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THE SPIRIT ENDOWING.

From the *graces* which the Spirit works in God's children, we turn now to consider the *gifts* which He bestows upon God's servants. This brings us to a comprehensive subject, and instead of devoting two brief papers thereto, a series of lengthy articles might well be written thereon. We can but here single out one or two aspects of it—those which we consider most need our attention today. Broadly speaking the fundamental principle underlying this branch of our theme may be expressed thus: when God calls any to the performance of special work in His service, He equips them by the gifts of His Spirit. For example we read "The LORD hath called by name Bezaleel . . . and He hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; and to devise curious works, to work in gold" etc. (Exo. 35:30-32).

Now just as men erred grievously concerning the *being* of God, grossly misrepresenting Him by images; and just as there have been the most horrible errors respecting the *Person* of the Mediator; so there has been fearful confusion upon the *gifts* of the Spirit—in fact it is at this point there pertains the most serious mistakes with regards to Him. Men have failed to distinguish between His extraordinary and His ordinary gifts, and have sought to generalize what was special and exceptional. Urging the rank and file of professing Christians to *seek* "power from on High," the "baptism of the Spirit," or His "filling for service," the wildest extravagancies have been fostered and the door has been opened wide for Satan to enter and delude the souls and wreck the bodily health of thousands of people.

It was well said by John Owen nearly three centuries ago that, "The great *deceit* and *abuse* that hath been in all ages of the church under the pretence of the name and work of the Holy Spirit, make the thorough consideration of what we are taught concerning them exceedingly necessary." The most signal gift of the Spirit for the benefit of His people in Old Testament times was that of *prophecy*. The Prophets were men who spoke in the name and by the authority of God, giving forth a Divinely inspired message from Him. It is not surprising, then, that many pretended unto this gift who were never inspired by the Holy Spirit, but rather were filled by a lying spirit, the Devil making use of them to accomplish his own designs: see 1 Kings 22:6, 7; Jeremiah 5:31, etc. Those facts are recorded for *our warning*!

This same gift of prophecy occupied a prominent place in the early days of the Christian dispensation, before the New Testament was written. The Gospel was at first declared from the immediate revelation of the Spirit, preached by His direct assistance, made effectual by His power, and accompanied in many instances by outward miraculous works, the whole of which is designated "the ministration of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:8). Those extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit were then so obvious and so acknowledged by all Christians, that those who wished to impose and deceive found no more successful method than by claiming to be themselves immediately inspired by the Spirit. Consequently we find such warnings given by God as, "Despise not prophesyings. *Prove* all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:20, 21); "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you" (2 Peter 2:1); "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but *try* the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1).

In order to preserve the church in truth and peace during those primitive times, and safeguard them from being imposed upon by the false prophets whilst there was a real communication of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit (whereby the more occasion was afforded for charlatans to pretend unto the possession of them), God graciously endowed some of His people with the gift of “*the discerning of spirits*” (1 Cor. 12:10). The saints were thereby provided with some who were enabled in extraordinary manner to judge and determine those who claimed to be specially endowed by the Spirit; but when the extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit ceased, this particular gift was also withdrawn, so the Christians are now left with *the Word alone* by which to measure and try all who claim to be the mouthpiece of God.

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was *confirmed* unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with *signs and wonders*, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost” (Heb. 2:3, 4). This passage makes known to us God’s *design* in the miraculous gifts of the Spirit at the beginning of this dispensation. They were for the purpose of confirming the *preached* Word—for none of the New Testament had then been written! They were for the establishing of the Gospel; not to beget and strengthen faith, but to cause unbelievers to listen to the Truth—compare 1 Corinthians 14:22, 24, 25.

In 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 we are supplied with a list of those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit which then obtained—we use the word “extraordinary” in contrast from His ordinary gifts, or those which obtain in all ages and generations. “For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:8-10). It will be noted that just as “the *fruit* of the Spirit” is divided into nine graces (Gal. 5:22, 23), so “the *ministration* of the Spirit” is here described under nine distinct gifts. A very few words must now suffice upon them.

“The word of wisdom” (1 Cor. 12:8) was a special gift bestowed upon the Apostles (hence it heads this list of gifts) for the defense of the Gospel against powerful adversaries: *see* Luke 21:15! “The word of knowledge” was a special gift bestowed on all then called of God to preach the Gospel: it supernaturally qualified them to expound Divine mysteries without protracted study and lengthy experience: *see* Acts 4:13! “To another faith,” a special gift which enabled its possessor to trust God in any emergency, and to boldly face a martyr’s death: *see* Acts 6:5. The “gifts of healing” and “the working of miracles” are seen in their exercise by the Apostles in the Acts. “To another prophecy” or immediate inspiration and revelation from God. Upon “tongues” and their “interpretation” we shall have more to say in our next.

Now that all of these special impulses and extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were *not intended* to be perpetuated throughout this Christian dispensation, and that they have long since ceased, is clear from several conclusive considerations. Their non-continuance is hinted at in Mark 16:20 by the *omission* of Christ’s “and, lo, I am with you *always*, even unto the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). So too by the fact that God did *not* give faith to His servants to count upon the same throughout the centuries: it is unthinkable that the intrepid Reformers and the godly Puritans failed to appropriate God’s promise if any had been given to that effect. “Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will

fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is *knowledge*, it will *vanish away*" (1 Cor. 13:8). The Apostle *cannot* there be contrasting Heaven with earth, for those on High possess *more* "knowledge" than we have; so the reference *must be* to the cessation of the miraculous gifts of 1 Corinthians 12. The qualifying language "which *at the first* began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us . . . with signs and wonders" (Heb. 2:3, 4) points in the same direction, and clearly implies that those supernatural manifestations had even then *ceased*. Finally, 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 proves conclusively that there is now no need for such gifts as prophecy and tongues: we are "thoroughly furnished" by the now complete Canon of Scripture.—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews.

117. *The Christian's Sacrifices*: 13:15, 16.

The verses which are now to engage our attention are closely related with those which immediately precede, as is intimated by the "therefore." The links of connection may be set forth thus. First, "We have an Altar" (v. 10): what *use* are we to make of it? The answer is, offer sacrifice thereon. Second, Jesus has sanctified His people "with His own blood" (v. 12), what is to be their *response*? The answer is, draw nigh to God as joyous worshippers. Third, we must go forth unto Christ "without the camp," what then, is to be our *attitude* towards those who despise and reject Him? The answer is, not one of malice, but benevolence, doing good unto all as we have opportunity and occasion. Such, in brief, is the relation between our present portion and its context.

Calvin suggested, we believe rightly, that the Apostle here anticipated an objection which might have been made against what he had previously advanced. In saying that Jesus "suffered without the gate" (v. 11), plain intimation was given that God had done with, abandoned Judaism as such. In bidding Hebrew believers to go forth unto Christ "without the camp," the Holy Spirit signified they must now turn their backs upon the temple and its services. But this presented a serious difficulty: all the sacrifices—those of thanksgiving as well as those of expiation—were inseparably connected with the temple system, therefore it followed that if the temple was to be deserted, the sacrifices also must have ceased. It was to meet this difficulty, and to make known the superior privileges of Christianity, that the Apostle penned our text.

If the Christian were debarred from offering any sacrifice to God, then he would occur an inferior position and be deprived of a privilege which the Jews of old enjoyed, for sacrifices were instituted for the purpose of *celebrating God's worship*. The Apostle therefore shows that another kind of sacrifice remains for us to offer, which is no less pleasing to God than those which He appointed of old, even the praise of our lips. Here we are taught what is the legitimate way of worshipping God under the new covenant, which presents another striking contrast from that which obtained under the old. As our "Altar" is not one of wood or stone, brass or gold, but Christ Himself, so our "sacrifices" are not the fruits of the ground or the firstlings of our herds, but the adoration of our hearts and the devotion of our lives. The contrast, then, is between the outward and ceremonial and the inward and spiritual.

The Jews offered to God a slain lamb each morning and evening, and on certain special days bullocks and rams; but the Christian is to present unto God a *continual* sacrifice of thanksgiving. This brings before us a most interesting and blessed subject, namely, those sacrifices of the Christian with which God is well pleased. The first of these was mentioned by David: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: *a broken and a contrite heart*, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psa. 51:17). "When the heart mourns for sins God is better pleased than when the bullock bleeds beneath the axe. 'A broken heart' is an expression implying deep sorrow, embittering the very life; it carries in it the idea of all but killing anguish in that region which is so vital as to be the very source of life. A heart crushed is, to God, a fragrant heart. Men condemn those who are contemptible in their own eyes, but the Lord seeth not as man seeth. He despises what man esteems, and values that which they despise. Never yet has God spurned a lowly, weeping penitent" (C.H. Spurgeon).

John Owen pointed out that there were two things in connection with the Old Testament sacrifices: the *slaying* and shedding of the blood of the beast, and then the actual *offering* of it upon the altar. Both of these were required in order to the completing of a sacrifice. On the other hand, the mere killing of the animal was no sacrifice unless its blood was placed upon the altar; and on the other hand, no blood could be presented there to God until it had been actually shed. Corresponding to these, there is a twofold spiritual sacrifice in connection with the Christian profession. The first is what has just been made reference to in the paragraph above: the broken heart and contrite spirit of the believer. That signifies evangelical repentance and mortification, or the crucifixion of the flesh, which is the Christian's first sacrifice, answering to the death of the beast before the altar.

The second sacrifice which the believer presents unto God is his offering of *Christ* each day. This is done by an act of *faith*—which is ever preceded by repentance, just as we must feel ourselves to be desperately sick before we send for the physician. As the awakened sinner is convicted of sin and mourns for it before God, pride and self-righteousness are subdued, and he is able to appreciate the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the (elect) world. Christ appears to him as exactly suited to his case and need. He perceives that He was wounded for his transgressions and bruised for his iniquities. He perceives that Christ took his place and endured the penal wrath of God on his behalf. Therefore does he now lay hold of Him by faith and present the atoning sacrifice of Christ to God as the alone ground of his acceptance. And as he begins, so he continues. A daily sense of defilement leads to a daily pleading of Christ's blood before the Throne of Grace. There is first the *appropriating* of Christ, and then the *presenting* of Him to God as the basis of acceptance.

Now it is this laying hold of Christ and the offering of Him to God in the arms of faith which correspond to the second thing in connection with the tabernacle (and temple) sacrifices of old. As the fire fell upon the oblation placed upon the altar, incense was mingled therewith, so that the whole yielded a "sweet savour unto God." Just as the mere slaying of the animal was not sufficient—its blood must be laid upon the altar and fragrant incense be offered therewith; so the Christian's sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart will not by itself secure the favour of God. Essential as repentance is it cannot purchase anything from God. The broken heart must lay hold of Christ, exercise faith in His blood (Rom. 3:25), and *plead His merits before God*. Only then will our sacrifice of a contrite spirit be a "sweet smelling savour" unto Him.

The third sacrifice which the Christian presents unto God is *himself*. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). That is an act of *consecration*. It is the recognition and acknowledgement that I am no longer my own, that I have been bought with a price, that I am the purchased property of Another. Hence, of the primitive saints we read that they "first gave their own selves to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:5), surrendering themselves to His sceptre, taking upon themselves His yoke, henceforth to live to His glory; that as they had formerly served sin and pleased self, now they would serve God and seek only His honour. As Christ gave Himself for us, we now give ourselves back again to Him. Hereby alone can we know that we are saved; not only by believing in Christ for the forgiveness of sins, but by yielding ourselves up to His government, as living sacrifices for His use.

The fourth sacrifice of the Christian is that mentioned in our text, namely, "the fruit of our lips"; but before taking up the same let us say a few words on *the order* of what has now been before us. There can be no acceptable sacrifice of praise until we have offered ourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, for as Psalm 115:17 declares, "The *dead* praise not the LORD." No, those who are yet in their sins cannot praise God, for they have no love for Him and no delight in Him. The heart must first be made right before it is attuned to make melody unto Him. God accepts not the lip service of those whose hearts are estranged from Him. Of old He complained "This people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me" (Isa. 29:13), and as Christ affirmed "*in vain* do they worship" Him (Matt. 15:9). Such hypocrisy is hateful to Him.

Nor can any man yield himself acceptably to God until he has *believingly embraced Christ*. No matter how willing I am to live honestly in the future, satisfaction must be made for the debts contracted in the past; and nothing but the atoning work of Christ can satisfy the just demands which the Law has against us. Again; how can I serve in the King's presence unless I be suitably attired? And nothing short of the robe of righteousness which Christ purchased for His people can gratify God's holy eye. Again; how could God Himself accept from me service which is utterly unworthy of His notice and that is constantly defiled by the corrupt nature still within me, unless it were presented in the meritorious name of the Mediator and cleansed by His precious blood? We must, then, accept *Christ's* sacrifice before God will accept *ours*; God's rejection of Cain's offering is clear proof thereof.

Equally evident is it, yet not so clearly perceived today by a defectively visioned Christendom, that no sinner can really accept Christ's sacrifice until his heart be broken by a felt sense of his grievous offences against a gracious God, and until his spirit be truly contrite before Him. The heart must be emptied of sin before there is room for the Saviour. The heart must renounce this evil world before a holy Christ will occupy it. It is a moral impossibility for one who is still in love with his lusts and the willing servant of the Devil to appropriate Christ and present Him to God for His acceptance. Thus, the order of the Christian's sacrifices is unchanging. First, we bow in the dust before God in the spirit of genuine repentance; then we appropriate Christ in His gracious provision, and present Him to God for the obtaining of His favour. Then we yield ourselves to Him unreservedly as His purchased property; and then we render praise and thanksgiving for His amazing grace toward us.

"By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (Heb. 13:15). This is *an exhortation to duty*, by way of inference from what was declared concerning the Redeemer and the sanctification of the people by His sufferings. Therein we are shown what use we are to make of our Altar, namely, offer sacrifice. The worship which the Christian presents unto God is the sacrifice of praise. Nothing is more pleasing unto Him, and nothing is more honouring to Him, than the praise of a renewed heart. Has He not declared, "Whoso offereth praise *glorifieth* Me" (Psa. 50:23). How thankful for that statement should those believers be who feel themselves to be poor and feeble. Had God said, whoso shall create a world, or even shall preach wonderful sermons and be a successful winner of souls, or whoso shall give a huge sum of money to missions, they might well despair. But "whoso offereth praise" opens a wide door of entrance to every believer.

And have not the redeemed abundant cause *for* praising God! First, because He has granted them a vital and experimental knowledge *of Himself*. How the excellencies of God's being, character and attributes, thrill, as well as awe, the souls of the saints! Glance for a moment at Psalm 145, which is entitled a "Psalm of Praise." David begins with "I will extol Thee, my God, O king; and I will bless Thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless Thee; and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised" (vv. 1-3). In the verses that follow, one perfection of God after another passes in review and stirs the soul to adoration. His "mighty acts" (v. 4), the "glorious honour of His majesty" (v. 5), His "greatness" (v. 6), His "great goodness" and "righteousness" (v. 7), His "fullness of compassion" and "great mercy" (v. 8), His "power" (v. 11), the "glorious majesty of His kingdom" (v. 12), His everlasting "dominion" (v. 13), His providential blessings (vv. 14-17), His dealings in grace with His own (vv. 18, 19), His preserving them (v. 20). No wonder the Psalmist closed with, "my mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD, and let all flesh bless His holy name for ever and ever."

If the Psalms be full of suitable petitions for us to present unto God in prayer, and if they contain language well fitted for the lips of the sobbing penitent, yet they also abound in expressions of gladsome worship. "Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding" (Psa. 47:6, 7). What vehemency of soul is expressed there! Four times over in one verse the Psalmist called upon himself (and us) to render praise unto the Lord, and not merely to utter it, but to "*sing*" the same out of an overflowing heart. In another place the note of praise is carried yet to a higher pitch: "Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and *shout for joy*, all ye that are upright in heart" (Psa. 32:11). Not in any formal and perfunctory manner is the great God to be praised, but heartily, joyously, merrily. "Sing forth the honour of His name: make His praise glorious" (Psa. 66:2). Then let us offer Him nothing less than glorious praise.

The "therefore" of our text intimates an additional reason why we should praise God: because of *Christ* and His so great *salvation*. For our sakes the Beloved of the Father took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made under the Law. For our sakes the Lord of Glory entered into unfathomable depths of shame and humiliation, so that He cried "I am a worm and no man" (Psa. 22:6). For our sakes He bowed His back to the cruel smiter and offered His blessed face to those who plucked off the hair. For our sakes He entered into conflict with the Prince of Darkness, and the pains of death. For our sakes he endured the awful curse of the Law, and for three hours was forsaken by God. No Christian reader can reverently contemplate such mysteries and marvels without being stirred to the depths of his soul. And then, as he seeks to contemplate what the shame and sufferings of Christ have secured for him, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift," must be the fervent exclamation of his heart.

And observe well, dear reader, how God has allotted to Christ the position of chief honour in connection with our subject. "*By Him* (the One mentioned in vv. 12, 13) let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God." As the Lord Jesus Himself declared, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). The saints can no more draw nigh unto God apart from Christ, than the sinner can; we are as dependent upon His mediation to render our *worship* acceptable to God, as we were at first for obtaining the *forgiveness* of our sins. As our great High Priest, Christ is the

“Minister of the Sanctuary” (Heb. 8:2). He meets us, as it were, at the door of the heavenly temple, and we place our spiritual sacrifices in His hands, that He may, in the sweet fragrance of His merits and perfections, present them for God’s acceptance. “Another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto Him much incense, that He should *offer it with* the prayers of all saints” (Rev. 8:3).

At every point God has made us dependent upon Christ, the Mediator. Only *by Him* can we offer acceptable sacrifices unto God. First, because it is through Christ’s bloodshedding, and that alone, that our *persons* have been sanctified, or made acceptable to God—note how in Genesis 4:4 Jehovah had respect first to Abel himself, and then to his offering! Second, because it is through Christ’s atonement, and that alone, that a new and living *way* has been opened for us into God’s presence: see Hebrews 10:19-21. Third, because He bears “the iniquity of our *holy things*” (fulfilling the type in Exo. 28:38), that is, through His perfect oblation our imperfect offerings are received by God; His merits and intercession cancel their defects. Fourth, because as the Head of the Church, He ministers before God on behalf of its members, *presenting their worship* before Him. Thus, “by Him” signifies, under His guidance, through His mediation, and by our pleading His merits for acceptance with God.

What has just been before us supplies further proof of what was pointed out in an earlier paragraph, namely, that it is impossible for the *unregenerate to worship God acceptably*. “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD” (Prov. 15:8). And why? Not only because he is utterly sinful in himself, but because there is no Mediator to come between him and God. This is brought out strikingly in the Old Testament types. Not a single “song” is recorded in the book of Genesis. In Eden our first parents were fitted to sing unto their Creator, and join the angels in ascribing glory and thanksgiving to the Lord. But after the Fall, sinners could only praise on the ground of *redeeming grace*, and it is not until Exodus is reached that we have the grand type of *redemption*. That book opens with Israel in Egypt, groaning and crying in the house of bondage. Next, the Pascal lamb was slain, Egypt was left behind, the red Sea was crossed, and on its farther shore they looked back and saw all their enemies drowned: “*Then sang Moses and the children of Israel*” (Exo. 15:1). Praise, then, is on the ground of redemption.

“By Him therefore let us *offer* the sacrifice of praise” (Heb. 13:14). Every word of Holy Writ is inspired of God, and throughout, its language is chosen with Divine discrimination. Therefore it behooves us to carefully *weigh* each of its terms, or we shall miss their finer shades of meaning. Here is a case in point: it is not “let us *render* praise unto God,” but “let us *offer* the sacrifice of praise.” Christ has made His people “kings and priests unto God” (Rev. 1:6), and here they are called upon to exercise their priestly functions. Thus we are instructed to make a right use of our “Altar” (Heb. 13:10). We are not only partakers of its privileges, but we are to discharge its duties, by bringing our sacrifices thereto. The same aspect of truth is seen again in 1 Peter 2:5, where we read that believers are “an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God *by Christ Jesus*.” Yes, offered “unto God” and not to angels or saints; and, acceptable “by Jesus Christ,” and not the Virgin Mary!

This particular expression “let us *offer a sacrifice* of praise to God” not only emphasises the fact that in their worship believers act in priestly capacity, but it also signifies that we now have the *substance* of what was shadowed forth by the Levitical rites. It also denotes that the Christian ought to be as particular and diligent in the discharge of his

evangelical duties as the Jew was in the performing of his ceremonial obligations. As *he* was required to bring any offering that was without physical defect, so *we* must bring to God the very best that our hearts can supply: "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and *all* that is within me, bless His holy name" (Psa. 103:1). Content not thyself with offering to God a few formal utterances of thanksgiving, still less hurry through thy worship as a task you are glad to get finished; but strive after reality, fervency, and joy in the same.

When the worshipping Israelite approached the tabernacle or temple, he did not come empty-handed, but brought with him a thank-offering. Then "let *us* offer the sacrifice of praise to God" (Heb. 13:15). When the saints come together for public worship, it should be not only for the object of having their empty vessels filled and their hungry souls fed, but with the definite purpose of *offering to God* that which will please Him. The more closely we walk with God, and the more intimate be our communion with Him, the easier the performance of this pleasant duty. The more we delight ourselves in the Lord and regale our souls by the contemplation of His perfections, the more spontaneous, fervent, and constant, will be our worship of Him. The more we cultivate the habit of seeing God's hand in everything, and are grateful to Him for temporal blessings, the more will the spirit of thanksgiving possess our hearts and find expression in songs of praise.

This sacrifice of praise is here designated "the fruit of our lips," which is a quotation from Hosea 14:2, where backsliding Israel vows that in return for God's receiving them graciously, they would render to Him "the calves of their lips"—the Hebrew word for "calves" being the same as for "praise." The expression "fruit of our lips" may at first strike us as strange, but a little reflection will reveal its propriety. Isaiah 6:5, 6 serves to open its meaning. By nature our "lips" are unclean: "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness" (Rom. 3:13, 14). But by God's applying to us the virtues of Christ's atonement, our lips are *cleansed*, and should henceforth be used in praising Him. "Fruit" is a living thing: the product of the Holy Spirit. When, through backsliding, the heart has cooled toward God and the music of joy has been silenced, cry unto Him, "O Lord, *open* Thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise" (Psa. 51:15).

This "sacrifice of praise" is to be offered unto God not merely on the Sabbath, but "*continually*." Have we not more cause to praise God than to pray? Surely, for we have many things to thank Him for, which we never ask for. Who ever prayed for His election, to have godly parents, for their care of us in helpless infancy, for their affection, for their faithfulness in training us the way we should go! Does not God daily heap upon us favours beyond that we are able to ask or think? Therefore we should be more in praising God than in petitioning Him. "*With thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6); as, is it not our failure in the former which explains why we are so often denied in the latter? "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2): "with thanksgiving" is as much a command as is the "continue in prayer."

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High" (Psa. 92:1). Yes, it is not only glorifying to God, but it is beneficial to the soul. To cultivate the habit of praising God will preserve the believer from many evils. The trials of life are more cheerfully borne if the spirit of thankfulness to God be kept lively in the heart. A man cannot be miserable while he is joyful, and nothing promotes joy so much as a heart constantly exercised in praising God. The Apostles forgot their

smarting backs in the Philippian dungeon as they “sang praises unto God” (Acts 16:25). The happiest soul we have ever met was a Sister in a London attic (before the days of old-age pensions), who had neither eaten meat or fruit nor had a glass of milk for years past, but was continually praising the Lord.

Mary was offering to God a sacrifice of praise when she exclaimed, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luke 1:46, 47). That was no mechanical act, but the spontaneous outburst of a heart delighting itself in the Lord. It is not enough that the believer should *feel* adoring emotions in his soul: they must be expressed by his mouth—that is one reason why the sacrifice of praise is defined in our text as “the fruit of our *lips*.” Verbal, articulated praise, is what becomes those who have received the gift of speech: that is why the saints of all ages have expressed their worship in holy songs and psalms. None of us sing as much as we should—how often the worldling shames us! Then let us say with David, “I will praise Thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will show forth all Thy marvellous works. I will be glad and rejoice in Thee: I will sing praise to Thy name, O Thou Most High” (Psa. 9:1, 2).—A.W.P.

The Life of David.

69. *His stay at Mahanaim.*

We have seen how God made use of Hushai, David's friend, to defeat the counsel which Ahithophel had proposed to Absalom. This meant a short breathing space was afforded the fugitive king. Hushai at once took steps to acquaint his master with his success (2 Sam. 17:15, 16). The two priests who served as messengers were obliged to take refuge in a farmer's house at Bahurim, hiding in a well, which his wife covered—how many strange and unexpected places have sheltered the servants of God from their enemies only the Day to come will fully reveal. Incidentally, let us note how this episode teaches us that so far from acting rashly and presumptuously, we should always avail ourselves of any lawful means which a merciful Providence supplies for us. True faith never leads to fanaticism or fatalism, but moves us to act with prudence and with good judgment.

It was well that the two messengers had taken this precaution, for they were pursued and tracked to the place where they were hiding, but through the woman's prevarication their enemies were sent on a false trail. "And it came to pass, after they (the pursuers) were departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David, and said unto David, Arise, and pass quickly over the water: for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against you. Then David arose, and all the people that were with him, and they passed over Jordan: by the morning light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over *Jordan*" (2 Sam. 17:21, 22). "This was a remarkable instance of God's providential care over His servant and his friends, that not one was lost, or had deserted, out of the whole company; and he was in this a type of Christ, who loses none of His true followers" (Thomas Scott). For the Antitype see John 18:8, 9.

It was at this time, most probably, that David wrote the 42nd and 43rd Psalms. They were composed at a season when he was deprived of the benefit and blessing of the public means of grace. This loss he felt keenly (42:4), but hoping in God and earnestly supplicating Him, he looked forward to the time when he would be again permitted to enter His holy courts with joy and thanksgiving (43:3, 4). These Psalms bring before us in a most blessed way the exercises of soul through which David passed at this season, and the persevering efforts he made to retain his hold upon God. They show us that though a fugitive, pressed almost beyond endurance by sore trials, nevertheless he maintained his intercourse with the Lord. They reveal the grand recourse which the believer has in every time of trouble—something to which the poor worldling is a complete stranger—namely, the privilege of unburdening his heart unto One who is of tender mercy, great compassion, and who has promised to sustain (Psa. 55:22) when we cast our burden upon Him.

The first two verses of Psalm 42 express the deep longing of a spiritual heart for communion with God in the house of worship: it is only when deprived of such privileges that we come to value them as we should—just as a parched throat is the one which most relishes a glass of water. In verse 3 he tells the Lord how keenly he had felt the mocking jibes of his blasphemous foes. Then he recalls the vivid contrast from previous experience, when he, though king, had gone with the multitude to the tabernacle and joined in celebrating God's praise. Challenging himself for his despondency, he seeks to raise his spirits. But soon dejection returns and he cries "O my God, my soul is cast down within me" (v. 6). Then it was he added "therefore will I *remember Thee* from the land of *Jordan*, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar" yes, though cut off from the public means of grace, though plagued with sore trials, he will not forget his best Friend.

In the remaining verses we find the Psalmist freely unburdening himself to God. As Spurgeon said, "It is well to tell the Lord how we feel, and the more plain the confession the better; David talks like a sick child to his mother, and we should seek to imitate him." So closely is the 43rd Psalm connected with the one preceding, that in one or two of the older manuscripts they are coupled together as one: that it was written during the same period is evident from verses 1, 2. In it we find David begging God to undertake for him, to "plead his cause against an ungodly nation," to "deliver him from the deceitful and unjust man"—the reference being to Ahithophel or Absalom, or both. He is distressed at his own despondency and unbelief, prays for a fresh manifestation of the Divine presence and faithfulness (v. 3), asks for such a deliverance as would permit his return to God's house, and closes with an expression of assurance, that, in the end, all would turn out well for him (v. 4).

"And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father" (2 Sam. 17:23). Unspeakably solemn is this. What a contrast is here presented: in the preceding verse we see the temporal deliverance of David and all his men; here we behold his chief enemy flinging himself into eternal destruction by his own mad act. Significantly enough "Ahithophel" signifies "the brother of a fool," and none exhibit such awful folly as those who are guilty of self-murder. Ahithophel did not commit this unpardonable crime on the spur of the moment, but with full deliberation, journeying to his own home to accomplish it. Nor was he bereft of his senses, for he first duly settled his affairs and arranged for the future of his family before destroying himself.

But *why* should Ahithophel have proceeded to such desperate measures? Ah, my reader, there is something here which needs to search *our* hearts. That upon which he had *chiefly doted* was now turned to ashes, and therefore he no longer had any further interest in life: his household "gods" were, so to speak, stolen from him, his "good thing" was gone, and therefore his temple lay in ruins. Hitherto his counsel was regarded "as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God" (16:23), but the advice of Hushai was now preferred before his. The high esteem in which he had been held for his political acumen, his wisdom in the affairs of state, were everything to him, and when Absalom passed his advice (17:14) it was more than the pride of his heart could endure. To be slighted by David's usurper meant that he was now a "back number"; to be thus treated before the people was too humiliating for one who had long been lionized by them.

Do we not behold the same Satanic egotism in Saul? When Samuel announced to him that the Lord had rejected him from being king, what was his response? Why, this: "Then he said, I have sinned: yet *honour me now*, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and *before Israel*" (1 Sam. 15:30). Ah, it was the praise of man, and not the approbation of God, which meant everything to him. Thus it was with Ahithophel: an intolerable slur had been cast upon his judgment, and his proud heart could not endure the idea of having to play second fiddle to Hushai. What point this gives to that exhortation, "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jer. 9:23, 24). Observe the justice of God in suffering Ahithophel to come to such an

end: he plotted the violent death of David, and now was fulfilled that word “his mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate” (Psa. 7:16).

O that we may really take this to ourselves, so that we honestly examine our hearts, and ascertain upon what it is, really, chiefly set. What did anything avail Haman, while Mordecai sat at the gate, is another illustration of the same evil principle. What a solemn lesson all of this reads to us! Have we, my reader, some earthly idol—be it riches, honour, fame, or even a loved one—around which the tendrils of the soul are so entwined that if *it* be touched, our very *life* is touched? If it be taken away, is life for us no longer worth living? Where is our ruling passion fixed? On what is it centered? Is it some object of time and sense, or One who is eternal and immutable? What “treasure” are we laying up day by day? Is it one that the hand of man or the hand of death may soon take from us, or that which is “eternal in the heavens”? Seek to answer these questions in the presence of the Lord Himself.

“Then David came to Mahanaim” (2 Sam. 17:24). This was one of the cities of the Levites in the tribe of Gad (Josh. 13:26-28). What sacred memories were associated with this place we may discover by a reference to Genesis 32:1-2. It was at this very place that Jacob had stopped on his return from sojourning so long with Laban. He was on his way toward the unwelcome meeting with Esau. But it was there that “the angels of God met him”! With faith’s discernment, Jacob perceived that this was “a token for good” from the Lord: “and when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s host, and he called the name of that place Mahanaim” or “two hosts”—if God were for him, who could be against him! It was *this* place, then, that David now made his headquarters, where he increased his forces, and gathered together an army with which to oppose the rebels.

By this time the first force of the disaster had spent itself, and when David had succeeded in getting his forces safely across the Jordan, on the free uplands of Bashan, his spirits rose considerably. The 42nd and 43rd Psalms reflect the struggle which had taken place within him between despair and hope, but as we have seen, the latter eventually triumphed. Now that Mahanaim was reached, he determined to make a definite stand. No doubt the sacred memories associated with this place served to further hearten him, and when the news reached him of Ahithophel’s defection from Absalom and his subsequent suicide, he had good ground to conclude that the Lord was not on the side of his enemies. As the time went on, it became increasingly evident that the leaders of the rebellion were lacking in energy, and that every day of respite from actual fighting diminished their chances of success, as the astute Ahithophel had perceived.

“And Absalom passed over Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him . . . so Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead” (2 Sam. 17:24, 26). At last the perfidious Absalom proceeds to carry out his vile designs. Not content with having hounded his fond parent from Jerusalem, and driven him to the utmost corner of his kingdom, nothing will satisfy him but removing David from the world itself. See to what fearful lengths Satan will lead one who is fully yielded to his sway. He was guilty of high treason. With eager mind and brutal heart he determined to deprive his father of his life. His awful conspiracy had now reached its consummation. He set his army in battle array against David. He was willing to play the part of fratricide, to stain his hands with the blood of a loving father who had been too long-suffering with him.

“And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab: which Amasa was a man’s son, whose name was Ithra an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruiah Joab’s mother” (v. 25). Joab the commander-in-chief of Israel’s army (1 Chron. 20:1), had remained loyal to his master, so that Absalom had perforce to appoint a new general to take charge of his forces: the wicked are not allowed to have everything their own way—Divine Providence generally puts a cog in their wheel. There is some difficulty in deciphering the details of this verse; as the marginal readings intimate. The one selected by Absalom as captain of his host was, originally, “Jether an *Ish-maelite*,” who had seduced the half-sister of David—suitable character for the present position! Later, he was known as “Ithra an Israelite,” Matthew Henry suggesting that he had become such by “some act of state—naturalized.” Such a selection on the part of Absalom was fully in accord with his own rotten character.

“And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim, brought beds, and basins, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse, and honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat: for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness” (2 Sam. 17:27-29). Here the scene changes again, and from the malice of David’s foes our attention is directed to the kindness of his friends. What vivid contrasts these chapters abound in! And is it not thus in all earthly life? How can it be otherwise in a world which is ruled by Satan, but overruled by God?

There is something striking and touching in connection with each of the three men mentioned here, who brought such a lavish present to David. Shobi was the brother of him, concerning whom David had said, “I will *show kindness* unto Hanun the son of Nahash” (2 Sam. 10:2) so, with the measure he had meted out to this Gentile, it is measured to him again. Ah, has not God promised that he who watereth others, shall himself be watered! “Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar” was the man who had given shelter to Mephibosheth (9:5): the king had relieved him of this trust by giving Mephibosheth a place at his own table (9:11), and now Machir shows his gratitude by providing for David’s table. Concerning “Barzillai” we read that he was “a very aged man, even four score years old” (19:32), yet he was not too aged to now minister unto David’s needs. He will come before us again (D.V.) in the sequel.

Let this pleasing incident be contemplated in the light of David’s prayers, recorded in Psalms 42 and 43. This was a most evident answer from God, who did not forget His servant in this hour of his emergency. Once again a kind Providence moved different ones to befriend the fugitive king and his forces. Weary from their long march, ill-provisioned for what lay before them, bountiful supplies are now freely given to them. As Matthew Henry pointed out, “He did not put them under contribution, did not compel them to supply him, much less plunder them. But, in token of their dutiful affection to him, their firm adherence to his government, and their sincere concern for him in his present straits, of their own good will, they brought in plenty of all that which he had occasion for. Let us learn hence to be generous and open-handed, according as our ability is, to all in distress, especially great men, to whom it is most grievous, and good men, who deserve better treatment.”

How often it falls out that God moves strangers to comfort His people when they are denied it from those much nearer to them. There is a law of compensation which is conspicuously exemplified in the Divine government of human affairs. A balance is strikingly preserved between losses and gains, bitter disappointments and pleasant surprises. If an heartless Pharaoh determines to slay the children of the Hebrews, his own daughter is constrained to care for Moses. If Elijah has to flee from Palestine to escape the fury of Ahab and Jezebel, a widow at Zarephath is willing to share her last meal with him. If the parents of Jesus Christ were poverty stricken, wise men from the East come with a gift of "gold," which made possible their flight and sojourn in Egypt. If a man's foes be those of his own household, friends are raised up for him in the most unexpected quarters. Let us not, then, dwell unduly upon the former; and let us not fail to be grateful and return thanks for the latter.—A.W.P.

The Divine Covenants.

6. *The Davidic.*

How mysterious and yet how perfect are the ways and works of “the Lord God omnipotent” (Rev. 19:6)! He makes all things subservient to His own glory, so directing the affairs of earth as to promise His own gracious designs. Though He be in no sense chargeable with the sins of the creature, yet He maketh “the wrath of man” to praise Him (Psa. 76:10). A striking, solemn, and yet blessed illustration of this appears in that incident of Israel’s history which we are now considering, namely, their discontent at having Jehovah Himself for their King, and their demand for a human monarch, that they might be like the heathen nations surrounding them (1 Sam. 8:5). This was most evil and wicked on their part, and as such, highly displeasing unto the Lord, who bade Samuel “protest solemnly unto them” (1 Sam. 8:9). This was followed by God’s chastening them by Saul, whose reign was a most disastrous one for Israel.

So much for the *human* side; but what of the *Divine*? The change now produced in the political constitution of Israel, though sinful in its origin and disastrous in its immediate effects, was in Divine mercy overruled to disclose some new aspects of the Divine purpose towards our fallen world. It became the means of unfolding by a fresh series of types the future exaltation of the Messiah, the nature and extent of His kingdom, and the beneficial effects of His administration. When the rejection of Saul was definitely intimated, steps were quickly taken under Divine direction, in the choice of his successor, and in this instance the carnal views of the people were in nowise consulted. God chose a man *after His own heart*: one whom His grace had prepared, and who in his *official* character, unlike Saul, would pay implicit deference to every intimation of the Divine will.

But before we take a closer view of David himself, let us add a further word to the above upon what brought about the institution of the kingly office in the constitution of Israel. As we have seen, it was a *sin* for the people to seek a king, yet it was *of the Lord* that they sought one. This is a deep mystery, yet its underlying principle is being constantly exemplified. God accomplishes His holy counsels by the free actions of sinful men. According to God’s sovereign purpose Saul must be made king of Israel, yet in bringing this to pass only the working of natural laws was employed. From the human side it was because the sons of Samuel were corrupt in judging, and in consequence the people had asked for a king. Had those sons been of the same calibre as their father, the people had been satisfied, and no king had been requested. It was by His ordinary providential control that God brought this to pass.

In nowise was the Divine holiness compromised: the Divine decree was accomplished, yet the people acted freely, and the guilt of their action was justly visited upon them. It may be asked, “Why did not Providence prevent this occasion of sin to His people? Why did His Providence lay this stumblingblock before them? If God designed to give them a king, why did He not give them a king in a way that would have presented them with no occasion of rejecting Himself as King? God designed to show that rebellion was in them, and His Providence manifests this, even in the way of fulfilling His own purposes, which coincided with theirs. Here is *sovereignty*” (Alexander Carson). Yes, and here is also infinite *Wisdom*, that can bring to pass His own foreordination without doing any violence to the responsibility of man, that can guide his evil inclinations, without any complicity therein. But to return to our more immediate enquiry.

At the time David was selected to be the successor of Saul, he was in the bloom of youth. The youngest son of his father's house. Although the intimation given of the high honour awaiting him was too distinct to be missed, it did not produce any injurious effects upon him. He continued to serve Saul as if he had been wholly ignorant of what God had designed. He was not puffed up with his prospects, nor did he give any intimation of a selfish ambition. He never presumed to anticipate by any effort of his own the fulfillment of the Divine purpose, but left it entirely with God to effect the same in His own time and way. From Saul himself he received sufficient provocation to have tempted him to pursue an opposite course, but he quietly submitted to God's sovereignty and waited for Him to make good His promise. Well may we seek grace to emulate such becoming meekness and patience.

In due time God fulfilled His word. On the death of Saul, the tribe of Judah anointed David king at Hebron (2 Sam. 2:4), and seven years later every hindrance having been providentially removed, all the other tribes concurred in his election (2 Sam. 5:3). During the early part of his reign, the attention of David was directed to suppressing the assaults of the Philistines and other enemies. His military operations were most successful, and the foes of Israel were humbled and subdued. On the establishment of peace throughout his kingdom, David's thoughts were directed to the removal of the ark, which had hitherto been migratory, to a settled place in Jerusalem. That city, in its entire extent had recently come into his possession, and had been chosen as the royal residence and the seat of Divine worship. The conquering of the promised land, through the Divine blessing on his administration, was now in a great measure completed, and David concluded that the time was ripe for him to erect a fixed and permanent habitation for the worship of Jehovah.

He formed the resolution to build a house for the Lord, and made known the same unto the Prophet Nathan, by whom he was at first encouraged. But though God approved the thought of David's heart, He would not permit him to give effect to his intentions. That particular honour was reserved for his son, and successor, Solomon, although he was not then born. The reason for this is expressly stated: God said to him. "Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto My name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in My sight" (1 Chron. 22:8). This statement does not mean that the wars in which David had engaged were unauthorized and sinful: on the contrary, they were undertaken by Divine orders, and their success was often secured by signal manifestations of God's interposition. But that aspect of the Divine character revealed in those events was different from that which worship mainly disclosed; therefore, there had been an evident incongruity in one who had shed so much blood erecting a house for the God of mercy and grace.

By the intended house of prayer, symbolic instruction was designed to be conveyed, and in order to that end there was required a condition of peace in association with its erection. Accordingly Nathan was sent to David to prohibit the accomplishment of his design. The Divine message, however, was accompanied with the most striking assurance of the favour of God toward himself. After reminding David of the humble condition from which he had been taken to be ruler over Israel, and of the invariable proofs of the Divine presence and blessing which had attended all his enterprises, the Prophet declared, "The LORD telleth thee that He will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed

out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for My name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be My son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but My mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever" (2 Sam. 7:11-16).

It is pitiable that any should raise a quibble that because there is no express mention here of any "covenant" being made, therefore we are not warranted in so regarding this event. It is true we have no formal account of any being offered in connection with it, no express figurative ratification of it, such as we find attending every similar transaction of which mention is made in Scripture. But the silence observed on this point is no proof that no such formality took place. The legitimate inference rather is that those observances were so customary on such occasions, and were so well understood, as to make any specific allusion to them here quite unnecessary. However, that it *was* a true covenant is evident from the distinct and frequent mention of it under this very designation in other passages.

That the great transaction narrated in 2 Samuel 7 *was* thus regarded by David himself as a "covenant" is clear from its own declaration: "Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting *covenant*, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire" (2 Sam. 23:5). When was it that God made this "everlasting covenant" with David, if not in the place which we are now considering? But what is still more to the point, the Lord Himself refers to the same as a "covenant," as we may see from His response to Solomon's prayer: "If thou wilt walk before Me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe My statutes and My judgments; then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have *covenanted with David* thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel" (2 Chron. 7:17, 18). With these statements before us, we cannot doubt that this Divine transaction with David was a true covenant, even though there is no formal record of its ratification.

That the Davidic Covenant constituted another of those remarkable revelations which at different times distinguished the history of the Jewish people, a cursory examination of its contents is sufficient to show. Like every similar transaction which occurred during the Old Testament era it has certain typical aspects, which were the figures of higher spiritual blessings. Those had special reference to David and his family. He was, for instance, assured that the temple should be built by his immediate successor, and that his family was destined to occupy a prominent place in the future history of Israel, and that the regal dignity conferred upon him should be perpetuated in his descendants so long, at least, as they did not by their sins forfeit the earthly advantages those secured to them. Those temporal promises were the ground on which the covenant rested, and were the elements which expanded into richer spiritual blessings in the distant future.

Viewed in relationship to the more *spiritual* results, David affirmed that the covenant was "ordered in all things, and sure" (2 Sam. 23:5). Against every possible contingency provision was made; nothing should ever prevail to defeat the fulfillment of those promises. Even the sins of the individuals of his race, though they would certainly meet with righteous punishment, and might terminate in the ruin of those who committed them, and in the permanent depression of the family, as in fact they did, would not annul them. It is

with these *higher* aspects of the Davidic Covenant we shall be chiefly concerned. From them we may gather the true nature of the solemn engagements it contained, and estimate the addition made by it to the sum of revealed Truth—the increased light which it shed on the scheme of Divine mercy, then in the course of disclosure.

The substance of the information conveyed by this covenant had reference to the exaltation, kingdom, and glory *of the Messiah*. Hints of a similar kind, though few, obscure, and isolated, are certainly to be found in the previous portions of Scripture, the most striking of which is the intimation given through Jacob, that “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be” (Gen. 49:10). But those hints were then, and up to the time of David, very imperfectly, if at all, understood, even by the most spiritually-minded people. They do not seem to have attracted notice; now, however, they were concentrated in and amplified with far greater distinctness through the promises of the Davidic Covenant. For the first time *the regal dignity of the Messiah* was exhibited, which, especially when enlarged by the later prophetic representations, the Jews were not slow to interpret in accord with their carnal ideas.

Thus far all has been, comparatively, plain sailing, but when we come to the actual interpretation of the promises made to David in 2 Samuel 7, real difficulty is encountered. Those which relate particularly to the *ultimate* design of the covenant require a much closer examination, and when attempting it (D.V.) a reference to other passages treating of the same subject will be essential. But before entering these deeper waters, let it be pointed out that, by the terms of this covenant a further and distinct limitation was given as to *the actual line* from which the promised Seed should spring. In the progress of Divine revelation, the channel through which the future Deliverer should issue, was, at successive periods, considerably narrowed. Though this has often been traced out by others, it is too important and interesting for us to ignore.

The first prediction, recorded in Genesis 3:15, was couched in the most general form, simply intimating that the Vanquisher of the Serpent would assume humanity, though supernaturally. On the destruction of the old world, the promise was renewed to Noah, together with an intimation that it would be through Seth its fulfillment should take place (Gen. 9:27). Further step forward was taken when Abraham was chosen as the progenitor of Him in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. His descendants, in the time of Isaac, on whom the promise was entailed, were, however, so numerous that no definite view could be taken as to the precise quarter from which its fulfillment might be looked for. Subsequently, the tribe of Judah was indicated, but this being one of the most numerous of the tribes, the same indefiniteness, though in a less degree, would exist as to the particular family on whom this honour was to be conferred.

Time rolled on, and now the family of David was selected as the medium through which the promise was to take effect. To that family the longings of all who looked for the Hope of Israel was henceforth restricted, and greater facility was thereby afforded for obtaining the requisite proof of the claims of the Messiah when He should appear. Thus, by a succession of steps God defined the course through which His gracious purpose would be wrought out, and with increasing distinctness concentrated the attention of the faithful towards the true direction in which the Divine promise would be realized; the last limitation possessing a definiteness to which none of the others could lay claim.—A.W.P.

N.B. In these two articles we have followed closely John Kelly in his work (1861) on "The Divine Covenants."

Christ Our Exemplar.

“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). We have seen that not only is the perfect life of Christ a suitable pattern of holiness for His people to imitate but that God has expressly *appointed* it for that very purpose. This in order that we may have a sure rule to walk by—the Law of God translated into concrete terms and its requirements set before us by a personal representation and also for the purpose of humbling our proud hearts—by revealing to us how far short we come of measuring up to God’s standard of righteousness. Furthermore, God has appointed that the example of Christ should be followed by His people in order that His Son might be honoured by them, in order to distinguish His followers from the world and in order that they should evidence the reality of their profession. The imitating of Christ, then, is not optional, but obligatory.

But at this point a very real difficulty confronts those who are sincerely seeking grace to heed this Divine appointment: in what particular respects and details are we to regard Christ as our Exemplar? All things recorded of Him in Holy Writ are for our instruction, but not for our imitation. There were some things which Christ did *as God*, as for example, when He wrought *miracles*: “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work . . . For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will” (John 5:17, 21). “But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house” (Matt. 9:6)—even the Apostles never performed such deeds in their own name or by their own power. Again—*as Mediator*, Christ performed *works of merit*, thereby making expiation for the sins of His people and “bringing in everlasting righteousness” for them, thus obtaining their justification and reconciliation; so now His intercession secures their preservation. Now no mere man can do anything meritorious, for at best we are all “unprofitable servants.” The Romanists, who are merit-mongers, are grievous offenders here.

Even *as Man*, Christ performed extraordinary acts which are not for our emulation. His fasting for forty days and nights, His walking upon the waters, His spending a whole night in prayer (Luke 6:12)—we do not read in Scripture of anyone else doing so—are cases in point. So, too, He performed certain temporary works which pertained to the time in which He lived, which are not for our imitation: such as His being circumcised, keeping the Passover, etc. Wherein, then, is Christ to be imitated by us? First, in all those *moral duties* which pertain to all men at all times, which are neither extraordinary nor temporary, comprehended in the loving of God with all our hearts and our neighbours as ourselves. Second, in such duties as belong to a *like calling*: as the child obeying its parents (Luke 2:52), the citizen paying his taxes (Matt. 17:27), the minister of the Gospel diligently (Luke 8:1) and faithfully (Heb. 3:2) discharging his office. Third, in all such works as have *like reason* and occasion for the doing of them: Matthew 12:12, John 8:59, etc.

In addition to those three general rules, we may repeat here what we said in our “Sanctification” article. The believer’s conformity to Christ corresponds to *the states* through which He passed. The man Christ Jesus first entered a state of humiliation before God rewarded Him by bringing Him into a state of exaltation. And therefore has God ordered that, in this, the members shall resemble their Head: they are called upon to endure suffering before they enter into the promised glory. The disciples of the Lord Jesus have to

experience a measure of opposition, persecution, hatred, affliction and they do so for their hope of a better life to come. In that, they do but follow “the Captain of their salvation,” who was “made perfect through sufferings” (Heb. 2:10). Had not God declared, “If we be dead with Him (Christ), we shall also live with Him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him” (2 Tim. 2:11, 12)? That order is inescapable: “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (2 Cor. 4:10).

In like manner, the Christian is to be conformed unto *the special acts of Christ’s mediation*, which are His death and resurrection. These are of paramount consideration, for they are not only a pattern proposed to our meditation but they possess a great influence upon our dying to sin and living unto holiness. This is evidenced from the fact that those effects of grace in us are ascribed to those acts of Christ’s mediation which carry most correspondence with them. Thus our mortification is ascribed to Christ’s crucifixion (Gal. 2:20), our vivification to His rising unto life (Phil. 3:10), and our heavenly-mindedness to His ascension (Phil. 3:20); so that all of those chief acts of Christ are verified in His people. We die *to* sin as Christ died *for our* sins.

But in descending to more specific details, it is in Christ’s *graces* we are to be conformed unto Him. All the graces and virtues of the Spirit were represented in their grandest glory and brightest lustre in His life here on earth. First, the purity and *holiness of His life* is proposed as a glorious pattern for the saints to imitate: “Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure” (1 John 3:3). Before enlarging upon this let us point out wherein Christ is unique and beyond our imitation. He was *essentially* holy in His being, for He is “the Holy One of God.” He entered this world immaculate, pure from the least stain of pollution: therefore it was said to His mother: “That holy thing which shall be born of thee” (Luke 1:35). Again—He was *effectually* holy, for He makes others holy, for by His sufferings and blood there is opened a fountain “for sin and for uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1). He is also *infinitely* holy, as He is God, and no measure can be set upon His holiness as Mediator, for He received the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). In these particulars He is inimitable.

Notwithstanding the above exceptions, the holiness of Christ is presented as a pattern for us. He was truly and *sincerely* holy, without fiction or pretense. When the prince of this world scrutinized Him he could find no defect in Him (John 14:31). He was pure gold throughout. The Pharisee may pretend to be holy but it is only in outward appearance. Now the Christian’s holiness must be genuine, sincere, without simulation. Christ was *uniformly* holy: at one time and place as well as another. The same even tenor of holiness ran through the whole of His life from first to last: so should it be with His followers: “As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:15). Alas, what inconsistencies we have to bemoan: one part of our life heavenly, another earthly!

Christ was exemplary holy: a pattern to all that came near Him, so that even those sent to arrest Him had to return to their masters and say “never man spake as this Man.” And we are to imitate Him in this respect. The Thessalonian saints were commended because they “were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the Word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godwards is spread abroad” (1 Thess. 1:7, 8). Let none go out of your company, Christian reader, without being either convicted or edified. Christ was *strictly* holy:

“Which of you convicteth Me of sin?” was His challenge. The most observing and unfriendly eye could pick no flaw in His actions. It is our duty to imitate Christ in this, too: “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15).

Second, *the obedience of Christ* to His Father’s will is a pattern for the Christian’s emulation: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus . . . (who) became obedient unto death” (Phil. 2:5, 8). Now Christ’s obedience was free and *voluntary*, not forced and compulsory. “Then said I, Lo, I come . . . I delight to do Thy will, O My God” (Psa. 40:7, 8). Nor did He waver, later, when suffering so grievously in the discharge of that will: “Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life” (John 10:17). So the Christian is to follow the steps of Christ, doing nothing grudgingly and counting not God’s commands to be grievous. Our *obedience* must be rendered cheerfully if it is to be acceptable. Christ’s obedience was unreserved and *entire*, declining no part of His Father’s will. See His perfect submission in Gethsemane. Here, too, he has left us an example: we are to do the most unpleasant task which God assigns us. Happy the Christian who can say with the Apostle “for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13).

The obedience of Christ was *entirely disinterested*. It was wrought for no self ends, but for the glory of God: “I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do” (John 17:4). Christ sought not honour of men, but the great desire of His soul was “Father, glorify *Thy* name” (John 12:28). This quality must also characterize our obedience: “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Phil. 2:4). The streams of Christ’s obedience flowed from the fountain of *love to God*. “But that the world may *know that I love the Father*; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do” (John 14:31). Let this also be true of us, for loveless obedience is of no value in the sight of God. The obedience of Christ was *constant*, continuing unto His very last breath. A being not weary in well-doing is required of us: “Be thou faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10).

Third, *the self-denial* of Christ is the pattern for the believer: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24). Though there is to be a resemblance, there can be no exact equivalent. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor” (2 Cor. 8:9). Who can gauge what Christ, for the glory of God and the love which He bare to the elect, gave up for us? How utterly trivial in comparison is the greatest sacrifice we are called upon to make! Christ was under *no obligation* whatever to deny Himself for us but He has placed us under the strongest obligations to deny ourselves for His sake. Though under no obligation, He denied Himself *readily*, making no objection to the severest part of it. Then let it not be said of us, “For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s” (Phil. 2:21). Let not self be loved, petted, pitied, pampered and indulged—rather renounce and mortify it, and make the pleasing and glorifying Christ your only business.

Fourth, *the activity and diligence* of Christ in fulfilling the work of God committed unto Him was a pattern for all believers to imitate. It is said of Him that “He went about doing good” (Acts 10:39), and what a glorious work He accomplished in so short a time!—a work which will be celebrated to all eternity by the praises of the redeemed. It was a work upon which His heart was intently set: “*My meat* is to do the will of Him that

sent Me.” It was a work under which He never fainted, despite the greatest discouragements and opposition. The very shortness of the time provoked Him to the greatest diligence: “I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4). He improved all opportunities and occasions; granting Nicodemus an interview at night, preaching the Gospel to the woman at the well when He was exhausted from His journey. Nothing displeased Him more than to be dissuaded from His work. “Get thee behind Me, Satan,” He said to Peter when that Apostle said “spare Thyself, Lord.”

Shall His followers, then, trifle their lives away in vanity? Shall we be slothful when He was so diligent? How great an honour God has placed on us by calling us to His service. Steadfastness in the work of obedience is our greatest security in the hour of temptation: “The LORD is with you, while ye be with Him” (2 Chron. 15:2). Diligence in prosecuting holiness is the way to get more: Luke 18:8. Graces grow by being *used*; spiritual acts lead to spiritual habits; talents faithfully employed are rewarded by an increase thereof. Diligence in the work of God is the direct way to an assurance of the love of God: 2 Peter 1:5-10. Diligence in obedience is the greatest security against backsliding: coldness leads to carelessness, carelessness to negligence, negligence to apostasy. The more diligent we are in serving God, the more we become like Christ.

Fifth *the inoffensiveness* of the life of Christ on earth is an excellent pattern for all His people. He injured none, and never gave occasion for any to be justly hurt at Him. He was not only holy, but “harmless.” He waived His own personal rights in order to avoid the giving of offense, as in the case of the tribute money: Matthew 17:27. When He was reviled, He “reviled not again” (1 Peter 2:23). So circumspect was our Saviour that though His enemies sought occasion against Him, they could not find any: John 19:4. Let us, then, earnestly seek grace that we may imitate this blessed excellency of His life, that we may obey God’s command and be “blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke” (Phil. 2:15). The honour of Christ, whose name we bear, is bound up in our deportment. The rule which He has laid upon us is, “Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”

Sixth, the *humility and meekness* of Christ is proposed by Himself as a pattern for His people’s imitation: “learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:29). He abased Himself, by taking upon Him the form of a servant. He stooped to the lowest office, by washing the disciple’s feet. When He presented Himself to Israel as their King, it was in humiliation, riding upon the back of an ass: “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, *meek*, etc.” (Matt. 21:5). He declared “the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister” (Matt. 20:28). He condescended to the lowest of men, eating with “publicans and sinners” (Matt. 9:11). In all of this He has left us an example to follow. O to be “clothed with humility” (1 Peter 5:5) and thereby evidence our conformity unto Christ!

Pride has no part of one who professes to be a follower of the Lord Jesus. It not only betrays lack of communion with Christ but woeful ignorance of self. Nothing is so provoking to God and more quickly estranges the soul from Him: “Though the LORD is high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knoweth afar off” (Psa. 138:6). Pride is not only utterly inconsistent with the complaints we make of our corruptions but it presents a serious stumbling block to the children of God. Be not ambitious of the world’s *great ones* but content yourself as one of Christ’s *little ones*. Learn humility at His feet. Evidence it in your apparel and deportment: 1 Peter 3:3. Display it in cultivating

fellowship with the poorest of the flock: Romans 12:16. Show it by speaking of and comporting yourself as “less than the least of all saints” (Eph. 3:8).

Seventh, *the contentment* of Christ in a low and mean condition in this world is an excellent pattern for His people’s imitation. His portion here was a condition of deepest poverty and contempt. The child of lowly parents; born in a manger. So deprived of the comforts of this world that, much of His time, He had nowhere to lay His head. So poor that He had to borrow a penny for the purpose of pointing to its superscription. Yet He never murmured or complained. Nay, so far from it, so perfectly content was He with God’s appointments that He declared, “The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places” (Psa. 16:6). Under the most degrading and painful sufferings, He never resisted nor repined: “He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter” (Isa. 53:7). “O that in this also the poorest Christians would imitate their Saviour, and learn to manage an afflicted condition with a contented spirit: let there be no complaints, or foolish charging of God heard from you, whatever straits or troubles He brings unto you.

“The meanest and most afflicted Christian is owner of many rich, invaluable mercies: Ephesians 1:3; 1 Corinthians 3:23. Is sin pardoned and God reconciled? then never open your mouths any more. You have many precious promises that God will not forsake you in your straits: Hebrews 13:5. Your whole life has been an experience of the faithfulness of God to His promises. How useful and beneficial all your afflictions are to you! they purge your sins, wean you from the world and turn to your salvation; then, how unreasonable must your discontentedness at them be! The time of your relief and full deliverance from all your troubles is at hand: the time is but short that you shall have any concernment about such things. Your lot falls by *Divine* direction upon you, and bad as it may be, it is much easier and sweeter than the condition of Christ in this world was. Yet He was contented, and why not you?” (John Flavell, to whom we are indebted for much in the above seven points).—A.W.P.

The Doctrine of Sanctification.

13. *Its Progress.*

At the close of last month's article we pointed out that the present aspect of our subject is one which deeply exercises many of God's people. It is with the desire to remove some of their difficulties and to throw light upon their problems that we devote a further paper thereto. Let us begin by mentioning several things which do *not* denote progress in personal and practical holiness. First, growth in grace is not an advancing in *outward profession* and ostentation, so that men shall "think of me above" what I am indeed (2 Cor. 12:6), but in inward and substantial godliness. When the roots of a tree do not strike deeper into the earth, yet its branches continue to spread, that is not true *growth*, for a strong wind will blow it over. Many people in Christendom are like that: there is a great spreading abroad outwardly and a plentiful show of leaves, but the fruits of vital piety are lacking.

Second, progress in holiness consists not in an increase of *gifts* or enlarged abilities for public service, but an increase in graces. The Corinthians grew fast in gifts, so that they were enriched "in all utterance and in all knowledge . . . so that they came behind in no gift" (1 Cor. 1:5, 7); nevertheless, the Apostle told them that they were but "babes" and "carnal" (1 Cor. 3:1, 3). And therefore did he point out to them "a more excellent way" (12:31), which (as Chapter 13 shows) was the presence and exercise of *true grace*, even love to God and love to our brethren, an ounce of which is of more real worth than a ton of gifts; for "though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass" (13:1). Ah, my reader, you may not be able to pray in public as some do, you may lack their readiness of speech when talking of Divine things, you may not be sought after to occupy positions of prominence in the church, but if you have a tender conscience, an honest heart, a gentle spirit, a forbearing disposition, you have that which is far more valuable than any gifts for public use.

Third, an increase in fruitfulness is not to be measured by the *success* we have in our service to the Lord. If He has called you to preach the Gospel, and you now obtain fewer souls for your hire than was the case in former years, that is not (necessarily) to be taken as a proof of your spiritual decay. It is true that the conversion of souls under the labours of the Apostles is called "fruit" by Christ Himself (John 15:16), and it is also true that God generally makes the most use of those whose hearts and lives are the holiest. Yet it was through no recorded failure on his part that John the Baptist must "decrease" that Christ might "increase." Older ministers are often required to give place to younger ones, but this is not because of a decay of grace in them. If the minister's heart be large in its desires and he is faithful in his endeavours to do good, God will reckon more fruit to him than to others who are less faithful but more successful.

Fourth, growing in grace and the bringing forth of more fruit is not to be measured by the largeness or smallness of those *opportunities* we have for the doing of more or less good. Some that have the most grace are often stationed in isolated places and are largely unknown to their fellow Christians. Some have larger opportunities when they are young and less when old, and yet they bring forth more fruit before God than formerly, because He accepts the will for the deed. The public labours of the Baptist were ended when he was cast into prison, yet he brought forth precious fruits by not envying Christ because He secured *his* disciples, but rejoiced that the work of God went forward—more

grace was expressed therein than in many sermons. So Paul spent much of his later life in prison, yet the fruit he brought forth there was quite as valuable as his preaching.

Fifth, increasing holiness is not to be measured by our *inward comforts* and joy, but rather by the more substantial qualities of faith, obedience, humility, and love. Very often it happens that the fragrant blossoms of ravishments fall off when the fruits of meekness, patience, and lowliness come on. What matters it though the gloss wear off, if the material be strong and substantial? Young Christians grow like new instruments: they have more varnish than the old, but they are not so sweet and mellow in sound. Often the decrease of joy is a means of increase of sincerity: lack of peace causes more exercise of faith, just as the taking away of floats compels the beginner to swim. One that has the assistance of floats and the stream with him, appears to swim as well as another with more experience and strength; but remove the floats from him and pit him against the stream, and his progress is not so swift, yet is it more sure.

Sixth, there is great danger of being deceived over *inward affections*, for even when they be drawn out unto Christ, yet their appearance may be greater than the reality. So often in a young Christian there is warm affection, yet much of self in it: great zeal, yet not a little of the energy of the flesh. He enters into duties more eagerly at first, but more spiritually later. New objects being set before him draw out after them the old nature as well as the principle received at regeneration. It was thus with Israel of old. They were obedient to Moses' call, and sang Jehovah's praises after their deliverance at the Red Sea; yet it was not long before the mixed multitude lusted after the fleshpots of Egypt, and only the spiritual were satisfied with the heavenly manna. When fire is first kindled there is more smoke, but after the flames come that control all into a narrower compass, the fire hath more heat in it. The believer's affections become purer, less mixed with the vapours of self-love as he grows in grace.

Seventh, we must not seek to determine our progress in holiness by any *one grace* or the performance of any particular duty, but take in the entire extent and latitude of character and conduct. One who has grown much in grace may be less in some kinds of duties than he was when a babe in Christ. Probably we then spent most of our available time in praying, reading, and meditating. Because we spend *less* time in them now, that is no proof of our spiritual decay: there are *other* duties to be performed which in earlier days were neglected, but are now made conscience of. To have more time available for prayer and reading is most delightful to a spiritual soul, yet the faithful discharge of business or domestic responsibilities is more profitable to others and more pleasing to God, if He has so appointed them. The mother who is faithful in the home honours God just as truly and fully as the most self-sacrificing missionary.

But let us turn now to the positive side and note some of the indications in and characters of an increase in holiness. First, we grow when we are led on to exercise *new* graces, and so "add" one to another as 2 Peter 1:5-7 enjoins. As our knowledge of Scripture increases, affections are awakened answerable to the truths newly discovered to us. At first the Christian does not exercise all the graces of the new man, though all are in him. As in the natural we first live a life of semi-consciousness, then one governed by the physical senses, and then one of reason, it is much the same in the spiritual. There are various "grades" or "standards" which Christians go through, as children at school rise from inferior to the higher. First we are placed under the Law and have heart exercises awakened by its requirements; then under the Gospel other affections are stirred into activity.

Second, we are increasing in holiness when the same graces *advance*, as when the Christian's love grows "fervent" (1 Peter 4:8). Faith at first is like a tiny mustard seed, but afterwards it develops into a tree. An awakened sinner often casts himself upon Christ much as a drowning man clutches at a passing spar: later, he has a more intelligent perception of His suitability and worth; until he attains unto "full assurance of faith." Thus in godly sorrow: when from mourning for sin because it is contrary to God's holiness, we go on to mourning over sin as grieving to Him who loves us, we are growing in grace. So when we have more strength to resist temptations. So in prayer: when our petitions are more for spiritual blessings than for material mercies, when we learn to plead with God in a Scriptural manner, when we pray much for others.

Third, we are increasing in holiness when the duties we perform and the fruits we bear are more *ripe*, that is, more spiritual, and less juicy, that is, emotional. Though they grow now in size or number—we pray not more nor longer—yet they are more holy, or more savoury and solid. It is a mistake to measure spiritual growth by the *multitude* of our performances: God prizes quality far more highly than He does quantity. When one is sick or aged, he is obliged to be less in active duties, but increased spirituality in those he *can* engage in, more than makes up for this. One short prayer put up in faith, with a broken heart, is in God's sight more fruit than a long one or a day spent in formal fasting; in the same sense that the "widow's mite" was more than all the other gifts cast into the treasury.

Fourth, an increase of holiness is indicated by the soul's becoming more firmly *rooted in Christ*, and this makes the fruits more acceptable unto God. By being more rooted in Christ, we mean the believer's living more out of himself and in Christ. At our conversion we were emptied of self-righteousness, and as we grow in grace we become emptied of our strength, wisdom, abilities, so that we recognize with increasing clearness that without Him we can do *nothing*. So of our service. "Not I, but Christ in me" is our ready acknowledgement. Consequently when "growth in grace" is mentioned "and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18) is at once added by way of explanation, for there can be no real growing in grace except as we increase in the vital and experimental knowledge of Christ. As to "worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3) are the surest signs of grace, so of genuine growth.

Fifth, the more we bring forth fruit *in season*, the more fruit we may be said to bear, for it is the timeliness of them which enhances their value. In the natural, fruit which is *forced* by artificial means is never so wholesome as that which is ripened normally by the sun. There is a time for everything. To be studying the Bible when I should be taking needful recreation, to be praying when I should be discharging other duties, to regale myself by happy fellowship with other Christians when I ought to be visiting the sick, or attending to the public means of grace when home duties plainly call for my attention, is to bring forth *untimely* fruit. So to rebuke when I should comfort, or comfort when I should rebuke: "a word *fitly* spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" (Prov. 25:11). In Psalm 1 the righteous man is said to bring forth fruit "in his season." Young Christians are often set on good works by the Devil which they are not yet qualified to perform.

Sixth, when we grow more *constant* in performing duty, more *even* in a godly course, and more settled in our spiritual affections, it is a sure sign that we are growing. Youth is more unstable than maturity, more given to change. The young believer is more influ-

enced by his emotions than his judgment, and therefore more easily carried away by religious excitement; and more quickly discouraged when things go wrong. The development of patience and perseverance is a clear mark of spiritual growth. To go by fits and starts, to be much in duties for a while and then almost abandon them, to be on a mountain top one day and down in the valley the next, is a character of immaturity and weakness. But being not weary in well-doing in the face of opposition, to continue pressing forward despite many failures, to go on seeking grace notwithstanding many refusals, denotes growth.

Seventh, we may be said to be increasing in holiness when, although difficulties increase and opportunities lessen, we *continue faithfully* therein. An orchard which produces fruit in a cold and uncongenial season, though it be less in quantity and quality, is really for it (relatively) to yield more than if the year had been a warm and propitious one. The Lord takes into account the times and circumstances in which our lot is cast: "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy *patience*" (Rev. 2.2). Fidelity to Christ means far more in such an evil day as ours than if we were in the midst of a Heaven-sent revival. Little is regarded by God as much as when His child has had to stand almost alone, when his strictness has been almost universally scoffed at by modern religionists.

Our object in this article is to resolve a case of conscience, rather than handle the subject of spiritual growth in either a doctrinal or hortatory manner. Instead of discoursing upon progressive holiness in general, or seeking to urge believers thereto, we have sought to indicate, both negatively and positively some of the marks of growth in grace that an exercised soul might be able to discern more clearly his actual condition. It is most important that we should be able to judge rightly of our case and not flatter ourselves on the one hand, nor deprecate ourselves on the other: some are more tempted to the former, others to the latter. It is easy to make a mistake and jump to a wrong conclusion. As in the physical realm many suffering from insidious diseases suppose they are healthy, while others who are sound and vigorous imagine they are ill, so it is spiritually.

Whilst it is the duty and privilege of the Christian to ascertain what progress Divine grace is enabling him to make in his spiritual course, and to be assured he is not a fruitless branch of the Vine, yet God does *not* intend that he should be satisfied with his attainments or fall in love with himself. Far from it; rather is it His design that he should live more and more out of himself, upon Christ. And it is for this reason that He suffers the most spiritual of His people to be constantly plagued by indwelling sin, and sees to it that they are kept continually busy in fighting the weeds that are ever threatening to crowd out the flowers and fruit in the garden of their souls. Should they become at all self-complacent, He will soon stain their pride by withholding the dews of His Spirit, and then their graces speedily wilt and wither. In such a case they are hard put to perceive any fruit at all.

In addition to all that has been said above, let it be pointed out that subsequent growth in grace is not nearly so apparent to our senses as first conversion is. That is a radical change from death unto life, from being brought out of darkness unto God's marvelous light, from no grace at all to the beginnings of grace in us, whereas that which follows is renewing of the life already received, additions of light, and further degrees of grace. To be translated out of a prison to a kingdom as Joseph was, would affect him far more than to have a new kingdom added to him later, as Alexander had. The very newness of grace in the first instance makes a much stronger impression upon the heart and understanding

than do the later additions of it. When one takes up any art or science, growth is prompt, because everything we read thereon is novel; whereas later, the same things are met with again and again, and that which is new is harder to discover, though now he learns more perfectly what he previously knew.

Again; time must be allowed for growth and the discovery of it. "When for the time ye ought to be teachers" (Heb. 5:12), implies that a sufficient space had elapsed for them to have passed the infantile stage. The sun's rising is slow and by degrees, so that its progress cannot be perceived till after its motion for an hour or so. Let it be remembered that things most excellent have the slowest development; bulrushes, and the weaker kind of plants shoot up swiftly, but oaks and other more solid trees grow very slowly. Moreover, there are great differences in the pace of growth even among the same specie of trees or animals; so it is spiritually. God has appointed the measure of growth in all His people, yet they are brought to the fullness in very different times and ways.

Growth in mortification is evidenced by our denying self more and more, by the things of this world making less of an appeal upon us, and by a steadier and more regular watching over our hearts. Such work is new to us at first, and the putting forth of unaccustomed efforts is always more taxing than actions we are used to; but as the habit is formed, the strain is not noticed so much. Moreover, an increase of spiritual (not intellectual) light exhibits filthy corners in the heart hitherto unsuspected; consequently, the farther one proceeds with God the more *spiritual* his conflict becomes. When the believer resists not only the grosser worldly and fleshly lusts, but also makes conscience of pride, self-confidence, impatience, unworthy motives, the weakness of his faith and the sparseness of his love, then is he indeed growing in grace.

Growth in vivification is evidenced in further supplies of grace and the effects they produce. It may be asked whether every new degree of grace affects the whole of our souls, or if it be confined to one faculty? The answer is the former, for as every new degree of light (as the sun rises) shines throughout the whole hemisphere, so new grace is diffused throughout the entire man—understanding, conscience, affections, and will—just as it did at our conversion. But may not one grace grow more than the other? Growth in our bodies is proportionate, one member together with another; so our graces all languish or thrive together. But some graces are *exercised* more, and so *abound* more: just as though our two arms both grow, yet through employing the right one more constantly, it becomes stronger than the left.

It may be of interest to enquire whether this increase in grace be only by the normal and spontaneous development of the graces, or by a new addition to them? The latter: just as a cloth comes out a deeper colour each time it be dipped in the dye. Every new degree of grace is by a fresh act of creation put forth by God. Therefore when David, being fallen, prayed for an increase of grace, he cried, "*create* in me a clean heart, O God" (Psa. 51:10). He who begins the work, by the same power, perfects it. Every new degree of grace is called a fresh conversion: "when thou art converted" said Christ to Peter (Luke 22:32) who was converted already. It is God who "giveth the increase" (1 Cor. 3:7). Yet, as pointed out in previous months, our concurrence is required. (For much in the above we are indebted to Thomas Goodwin).—A.W.P.

Christ Despised.

“He is despised and rejected of men” (Isa. 53:3). For the special benefit of young preachers we propose to sermonize this text, though in as simple and homely a manner as possible, trusting that it may please the Lord to speak through it to some unsaved readers, for we dare not assume that all who take this magazine have really been born again.

Our text forms part of one of the Messianic predictions, in which God made known long beforehand the treatment which his Son should receive when He became incarnate. The prophecy of Isaiah was in the hands of the Jews seven hundred years before the Lord Jesus was born at Bethlehem, yet so exactly did it describe what befell Him that it might well have been written by one of the Apostles. Therein is supplied one of the incontrovertible proofs of the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, for only One who knew the end from the beginning could have thus written history beforehand.

It might well have been supposed that the advent to earth of such an One as the Lord of Glory would meet with a warm welcome and reverent reception, the more so in view of His appearing in human form, going about doing good. Since He came not to judge, but to save; since His mission was one of grace and mercy, since He ministered to the needy and healed the sick, will not men gladly receive Him? Many would naturally think so, but in so thinking they overlook the fact that the Lord Jesus is “the *Holy One*,” and none but those who have in their hearts the principle of holiness can appreciate ineffable Purity. Such an assumption as the one we have just mentioned ignores the solemn fact of *human depravity*: the heart of fallen man is “desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). How can the Holy One appear attractive to those who are full of sin!?

Nothing so clearly evidences the condition of the human heart, and so solemnly demonstrates its corruption, as its attitude toward the Christ of God. There is much recorded against man in the Old Testament Scriptures, as for example in Psalm 14:1-4; yet dark as is the picture there drawn of fallen human nature, it fades into insignificance before what the New Testament sets before us. “The carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom. 8:7), and never was this so frightfully patent as when He was manifested in flesh. “If I had not come,” declared Christ, “and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin” (John 15:22). The appearing of Christ has fully exposed man, bringing to light as nothing else ever has the desperate wickedness of his heart. Now let us ask and supply answer to three questions: *Who* was (and still is) “despised and rejected of men?” *Why* is He so grievously slighted? In *what way* is He scorned?

Who was so unwelcome here? We answer, first, the One who pressed upon men the absolute *sovereignty of God*. Few things are so distasteful to the proud human heart as the truth that God does as He pleases, without in anywise consulting with the creature; that He dispenses His favours entirely according to His imperial will. Fallen man has no claims upon Him, is destitute of any merit, and can do nothing whatever to win God’s esteem. Fallen man is a spiritual pauper, entirely dependent upon Divine charity, and in the bestowal of His mercies God is regulated by naught but His own “good pleasure.” “Is it not lawful for Me to do *what I will* with Mine own?” (Matt. 20:15) is His own unanswerable challenge: yet, as the context there shows, man wickedly murmurs against this. Now the Lord Jesus came here to glorify His Father, and therefore do we find Him maintaining His crown-rights and emphasising His sovereignty. In His first message, in the Capernaum synagogue, He pointed out that though there were many widows in Israel during the days of Elijah, when there was a great famine throughout all the land, unto

none of them was the Prophet sent, save unto one at Zarephath; and that though there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha, none of them were healed, yet distinguishing mercy was shown unto Naaman the Syrian. The sequel was, "All they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were *filled with wrath*, and rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong" (Luke 4:28, 29). For pressing the truth of God's absolute sovereignty, Christ was "despised and rejected of men."

Who was so unwelcome here? Second, *the One who upheld God's Law*. Therein is the Divine authority expressed, and complete subjection thereto is required from the creature; and therefore did Christ press the demands of God's Law upon man. Said He, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17); "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12). But fallen men resent restraints, and want to be a law unto themselves, and their language concerning God and His Christ is "Let us break Their bands asunder, and cast away Their cords from us" (Psa. 2:3). Because the Lord Jesus enforced the requirements of the Decalogue He was "despised and rejected of men." A solemn illustration of this occurs in John 7. To the Jews He said, "Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you keepeth the Law? Why go ye about to kill Me?" (v. 19). And what was their response? This, "The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil" (v. 20).

Who was so unwelcome here? Third, the One who *denounced human tradition* in the religious sphere. Despite the Fall, man is essentially a religious creature—the image of God in which he was originally created has not been completely destroyed. The world over, blacks and whites, reds and yellows, pay homage to gods of their own devising, and there are few things on which they are more tender than their sacerdotal superstitions: he who condemns or even criticizes the devotees of any form or order of worship, will be greatly disliked. Now Christ drew upon Himself the hatred of Israel's leaders by His denunciation of their inventions. He charged them with "making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition" (Mark 7:13). When He cleansed the temple, the chief priests and scribes were "sore displeased" (Matt. 21:15).

Who was so unwelcome here? Fourth, the One who *repudiated an empty profession*. Nothing so infuriated the Jews as Christ's exposure and denunciation of their vain pretensions. Being omniscient, it was impossible to impose upon Him; being inflexibly righteous, He could not accept deceptions; being absolutely holy, He must insist upon sincerity and reality. When they declared "Abraham is our father," He answered, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the *works* of Abraham." When they added "we have one Father, even God," He replied, "If God were your Father, ye would love *Me* . . . ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." This so riled them that they exclaimed, "Say we not well Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a demon" (John 8:39-48).

On another occasion the Jews asked Him, "How long dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly" (John 10:24). He at once exposed their hypocrisy by saying, "I told you, and ye believed not . . . but ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep . . . My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they *follow Me*" (John 10:25-27). So angered were they at this that they "took stones again to stone Him." Men

will not tolerate One who pierces their religious disguise, exposes their shams, and repudiates their fair but empty profession. It is just the same today.

Who was so unwelcome here? Fifth, the One who *exposed and denounced sin*. Ah, this explains why Christ was not wanted here. He was a constant thorn in their sides: His holiness condemned their unholiness. Men wish to go their own way, to please themselves, to gratify their lusts. They want to be comfortable in their wickedness: therefore they resent that which searches the heart, pierces the conscience, rebukes their evil. Christ was absolutely uncompromising. He would not wink at wrong doing, but unsparingly denounced it, in whosoever it was found. He boldly affirmed, "For judgment I am come into this world" (John 9:41), that is, to discover men's secret characters, to prove they are blind in spiritual things, to demonstrate they loved darkness rather than light. His Person and preaching *tried* everything and everyone He came into contact with.

Why was (and is) Christ "despised and rejected of men"? First, because He required inward purity. Herein is the great difference between all human religions and the Divine: the former concern themselves with external performances, but the latter with the source of all conduct. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). It was Christ's exposition and enforcement of this truth which made Him so unpopular with the leaders. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is *within* the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are *within* full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but *within* ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matt. 23:25-28).

Why was Christ "despised and rejected of men"? Second, *because He demanded repentance*. "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15) was His claimant call: that order is unchanging, for it is impossible to savingly believe the Gospel till the heart be contrite. Repentance is taking sides with God against ourselves: it is the unsparing judgment of ourselves because of our high-handed rebellion. It is a ceasing to love and tolerate sin and excusing ourselves for the commission of it. It is a mourning before God because of our transgressions of His holy Law. And therefore did Christ teach, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3), for He would not condone evil. He came to save His people *from* their sins, and not *in* them.

Why was Christ "despised and rejected of men"? Third, *because He insisted on the denial of self*, and this at two principal points, namely, the indulging and the exalting of self. All fleshly lusts are to be unsparingly mortified, and self-righteousness is allowed no place under the Gospel scheme. This was made unmistakably plain by our Lord's teaching: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24). Yet nothing is more contrary to the desires of the natural man, and Christ's insistence upon these terms of discipleship causes Him to be "despised and rejected of men."

How is Christ "despised and rejected of men? In different ways and in varying degrees: professedly and practically, in words and in works. It is most important that this should be clearly recognized, for Satan deceives a great many souls at this point. He deludes them into supposing that because they are not guilty of what pertains to the avowed

infidel and blatant atheist, therefore they are innocent of the fearful sin of slighting and defying the Lord Jesus. Ah, my reader, the solemn fact remains that there are millions of people in Christendom who though not atheists and infidels, yet despise and reject the Christ of God. "They profess that they know God; but *in works they deny Him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16). That verse clearly enunciates this principle.

Because of the limited space at our disposal, we are obliged to condense this last division so that the preacher will have to develop it for himself. Christ's *authority* is "despised" by those who disregard His precepts and commandments. Christ's *yoke* is "rejected" by those who are determined to be lord over themselves. Christ's *glory* is "despised" by those who bear His name yet have no concern whether their walk honours Him or no. Christ's *Gospel* is "rejected" by those who on the one hand affirm that sinners may be saved without repenting of and turning away from their sins, and on the other hand by those who teach that Heaven may be won by our own good works.

There are some who *intellectually* reject Christ, by repudiating His claims, denying that He is God the Son, assumed a holy and impeccable humanity, and died a vicarious death to save His people from their sins. There are others who *virtually and practically* reject Christ. Just as there are those who profess to believe in the existence of God, own His power, and talk about His wondrous handiwork, yet who have not His fear upon them and are not in subjection to Him; so there are many who claim to trust in the finished work of Christ, yet their daily walk is no different from that of thousands of respectable worldlings. They profess to be Christian, yet are covetous, unscrupulous, untruthful, proud, self-willed, uncharitable; in a word, utterly unChristlike.—A.W.P.