *in Christ* with all heavenly blessings, and not spiritual only, which Adam (and the race in him) in his primitive condition was.

Now the sum and substance of the spiritual and heavenly blessings with which the entire election of grace were blessed in Christ, are described in the verses which immediately follow. “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:4-6). In verse 3, praise is rendered unto God for His eternal *act* of “blessing” His people. In verses 4-6, we are shown how all blessings depend upon God’s election in eternity past and likewise how all depends upon Jesus Christ. A parallel passage is found in 2 Timothy 1:9, “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” All the “blessings” of Ephesians 1:3 are here expressed in the single term “grace.”

How the blessings of Ephesians 1:3 are communicated to God's elect in a time-state or in other words, how "the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph 3:11) is wrought out in human history is revealed in Ephesians 1:7-14. As will be seen at a glance at those verses, everything else is wrapped up in the first thing there mentioned, namely "redemption" through the blood of Christ. The consideration of this must be held over (D. V.) for the closing section of this article. Meanwhile we would urge the interested reader to prayerfully read and re-read what has already been said and to "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1Th 5:21).

## CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

### *Part 2*

Let me first restate the four principal points which occupied us this morning. First, there is an evangelical perfection in contrast from that absolute perfection which the law demands, God in His grace accepting from His people (through Christ) sincere obedience of the heart—that genuine desire and sincere effort to please Him in all things. Second, relative perfection in contrast from absolute. This is what distinguishes the Christian from the non-Christian. Third, perfection of parts, that is, the adding of one grace to another, so that a well-rounded Christian character and conduct is developed. Fourth, perfection of degrees, that is, growth from spiritual baby hood to youth and from youth to full maturity. It is after the third and fourth we should daily and prayerfully strive.

By way of application, let me point out first that the Christian ministry has been appointed by God for "the perfecting" of His saints, see Ephesians 4:11-12. God sends His servants that you may be instructed, nourished, sanctified. "Night and day" Paul "prayed exceedingly" that he should come unto the Thessalonian Christians and this that he "might perfect that which is lacking in your faith" (1Th 3:10). This is the yearning of every true servant of Christ's. Second, our improvement of this means, the response which God requires His people to make unto the ministry of His servants, "As ye have received of us *how* ye ought to walk and to please God, *so* ye would abound more and more" (1Th 4:1). May this be true of you. Third, nothing short of this should be our aim and diligent endeavor, that you may "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Col 4:12).

#### *I. Reasons Why We Must Be Perfect.*

That is, not only sincere, with a heart desiring to and seeking after the glory of God, not only having all the spiritual parts of a Christian and striving after the highest possible growth, but that we may actually attain unto all that is possible for us in Christ in this life. First, we have to do with a perfect God and therefore we should seek perfection of character and conduct, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Mat 5:48). The main reason why God has been pleased to make known His attributes, to reveal unto us His perfections, is that we should take them for our copy. Second, a perfect standard is set before us and God will not lower it. To Abraham, He said,

“Walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Gen 17:1). Abraham is the father of us all (Rom 4:16, Gal 3:7), therefore what God says to him, He also says to us. Third, we have a perfect rule to regulate us, see 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Those verses show that the strictness of the law is embodied in the Gospel. The high standard which God has set up under the old covenant has not been lowered under the new covenant. The exhortations of the New Testament are but so many explanations and applications of the Ten Commandments. Fourth, we have a perfect and all-sufficient Redeemer to rely upon, Colossians 2:9. There is everything in Christ which is needed by us and all that is in Him we may appropriate. God has not only given Christ *for* us, but He has given Him *to* us. *Christ Himself* is ours. O that the Holy Spirit may teach us how to draw from His infinite fullness.

### *II. Motives to Stimulate.*

First, all that we lost in Adam should be found again in Christ or we do not honour Him. The last Adam is far more able to save than the first Adam was to destroy, Romans 5:17—yet that “abundance of grace” has to be diligently sought. It is not given to the lazy and halfhearted. O that the Spirit may deeply impress each of our hearts with the fact that the more we “grow up into him in *all* things,” (Eph 4:15) the more Christ is glorified through us.

Second, we *pray* for perfection (at least, I hope we do) and therefore, should strive *after* it with all our might, otherwise our prayers are but a pretense. True prayer is a solemn binding of ourselves to use the means that we may obtain the blessings which we ask. If this be not the intention of our hearts, then our prayer is merely empty words. When we truly ask God to make us more holy, we pledge ourselves to use every means which makes for holiness, and strive our utmost to be holy. Prayer was never designed to be a substitute for diligent effort. Therefore, if we are praying for the highest perfection attainable in this life we must strive after it.

Third, we should remind ourselves more frequently of what we lose when we slacken in our efforts after spiritual growth. All around us we behold illustrations of the fact that God has closely linked together sin and misery, so also has He inseparably connected holiness and true happiness. Therefore we should consider how much we miss when we slacken in our efforts after Christian perfection. It is those who take Christ’s yoke upon them that find rest unto their souls. It is those who walk closest with Him that enter most into His joy. Not only so, but they who live a holy and happy life have a triumphant exit from this world, Psalm 37:37. Balaam said he wished that he might die the death of the righteous, but he was unwilling to live the life of the righteous. If our daily lives be right with God, He will look after us in death. This thought is also brought out in 2 Peter 1:11, which supplies the climax to the whole of that passage.

### *III. Means to Help.*

First, make sure that a divine work of grace has begun in you, and my friends, we cannot be too sure, nor be too diligent in the duty of self-examination. But there must be life before there can be growth. It is no use trying to grow if you do not have spiritual life. If you are in doubt, get alone with God and earnestly beseech Him to begin a good work in you. We must definitely choose God for our portion before we can cleave to and serve Him. Just as a young man selects his vocation or calling, and later chooses the woman to be his wife, so the Christian must definitely choose God. The enjoyment of God, the

service of God, the pleasing of God, must become the soul's portion for time and eternity, but we cannot cleave unto God, walk with Him, or go on with Him, until we first take Him for our portion. David said, "The Lord is my portion."

Second, give special attention to the radical graces. Just as in our physical bodies there are some organs and members more vital than others, playing a larger part in determining whether we are well or sick, weak or strong, so there are certain graces in the Christian character which are more vital and radical than others. What these are is intimated in 1 Corinthians 13:13, faith, hope, and love. Let us be especially concerned to have a strong faith, a lively hope, and a fervent love. Remember that word of the Lord to the Pharisees in Matthew 23:23. They were very careful about minor things, most punctilious about washing their hands, so particular they would not eat if the shadow of a Gentile even crossed their path. But God is not found in such things, neither is the spiritual life promoted by them. Give your attention to that which is vital and fundamental.

Third, seek grace to appropriate Philippians 4:13 and turn it into earnest prayer, "I can do *all* things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Unbelief says, I cannot. Previous failures say, I cannot. Past experience says, I cannot. The example of fellow-Christians says, I cannot. Satan tells me, I cannot. But faith says, I "*can* do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Turn that statement into believing, fervent, persistent prayer. Count upon God making it good. Fourth, remind yourself frequently that failure to strive hard and constantly after perfection dishonours Christ. O that the love of Christ may constrain us, that gratitude to Him will compel us to seek a closer conformity unto Him. The more I am like Him, the more I honour Him. The less I am like Him, the more I dishonour Him. We must realize this if our hearts are to be stirred up unto renewed efforts after perfection.

#### IV. Tests.

Here there are two extremes to guard against. On the one hand, the workings of pride, assuming that I have made more progress than is really the case. On the other hand (and to a genuine Christian, this danger is just as real), the workings of unbelief, a mock humility denying that I *have* made true progress. Now every real Christian should be anxious to know what measure of growth he has attained unto. You know how it is with growing children—how anxious they are to test themselves. They make a mark on the wall to register their height and in a month's time see whether they have gone beyond it. So it should be with us spiritually. I am going to mention five things by which we should test ourselves concerning our growth.

First, increasing deadness to the world. The closer we approximate to Christian perfection, the deader will our hearts be unto the world. The more fully we are conformed unto the image of Christ, the less power will the world have to attract us. When I say that, I refer to something more than its amusements and grosser sins. I mean also its pretty things. One of the marks of a child is to value a thing not according to its worth and usefulness, but according to its attractiveness to the eye. There are many forms of worldliness. Isaiah 3:22 warns against "changeable suits of apparel"—such savors of pride. It is an unnecessary expense and it is a denial of our strangership.

The more we are really growing in grace the less shall we be attracted by such baubles and the more attention shall we give to the adorning of our souls. One half of practical

godliness is a dying unto the world, the other half is a living unto God—the mortification of self-love and the strengthening of love to God. “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal 6:14)—that is the language of a perfect Christian, that is the experience of a mature saint—dead to the world. It no longer has any attraction for him and no power over him.

Second, increasing dissatisfaction with our present attainments. Instead of being pleased with and proud of the progress he has made, the growing Christian increasingly mourns over the littleness of it, groans daily because of his sinful failures, and is burdened over his lack of conformity to Christ. Instead of self-complacency for having attained unto this or that, there is a realization that “there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed” (Jos 13:1). The nearer I come to real Christian perfection, the more imperfect I feel myself to be. Therefore, dear friends, the measure of spiritual growth you have made during the past year is the extent to which you have grown out of love with yourself.

Third, increasingly being moved by love rather than by fear. The weak and immature Christian is most obedient when he is most in fear of punishment from God—either fear of His law or fear of His chastisement. But the mature Christian, he who has grown in grace, is moved more by the love of God and love to God. This is what regulates his actions, “For the love of Christ constraineth us” (2Co 5:14). The extent to which we have grown spiritually during the last twelve months may be gauged by the measure in which our conduct is now regulated by love to Christ.

Fourth, increasing humility. Where there is real and deep humility, one sees more quickly and is more concerned about *his own* defects than those of his fellow Christians. A proud man is quick to note the faults of other people, but it takes a humble man to recognize and acknowledge his own. A babe in Christ is far more likely to be proud of his spiritual attainment than is a mature Christian. The latter is filled with self-abhorrence. Thus, increasing holiness means increasing self-loathing.

Fifth, increasing deliverance from childishness. I believe the analogy holds good at every point between the natural and the spiritual. Let me name one or two points of resemblance. First, touchiness characterizes an infant. A little child will cry over every trifle, but as he gets older he outgrows that. The same holds good spiritually. Alas, that such growth does not always keep pace with the added years. Oftentimes one who has been a Christian for twenty years has really grown less than one who is only five years old spiritually. Where there is growth, one is less sensitive of being hurt over trifles.

Second, a child is regulated very largely by his senses, rather than by his reason. Take food as an example. If something looks nice, tastes nice, smells nice, the child wants it, whether or not it is good for him—he is regulated by his senses. But as he grows older, he learns that some things which look and smell good are injurious and so he learns to leave them alone. So it is spiritually. A developed Christian is regulated by his judgment rather than by his senses.

Third, a child is incapable of helping others very much. It is always needing attention itself. But as the child grows older, it increases in usefulness. It becomes able to help mother in the home and later on to do other things in the world. So it should be spiritually.

That Christian who is all the time needing attention and help from others is not growing. He is only a spiritual babe.

Finally, a child is always getting into mischief or trouble, constantly doing something or other which it ought not, so that it is not safe to allow it to be long out of sight. But as it grows older, if it be properly trained, it grows out of that. Now, my friends, honestly measure yourselves by these tests.

In closing, let me say, praise God for any real growth that you can see has been wrought in you. To Him alone belongs all the glory. Strive earnestly after further growth, avoiding all things which hinder and retard it, making a diligent use of all the means of grace which God has appointed for the promotion of the same.

(An address [revised] given by the editor in his home to a little company last June.)

## TRUSTING GOD

Of himself, the Christian can no more regulate his faith than he could originate it. Only He who imparted it, can call it forth into action. This is recognized by few today. Even in those little groups where it is owned that faith is the gift of God (Eph 2:8-9; Phi 1:29), the majority appear to think it lies within their own power to exercise this spiritual grace. Even when it is allowed that a spiritually dead soul cannot believe in a spiritual way, it is commonly supposed that only an effort of will is required in order for the living saint to lay hold of God's promises. Not so. It was to His regenerated disciples the Lord Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing" (Joh 15:5). In keeping with this, the apostle Paul declared, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom 7:18).

But why proclaim and press so discouraging a thing. Will not God's children be disheartened thereby? First, because it is the truth and the truth doeth "good" (not evil) to them that walk uprightly (Mic 2:7). Second, to counteract the haughty, independent, self-reliant spirit of the day. Anything that humbles the heart is salutary. Third, to emphasize the Christian's entire dependence upon God, not "that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves" (2Co 3:5). If we are incapable of so much as "thinking" a good thought of ourselves, how much less can we initiate a good work!

Yet while the divine Giver of faith can alone regulate and stimulate it, nevertheless, He is pleased to use means in so doing. One of these means is the exhortations of His own blessed Word. Such an exhortation we find in Psalm 62:8, "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us." But if fallen man and quickened saint be alike incapable of doing so, is not God mocking us by bidding us to "trust in him at all times"? Far be it from the puny creature to blasphemously charge the All-wise with foolishness. Better to say with the psalmist, in another connection, "such knowledge is too wonderful for me," (Psa 139:6) than to call them into question, much less deride them. In this case, however, a solution may be given. It is both the duty and the privilege of the Christian to beg God to work in and through him that which He requireth.

“Trust in him at all times” (Psa 62:8). And why not? Circumstances fluctuate, we ourselves vary, but *He* is immutable, “I am the LORD, I change not” (Mal 3:6). Blessed, assuring, comforting declaration. If God were fickle and unreliable faith would be without any foundation to rest upon, but because He is “the same yesterday and today and forever,” (Heb 13:8) He may be safely confided in. Again, His promises are ever sure and they are given for faith to feed upon. None ever yet really truly grasped one of the divine promises and found it to fail him. Then why should we not “trust in him at all times”? It is for our own peace and good that we do so. It is our own great loss and misery if we do not.

Why does not the Christian trust in the Lord at “all times”? Because the root of unbelief still indwells him. Not yet is sin eradicated from our being. The “flesh” opposes the “spirit” every step of our journey toward heaven. “Fight the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12). The repetition of that word “fight” in such a short sentence plainly intimates opposition and a fierce contest. What, then, is the struggling Christian to do? Cry earnestly with one of old, “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24). But alas, so often we make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof (Rom 13:14) and then the Spirit is grieved, and His enabling power is withheld.

But what is it to “trust in the LORD”? A very helpful answer to this question is supplied in 2 Kings 18:30, “Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us.” The second clause explains the first. Trusting the Lord is the heart’s assurance that He *will surely* “deliver.” A signal illustration of His high sovereignty was this, God using a scoffing heathen to define for us the meaning of the word “trust.” How it ought to shame us that an idolater had a clearer conception of what it means to “trust in the LORD” than many Christians have!

“To trust in God is to ‘cast thy burden on the Lord,’ when it is too heavy for our own shoulder (Psa 55:22); to dwell ‘in the secret place of the Most High,’ when we know not where to lay our heads on earth (Psa 91:1); to look to our Maker and to ‘have respect to the Holy One of Israel’ (Isa 17:7); to lean on our Beloved (Song 8:5; Isa 36:6); to stay ourselves, when sinking, on the Lord our God (Isa 26:3). In a word, trust in God is that high act or exercise of faith whereby the soul, looking upon God and casting itself on His goodness, power, promises, faithfulness, and providence, is lifted up above carnal fears and discouragement, above perplexing doubts and disquietments, either for the obtaining and continuance of that which is good, or for the preventing or removal of that which is evil.

“There are some special instances and nicks of time for trust. 1. The time of *prosperity*. When we sit under the warm beams of a meridian sun, when we wash our steps in butter and feet in oil, when the candle of the Lord shines on our tabernacle, when ‘our mountain stands strong.’ Now, now is the time for trust, but not in our ‘mountain’ (for it is a mountain of ice and may soon dissolve), *but in our God*. Any gift or blessing which comes between the heart and the Lord is a snare and a curse.

“2. In times of *adversity*. This also is a seasonal time for trust. When we have no bread to eat, but that of ‘carefulness,’ nor wine to drink, but that of ‘affliction’ and ‘astonishment,’ no, nor water either, but that of our tears. Now is the time, not for our over-grieving, murmuring, sinking, despondency, but trusting. In a tempest, then, a believer thinks it seasonable to cast anchor upon God. Thus did good Jehoshaphat, ‘O our



God...neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee” (2Ch 20:12). (Thomas Lye, 1621-1684, from “Morning Exercises.”)

“Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us” (Psa 62:8). “The word ‘pour’ plainly signifies that the heart is full of grief and almost afraid to empty itself before the Lord. What does He say to you? ‘Come and pour out all your trouble before Me.’ He is never weary with hearing the complaints of His people. Therefore you should go and keep nothing back. Tell Him everything that hurts you and pour all your complaints into His merciful bosom. Make Him your Counselor and Friend. You cannot please Him better than when your hearts rely wholly upon Him. You may tell Him, if you please, you have been so foolish as to look to this friend and the other for relief, and found none and you now come to Him, who commands you to” (John Berridge, 1716-1793).

“Trust in the LORD at *all* times” (Psa 62:8). In times of persecution, as well as toleration; in times of famine, as well as plenty; in times of sickness, as well as health; in times when called to walk alone, as well as when enjoying the fellowship of Christians; in times of spiritual darkness and distress, as well as light and joy. “Trust *in* the LORD,” not merely *about* Him—in His love, His power, His faithfulness. Trust Him when His providences frown, His rod smites, His hand removes your most cherished idol. Trust Him in the worst case you have ever been in or can be in. The way to make a feast is to trust Him, and the way to have a continual feast, is to trust in Him at all times. The way to honour Him is to trust Him. The way to *prove* Him to be a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother is to trust in Him at all times.

## NOT ASHAMED

“They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied” (Psa 37:19). Of whom is this declaration made? Of all the children of God? No, indeed. Only of those who are truly “upright” (v. 18) in their hearts and ways. If the reader will look up and carefully weigh Job 1:1; Psalm 37:37; Proverbs 14:11; 15:8; 29:27 it should at once be seen that the “upright” are they who walk with God, are in subjection to God, and live only to the glory of God. The “upright” are contrasted from those whose hearts are “divided” (Hos 10:2)—half in heaven and half in the world; half occupied with God, half wrapped in self; and with real Christians who are in a backslidden state.

Now Psalm 37:19 plainly affirms that the “upright” shall not be ashamed in the evil time. And why? Because God is showing Himself strong on *their* behalf (2Ch 16:9) and doing for them what He is not doing for many others who bear His name. No good things do they lack (Psa 84:11). Having sought *first* God’s kingdom and righteousness (Mat 6:33), their needs are being freely and abundantly met. An “evil time” has now come upon this perishing world and we are acquainted with quite a number who are “*not* ashamed,” and who can joyfully exclaim, “The LORD is my helper” (Heb 13:6). On the other hand,

we are acquainted with not a few real Christians who have every cause *to be* "ashamed," for their present situation brings no glory unto God.

In an "evil time" like this, the lines ought to be so clearly drawn that even the world can discern "between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not" (Mal 3:18). "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing" (Psa 34:10). Now let us ask our readers some plain questions. A few years back when "times" were "good" and money was plentiful, were you "seeking the LORD" when you bought a car for the pleasure of your family? Had you *His* glory in view when you purchased an electric sweeper, electric washer, electric refrigerator? You wish now that you had in cash the money you then put into such extravagances. Yes, so does the worldling. But have you confessed unto God the *sin* of such extravagance?

And what of the silk stockings, the "changeable suits of apparel" (Isa 3:22), and the many other luxuries which the worldlings were squandering their money upon? What too of being conformed unto the world in its wicked fashions—the "bobbed" hair, the short skirts, the sleeveless waists? "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal 6:7). Having sown to the flesh, why think it strange if you are now reaping "corruption"! Perhaps some answer, But I was liberal in giving to the Lord's cause in those days. Are you sure it was the Lord's cause? Was the aiding in the erection of a costly "church house," which still has a heavy *debt* upon it, "the Lord's cause"?

Is there no remedy? Yes, thank God, there is. "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2Ch 7:14). Ah, notice carefully what is said in the first clause. It is not "if the people," but "if *my* people shall humble themselves." How many Christians are genuinely surprised that we have not already witnessed a marked change on the part of the masses around us. But they need not be surprised. The "hard times" will make no impression for good on the multitudes until *God's own people* humble *themselves* before Him! There is no need for the King of Great Britain or the President of the U.S.A. to appoint a day for national humiliation, fasting, and prayer until Christians first get right with God.

What is meant by God's people "*humbling* themselves?" This—getting down on their knees before God and owning with shame-facedness the fleshly and worldly manner in which they lived during the years of plenty, truly repenting for and sorrowfully confessing their covetousness, their carnality, their wastefulness. Then there has to be a sincere forsaking in full purpose of heart any continuance or repetition of their past Christ-dishonouring ways. Coupled with this must be the *exercise of faith*, that a merciful God will hear the penitent sobbings of a contrite heart, that He will graciously forgive, that He will blot out even the *effects* of their sins, and now "heal their land," their present case, and circumstances. Not only must the four conditions of 2 Chronicles 7:14 be met, but the three closing promises of it must be trustfully appropriated and earnestly and persistently pleaded before God. Reader, let not the devil put you off by saying that *you* were not guilty of such extravagance as were many of your neighbors, for most probably you *were* proportionately, and according to your station in life, no more self-denying or thrifty than

they. May the Lord search each of our hearts, quicken our memories, and convict our consciences.

