

Studies in the Scriptures

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by Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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JANUARY

HIS PRESENCE

“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Mat 28:20). In their first and primary sense, those words are addressed to the *ministers* of Christ, the ones (and the only ones) He has called, commissioned, and qualified to preach His Gospel, make disciples, baptise the same, and instruct them in the Faith. The fact that their Master declares He will be with such “unto the end of the world” is a clear intimation that He will provide and maintain a succession of Gospel ministers unto the end, that the forces of evil will *never* succeed in banishing the Gospel from the earth! “Lo, I am with you alway”: it is of incalculable benefit for the servant of Christ to appropriate those words, bear them constantly in mind and mix faith with them. There are many occasions when he needs their bracing influence, as there will be seasons when they should have a sobering effect upon him. Let him ever seek to conduct himself, both in public and private, as in the immediate presence of his Master. Let him draw strength and comfort from Exodus 3:12; Acts 18:9-10; 2 Timothy 4:16-17.

Yet let it be pointed out that it would be quite wrong to *restrict* those precious words of Christ to preachers. When comparing Scripture with Scripture, we find that they certainly have a wider application, that they belong equally unto *all* the members of the household of faith; Hebrews 13:5-6 makes that sufficiently clear. There the apostle quotes that wondrous promise which God gave originally unto Moses (Deu 31:8) and then to Joshua (Jos 1:5): “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”; and then informs us that it is the privilege of faith for all Christians to take that promise unto themselves: “So that we may boldly say, The Lord is *my* helper.” Christ is present with each of His own. Those words of Matthew 28:20 express one of the marvels of His theanthropic Person: though His humanity is now localized in heaven, yet His divine presence fills heaven and earth. It is His *favourable* presence which is with His people. It is one of the grand blessings of redemption that the Redeemer is never absent from the redeemed. This is one of the “exceeding great and precious promises” of our Lord (2Pe 1:4), which is our privilege and advantage to live upon.

This inexpressibly blessed fact of the Lord’s abiding presence with His own is far too little apprehended by any of them. O to enter this new year with the realization that the one who loved me and gave Himself for me accompanies me into it! Then why should I fear what may lay ahead of me in 1948? Whatever may be my circumstances, whatever changes I may pass through, whatever I may be called upon to bear, Christ Himself will be my constant companion! But only *faith*—not imagination or feelings—will be able to realize and appreciate His presence. Literally the Greek reads, “Lo! I am with you all the days,” which, personally, we much prefer to “alway.” No fair-weather friend is Christ. He is with us in cloudy days equally as in sunny ones. What comfort, peace, strength, and joy that fact must bring to the one whose faith lays hold of it! It can never be ill with the one with whom Christ is, no, not in the worst condition of outward trouble. Rather must it be *well* with him, for the Lord is “a very present help in trouble” (Psa 46:1).

That opening, “Lo!” is designed to arrest attention and evoke wonderment. It is usually translated, “Behold,” but seven times over in Matthew’s Gospel, it is rendered, “Lo”: the references are Matthew 2:9; 3:16-17; 24:23; 26:47; 28:7, 20; and all of them are connected more or less directly with our blessed Lord. “Lo!”—mark it well, carefully consider, joyously contemplate. “Lo!”—be astonished, be awed, bow in worship at this amazing fact. “I”—the eternal Lover of your souls, the One who bore your sins in My own body on the tree, the risen Redeemer who now liveth to make intercession for thee. “I”—the Maker of heaven and earth, the Lord of angels, the Beloved of the Father—“am with you”: not only at God’s right hand, but by your side too. “Am with you”: not only have I commissioned My servants to edify you, My angels to serve you, but Myself in person am present with you. “All the days”: not merely an occasional visitor, but an abiding friend! “Even unto the end” of our earthly pilgrimage. No wonder that such a statement is prefaced with “Lo!”

“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end” (Mat 28:20). *That* includes everything. *That* is saying all that can be said. That is a promise which comprehends all other promises. It is far more than though He said, “Thy sins be

forgiven thee,” or “Peace be unto thee,” or “Be of good cheer.” In those, there is but a *single* good, but in Christ Himself, we have *all* good! “Lo! I am with you”: therefore, protection, sustenance, strength, comfort, and everything you can desire is available. Whatever real good you covet is contained in that word! O what a difference it will make in our experience if we journey through all the days of 1948 realizing that Christ is ever by our side! What can there be to fear? “When thou passest through the waters, I will be *with thee*; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isa 43:2). He is indeed *Emmanuel*—“God with us.” “The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge” (Psa 46:11).

Is not our failure to realize the favourable presence of our divine Redeemer the main cause of our slackness in communion and carelessness in our walk? Does not that failure explain our weakness, irresolution, timidity? Christ is present to counsel, to direct our way, to shelter, to energize, to comfort. Then make use of Him: draw from Him, lean upon Him. Does He not say, “Fear thou not; for I am *with thee*: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isa 41:10)? Then conduct yourself accordingly, Christian reader. Memorize that wondrous statement: meditate upon it until its sweetness fills your soul. Recall it every time a fresh difficulty, trial, or emergency is presented. Look away from the threatening storm and your own weakness, unto that all-sufficient Saviour who is by your side. And as the final crisis approaches, exclaim, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art *with me*; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Psa 23:4).

Faith’s consciousness of Christ’s presence will have, first, a *restraining* and deterring effect. If I realize that Christ is with me, shall I go to the movies or the dance hall? Second, a *cheering* effect, counteracting the depressing state the world is now in. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth, but be thou occupied with the perfections of that blessed One who is at thy right hand. Third, a *strengthening* influence. Here is a Refuge into which we may flee at all times, an almighty Friend to turn unto for all we need. Fourth, a *comforting* power. A reader may recently have suffered a sore bereavement, the removal of a loved and lifelong partner. What solid consolation is there here: he or she has gone, but “Thou remainest” (Heb 1:11)! Fifth, how this should *endear* Christ unto us: “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (Joh 13:1), and He evidences His love unto them *thus*. He thinks so much of them, He will not leave them. Surely such love must beget love.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

49. 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, Part 3

There is more difference of opinion among sermonizers and commentators on *this* prayer than any other in the New Testament. It is not easy to make a translation of the Greek into simple and intelligible English, as appears from the additions made in our Authorized Version, for the insertion of the italicized words quite alters the scope and meaning of its clauses. Even where there is substantial concurrence as to the best English rendition, expositors are far from being agreed as to the precise significations of its several petitions. We have, therefore, proceeded more slowly in our own attempt to open its contents, taking as our foundation the rendering of *Bagster’s Interlinear*, which in our judgment is as close and literal an equivalent of the original as can be given: “For which also we pray always for you, that you may count worthy of the calling our God, and may fulfil every good pleasure of goodness and work of faith with power, so that may be glorified the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and of [the] Lord Jesus Christ.”

First, we have carefully considered the *occasion* of this prayer or what prompted it, as its opening, “For which also [‘Wherefore also’—Authorized Version] we pray” requires us to do. We have pointed out that such an investigation takes us back to verse 4, where reference is made to the “persecutions and tribulations” which those saints were enduring, and reminded the reader that the Thessalonians were being so sorely oppressed by their enemies that Paul had sent Timothy “to establish...and to comfort” them concerning their faith, and to urge them “that no man should be moved by these afflictions” (1Th 3:2-3). In what follows from verse 4 of 2 Thessalonians 1, the apostle had sought to strengthen them by setting forth various considerations for their encouragement. In addition thereto, he assures them that he specially remembered them before the Throne of Grace, earnestly supplicating God on their

behalf. The “Wherefore [for which cause] also we pray *always* for you” shows, second, the *importance* of this prayer. He frequently interceded for them, which expressed both his deep affection and real concern for them.

Third, coming now to its *petitions*, we expressed the conviction that the principal blessing for which the apostle here made request was that further supplies of *persevering grace* should be granted these saints. We conclude thus, first, from the situation they were in: a sorely tried one. Second, because that was what they particularly needed in order to “count [them] worthy of this calling” of God—i.e. conduct themselves suitably to their procession. Third, because the “[that you may] fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power” was the task allotted *them*, and for the performance of which divine enablement was absolutely essential. Fourth, it was thereby they would glorify “the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Fifth, because on any other analysis of this prayer, its concluding words would be a redundancy. But if *their* perseverance was what the apostle had before him, then “according to the grace of our God” would remove from them all ground of boasting and place the crown of honour where it rightly belonged. There is a holy balance between the truth of God’s effectual preservation of His people, and the imperative necessity of their continuing in faith and holiness.

Personally, we find it enables us to obtain a better understanding of the apostle’s scope by regarding this prayer (and each of his others) as an *implied exhortation*, for the chief reason why his prayers are recorded is that those for whom he prayed (and we who are informed of his petitions) might seek to realize in their own experience and walk the blessings which he sought from God on behalf of His children. In other words, those things for which the apostles made request are what God *requires from* His people, yet which they are unable to accomplish in their own strength. While there be nothing meritorious in them, yet the exercise of their minds and muscles is as necessary as the exercise of their minds and muscles, and is essential for the adorning of the Gospel and the glorifying of their Master. Consequently, we behold in this prayer, as everywhere in the Word of Truth, a striking and a blessed union of divine operations and Christian activities, of God’s free grace and infinite power, and of our perseverance in duty and attainment of blessedness; there is a suitable concurrence of both ends and means, of the exercise of divine sovereignty and the discharge of human responsibility. Never let us put asunder what God has joined together.

“That our God would count you worthy of this calling” (2Th 1:11) is the first petition in the prayer we are now pondering. Since we have previously devoted several paragraphs to a consideration of its meaning, we must abbreviate our present remarks upon it. The “calling” has reference to that operation of divine grace by which they had been brought out of darkness into God’s marvellous light and made the willing subjects of the kingdom of His dear Son, and which entailed that henceforth they must make personal holiness their trade or avocation. The petition was to the effect that they should be brought to *highly esteem* such a vocation—notwithstanding the bitter opposition it met with—and be stirred up to meetly discharge their responsibilities in connection with the same. Paul prayed not that they might be delivered from their “persecutions and tribulations” (2Th 1:4), but rather that they should be divinely enabled to hold out steadfast under the same, and so quit themselves as the followers of Christ that He would not be ashamed to own them as His brethren. Paul’s yearning was that by their *becoming conduct*, they should clearly evince themselves to be among the effectually called of God.

“And fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness” (2Th 1:11) is the second petition. The reference is clearly unto of the divine excellencies, for God is expressly mentioned at the end of the preceding clause. The “good pleasure” of God signifies His most free will, His entire independency, that He acts without any restraint, being a law unto Himself. His “goodness” is His benignity and kindness. God has an absolute power and sovereign right to dispose as He will of all creatures, not only as to their temporal, but eternal concerns (Mat 20:15). That sovereign will is the sole cause why He passes by some and chooses others (Rom 9:18). But that absolute will of God is sweetly tempered with goodness or rich favour unto His own elect. He has a gracious good will unto them at all times. As the self-inclination which is in God to promote His people’s welfare is free, it is called His “good pleasure”; and as it moves Him to bestow benefits upon them, it is termed His “goodness” or benignity. All that the saints receive from Him proceeds from the good will which He bears them; and therefore, all the praise for the same belongs alone unto Him.

It is to be duly noted that those words, “fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness,” do not form part of a doctrinal statement in which is affirmed the certainty of the divine purpose; but instead, describe a duty incumbent upon Christians, but for which divine grace needs to be sought. It is therefore requisite that we call the reader’s attention to a simple but necessary distinction. As there is a *twofold* “will” of God referred to in Scripture, namely, His secret and revealed will—the former being the principle from which He works and which is invincible, the latter being the rule by which we are required to walk and which is never perfectly performed by any man (Dan 4:35; Rom 9:19; and contrast Joh 7:17; Luk 12:47); and as there is a twofold “counsel” of God—the one referring to His eternal decree and the other unto His advice to us (Isa 46:10; Act 4:28; and contrast Pro 1:25; Luk 7:30); so there is

also the “good pleasure” by which *God* always acts (Eph 1:9) and the “pleasure” of God by which *we* are called to act (Psa 103:21). It is the latter of which our present verse speaks: the apostle prayed that these saints might be granted hearts framed unto an entire obedience to the divine statutes.

It is blessedly true that God does fulfil every good pleasure of His goodness in and through His people, yet it is equally true that they ought to aim at and rest content with nothing short of *their own* fulfilling of every divine precept which has been given them. The divine statutes are not only clothed with God’s authority, which we disregard at our peril, but they are also expressions of His goodness, which we ignore to our loss. God manifests His “goodness” unto us in many ways, not least in His commandments, which are designed for our welfare: “The Sabbath was made for man” (Mar 2:27)—because he needed it, for his benefit. They who, like the prophet, follow their own inclinations, rather than God’s instructions “forsake their own mercy” (Jon 2:8). A life of obedience is not only our duty but our comfort: the divine wisdom has so determined that whatever promotes His glory shall also advance the good of His people. Therefore, as He has inseparably connected together sin and misery, so He has holiness and happiness. “Great peace have they which love thy law” (Psa 119:165). “He that keepeth the law, happy is he” (Pro 29:18). “But the way of transgressors is hard” (Pro 13:15), but wisdom’s are “ways of pleasantness” (Pro 3:17).

“And fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness.” Again, we observe what an exalted standard of conduct the apostle (by necessary implication) here set before the saints. God requires His people to “be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1Pe 1:15)—in thought, word, and deed. Nothing less than complete conformity to the rule God has given us must be our aim and earnest endeavour. No dispensation is granted for us to pick and choose out of the Scriptures what we like best and pass by the rest. The divine promises must not be esteemed above the precepts. It is at this very point the emptiness of so many professors stands revealed. They are like backsliding Ephraim, of whom it is recorded that he “loveth to tread out the corn,” but would not “break his clods” (Hos 10:11). How many who call themselves “believers” affect the privileges of Christianity, but disdain its duties; are all for saving grace, but nothing for the grace which teaches us to *deny self*. God requires that our obedience should not only be diligent, but universal. Said the Psalmist, “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto *all* thy commandments” (Psa 119:6): until we do so, we have cause to hide our faces in confusion.

But like everything else in the Christian’s life, obedience unto God is a *growth*: not in the spirit of it, not in a sincere desire, and determination to please God—for that is common to all the regenerate—but in an actual performance. Light as well as love is necessary thereto, and that comes to him gradually as he is able to bear it—“more and more unto the perfect day” (Pro 4:18). Increased wisdom is required in order to make a right use of the light—to know when to speak and when to be silent, etc.—and that is largely a matter of experience. As babes in Christ are unable to feed upon the food of which the fully grown partake, so there are tasks performed by the latter of which the former are as yet incapable. Mark then the nice discrimination in the apostle’s language: That you may “fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness.” He did not employ the verb *teleioo* which means “to accomplish,” but *pleroo* which signifies “to bring to completion.” Paul had reference to a process which is performed gradually or by degrees. The same word occurs again in Acts 12:25; 14:21-22, etc. The goal was that they “might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10), thus performing all those duties He had assigned them.

Increased *grace*, as well as light and wisdom, is essential for a fuller obedience, and it was for *that* the apostle here made supplication. Once more we call attention to the *breadth* of his requests. It was for a full supply of enabling grace unto His people that he now besought God. No niggardly petitioner was he. Eyeing the good will which God bears His children, Paul hesitated not to “open thy mouth wide” (Psa 81:10) when seeking favours for them—which, so far from being presumptuous, was honouring unto God and an availing himself of his rightful privilege. This feature, as we have seen, is a very prominent one in all his prayers; so here. It was though he called to mind the example of the man after God’s own heart who asked, “Deal *bountifully* with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word” (Psa 119:17). That was the very thing the apostle was here doing: beseeching God that He would impart to the Thessalonians a plentiful supply of grace, that they might be spiritually vigorous and lively, and this in order that they should “keep [His] word,” for to have the heart furnished for full obedience unto God’s “good pleasure” is what a renewed soul deems to the best “bounty.”

Let us not be stumbled, then, by the exalted standard of holiness which God has set before us; but rather be encouraged by the apostle’s precedent, and seek from Him full supplies of grace to fit us for the performing of our duty. If we be believingly occupied with “the goodness” of our God, we shall not be afraid to ask and look for bounteous blessings from Him. As one truly said, “We may be too bold in our manner of approach to God, but we cannot be too bold in our expectations from Him.” God is able—God is willing—to do for us far more “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph 3:20). The straitness is always in ourselves and never in Him: in

the narrowness of our faith and not the breadth of His promises. “For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have *abundance*” (Mat 25:29)—plead that word before Him. “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (2Co 9:8). Ponder well that threefold “all”! What further inducements do we require to approach the Throne of Grace with “large petitions”? If your need and longing be great, see to it that your expectation is equally so.

It is neither honouring to God nor good for himself that the Christian should be contented with a little grace. These Thessalonians were not only regenerate persons, but they had attained to a considerable degree of eminence in faith and holiness; nevertheless, Paul prayed that such further supplies of grace be vouchsafed them that they would be enabled to “fulfil *all* the good pleasure of his goodness”—i.e. measure up to the whole revealed will of God. Rest not satisfied with the assurance that you have enough grace to take you to heaven, but seek that measure of it which will not only be for your comfort on earth, but for the glorifying of your Saviour while you be left in this scene. “Covet earnestly the best gifts” (1Co 12:31). Pray for enlarged affections and expectations. Beg God to deal with you not according to your ill deserts, but according to the largeness of His liberality, seeking from Him that “good measure” which is “pressed down, and shaken together, and running over” (Luk 6:38). Above all, plead the Redeemer’s worthiness. God never denies those who make *that* their all-prevailing plea, for there is infinitely more merit in Christ’s sacrifice than there is demerit in you and all your sins!

“And the work of faith with power” (2Th 1:11) is the third petition, or thing which God required from the saints and which the apostle asked for them. A notional and nominal faith, which is without good works, is a dead and worthless one; but a spiritual faith which produces fruit unto God’s glory is a living one. The faith which God communicates to His elect is a vital and operative principle; and therefore, it has an office to discharge, a duty to fulfil. These words, “the work of faith,” are to be understood in precisely the same way as that little-understood expression, “the work of the law” in Romans 2:15. The “work of the law” in that verse is not to be regarded as a principle of righteousness operating within the unregenerate Gentiles (a manifest absurdity), but as the design and function of the law. Its “work” is to prohibit and promise, to threaten or assure, of reward. The “work of the law” refers not to the conduct it requires from us, but to what the law itself *does*—accuses or acquits. So the “work of faith” refers to neither God’s quickening of faith nor its fruits through us, but to the task allotted it. It is not the invigorating of faith by God’s Spirit which is here in view, but that function which God has assigned faith, that office which it is fitted to perform.

In his sermon on these verses, even J.C. Philpot (1802-1869)—who was all at sea on the preceding petition (understanding it to refer to an experience of heart in which we are passive, rather than to our active obedience)—said on these words: “By ‘the work of faith’ we may understand two things: 1) the operation of God upon the heart, whereby from time to time, faith is raised up and brought into living exercise upon the things of God; and 2) the work which faith has to do when thus raised up and strengthened in the soul”—so that in the latter part of his definition, he conceded what other hyper-Calvinists denied. There are two sorts of works required of and ascribed to faith—namely, those which are internal, and those which are external. The former consists of the mind’s assent unto the truth, the will’s consent to what is there enjoined, and the heart’s reliance upon the promises of God and a resting the whole soul on Christ, confiding its eternal interests unto Him. The external work of faith consists of an open confession of Christ, boldly owning His ways before a world which despises them, and a ready obedience to the will of God in forsaking sin and walking in the path of His commandments, to the producing of practical holiness; and therefore, our obedience is designated “the obedience of faith” (Rom 16:26).

While not inclined to altogether exclude the internal work of faith, we think it is obvious, both from what precedes and follows, that the external work of faith is chiefly in view—the honouring of Christ before men. It is the products of the work of faith which make it evident to our fellows, for a holy walk brings more glory to Christ than a log of frothy talk; steadfast perseverance in duty in a time of persecution is more pleasing to Him than showy performances in a day of peace. Furthermore, in a time of acute suffering, the saint will find it easier to determine his spiritual case by the exercises of his grace objectively than subjectively. “The drift of his prayer is that God would enable them to ride out the storm of those troubles which came upon them for the Gospel’s sake. And a Christian, in judging his condition, will discover it better in the external acts of faith than in the internal”—Thomas Manton (1620-1677).

“And the work of faith *with power*”—namely, the power of God in enabling faith to fulfil its functions. As the faith here spoken of is of God, so it is dependent upon God. Does faith support the soul under heavy trials? Then it is, because it is sustained by the omnipotent One. Does it perform duties which are contrary to the dictates of carnal wisdom? Then it is, because faith is energized by divine power. Does it choose a path which is hateful to flesh and blood? Then it is, because faith is strengthened by the might of its Giver. Does faith, in the midst of the most pain-

ful and bewildering situation, aver “though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15)? Then it must be because the Almighty is its maintainer. Nevertheless, it remains that if our faith be small and feeble, the fault is entirely ours. God has expressly bidden us, “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Eph 6:10); and therefore, it is both our privilege and duty to ask and expect Him to make good in us that which He requires from us. Surely that is evident from the Lord’s rebuke to His disciples: He had not reproved them for their fear and unbelief (Mat 8:26), unless *they* were responsible to maintain it in healthy vigour.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

29. The Passover (5:10)

It is most blessed to observe how Israel conducted themselves upon their first entrance into the promised land, for therein is manifested not the workings of nature, but the fruits of divine grace. After God had wrought so signally for them at the Jordan, they did not rush ahead and seek to immediately possess their inheritance. The miraculous dividing of its waters so that they passed through dryshod must have greatly dispirited the Canaanites, and thus have prepared the way for an easy triumph for the invaders. It had been natural, yea, what all military men would call “good policy” for Israel to have made the most of this terror by striking a heavy blow at once, pressing on with might and main before the enemy could recover himself, and so carry all before them in one swift campaign. But God’s people follow not the ways nor employ the devices of the world. They are a “peculiar people” (1Pe 2:9): distinct and separate from the unregenerate, acting not by carnal wisdom and expediency, but regulated by spiritual considerations. “He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa 28:16) is one of the principles by which they are required to act, for “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong” (Ecc 9:11).

Instead of immediately assaulting Jericho, the children of Israel pitched their tents at Gilgal and tarried there for a season. Exemplary restraint was that, and one which we do well to take to heart in this feverish age of mad speed. This tarrying in the camp at Gilgal was the more noteworthy when we bear in mind the very lengthy interval which had elapsed since their exodus from Egypt, during which they were prevented from reaching their goal and realizing their eager expectation. Yet there was something far more praiseworthy than self-discipline which marked their conduct on this occasion: they had the glory of God before them. They eyed His authority, and respect for His institutions, and acted in faith and obedience to His appointments. That should ever be what marks God’s people, collectively or singly. It is neither the first business of the church to “win the world for Christ,” nor of the individual Christian to seek the salvation of his relatives and companions; rather, it is to “shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1Pe 2:9) by our entire subjection to His Word. God has nowhere promised to *use* those who make not conscience of obeying Him in all things.

The appointments of God and not the attaining of their own desires were given the pre-eminence. First, Joshua had, in submission to the Lord’s requirement, circumcised all those male Israelites who had been born in the wilderness. We have previously shown that the non-observing of that rite during those thirty-eight years was due to no sinful neglect, but was owing to the apostasy of their fathers at Kadesh-barnea, in consequence of which Jehovah declared, “ye shall know my breach of promise” (Num 14:32-34); and therefore, were their children denied the token or “token of the covenant” (Gen 17:11). But the miraculous passage of the Jordan demonstrated that Israel was once more restored to the divine favour, that He had resumed His covenant relationship with them, that in emerging from the river of death, judgment was behind them; and therefore, it was fitting that this second generation should now be given that mark which distinguished them from all other nations as bound by special obligation to serve their God. It was also observed how that the Lord’s commanding Joshua to then circumcise the people presented a real test to his faith and obedience, severely handicapping for a few days his fighting forces; but counting upon God’s protection, he confided in Him and triumphed over the trial.

Second, we are told, “And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover” (Jos 5:10). Appropriately did Matthew Henry (1662-1714) point out, “We may well imagine that the people of Canaan were astonished and that, when they observed the motions of the enemy, they could not but think them very strange. When soldiers take the field, they are apt to think themselves excused from religious ceremonies (they have not time or thought to attend to them), yet Joshua opens the campaign with one act of devotion after another. What was after-

wards said to another Joshua might truly be said to this: ‘Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at’ (Zec 3:8); and yet indeed he took the right method.” And, my reader, if *we* be actuated and regulated by a concern to the glory of God, worldlings will wonder at us. It cannot be otherwise, for the natural man acts only from a spirit of self-love and self-will, and his end is self-pleasing and self-advancement. Thus, if he beholds any denying self, subordinating their interests to the honouring of God, he marvels at such conduct. Unless, then, *we* be “wondered at,” yea, sneered at and regarded as crazy, it is because we have “left our first love” and become conformed to this world.

Israel’s keeping of the Passover was, like the circumcising of the people, an act of *obedience* unto the Lord: in fact, the one could not be without the other, for it had been expressly laid down that “no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof” (Exo 12:48). For that very reason, this ordinance had not been observed while the nation lay under the wrath of God. They *had* kept it on the first anniversary of the event which it commemorated (Num 9:5), but not during the next thirty-eight years. God had said, “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them” (Amo 5:21-22)—language which not only applied to the prophet’s own day, but also had special reference to their sojourn in the wilderness as verse 25 evinces. But now the Lord had resumed His covenant relations with Israel, and they had attended to the matter of circumcision; it was in order, yea, requisite, for them to do so. They had been strictly enjoined, “And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service” (Exo 12:24-25).

In previous articles, we have noted that this particular generation under Joshua was not only vastly better than the one which preceded, but also far more spiritual than any that followed it. This was exemplified in the willingness of their adults to be circumcised without any demur. It appears again in what is now before us. The Lord had particularly said unto Moses almost a year after their leaving Egypt, “Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season” (Num 9:2), as though to intimate, otherwise His command in Exodus 12:24 had not been complied with. But on this occasion, no mention is made of God’s reminding them of their duty. We are told, “And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover” (Jos 5:10). And that is not all which is stated: “On the fourteenth day of the month,” which is something more than a mere narration of a historical fact—it tells us that they kept the Passover “at his appointed season.” Nor is that all: it is added “at even,” which was as the Lord required. How the Spirit delights to notice and record the *details* of obedience! The Israelites did not tamper with this divine ordinance and change it to a morning observance to suit their own convenience, as a compromising Christendom has done with “the Lord’s *supper*.” Unless we conform strictly to the letter of the divine precept, it is not “obedience,” but “will worship.”

Israel’s act of keeping the Passover was not only one of obedience, but also of *commemoration*. “And this day shall be unto you for a *memorial*; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations...And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD’S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses...It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD” (Exo 12:14, 26, 27, 42). This feast, then, was appointed to celebrate the great goodness of the Lord unto His people and their deliverance both from death and from the house of bondage. It was designed to keep before their minds the blessed provision He had made for them in the night of their deepest need, a provision all sufficient. It was to express anew their gratitude unto God for His distinguishing favour: the original “sacrifice” was expiatory, but the memorial of it was eucharistic. It was intended to signalize those perfections of God which had been exemplified on that never-to-be-forgotten night.

The Passover had demonstrated in unmistakable manner the *sovereignty* of God, when He had “put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel” (Exo 11:7); that is, between the reprobate and His own elect—no lamb was provided for the former! It had manifested the *grace* of God. By nature, the children of Israel were no better than the Egyptians, nor in conduct, as is clear from Ezekiel 20:6-9; 23:3. It was out of His mere good pleasure and unmerited favour that the Lord exempted Israel from the destroyer (Exo 12:23). It displayed the *righteousness* of God, which announced that He “will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo 34:7). They were flagrant sinners and “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23): death must do and did its work in their households, too, when the sacrificial lamb was slain. It revealed the amazing *mercy* of God in providing that substitute. It placated the *wrath* of God: He said to the avenging angel concerning Israel’s firstborn, “Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom” (Job 33:24), illustrating that basic principle, “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb 9:22). It testified the *faithfulness* of God: “When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Exo 12:13), and He did. It made known His *love*, which had chosen Israel to be His favoured people (Deu 10:15).

Again, the Passover was not only commemorative, but *anticipative*: it memorialized what was past and also foreshadowed what was to come. The institution and ritual of the Passover furnished one of the most striking representations of the person and work of Christ to be met with anywhere in the Old Testament. That it was a type thereof is clear from 1 Corinthians 5:7, “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.” Here then is our authority for regarding the contents of Exodus 12 as shadowing forth the cross-work of the Saviour; and it is this which invests that chapter with such deep interest. The Passover was the first of those annual “feasts” which God appointed unto Israel, for it sets forth the grand truth of redemption, which is the foundation blessing of believers, the fountain from which all others flow; and the Passover was kept upon Israel’s entrance into Canaan to signify that their possession of the inheritance—no less than their deliverance from Egypt—was owing to the merits of the blood of the Lamb. Christ Himself observed it, saying to His apostles, “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer” (Luk 22:15). In the light of these facts, it becomes us to give our best attention to the teaching of Scripture thereon.

Observe first, the *occasion* of its institution. It was at the close of God’s judgments upon Egypt. He had declared, “About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel” (Exo 11:4-7). Note carefully the exact wording of verse 5: it was not “all the firstborn *of* the land of Egypt shall die,” but “all the firstborn *in* the land of Egypt”—and that necessarily included Israel’s equally with Egypt’s. Yet in verse 7, the Lord said He would “put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel,” so that the latter should be wholly exempt from judgment. That is what infidels would term, “a flat contradiction,” but the Christian knows there is none in the Word of Truth. What, then, is the explanation?

Each of those divine declarations was literally accomplished: all the firstborn in the land of Egypt died; nevertheless, the firstborn of Israel were delivered from the angel of death. But how could that be? Surely both could not take place! Yet they did, and therein, we have a blessed illustration of the contents of the Gospel. It was the question of *sin* which was here raised and dealt with by God—consequently both parties were equally involved in His righteous judgment. The Israelites were not only sinners by nature, but practice; not only sins of infirmity, but high-handed sins of idolatry (Lev 17:7; Josh 24:14). Divine holiness can never ignore sin no matter where it be found: when the angels sinned, God “spared them not” (2Pe 2:4). Justice must be satisfied; sin must pay its wages. A reprieve is out of the question. Then must guilty Israel perish? It would seem so. Human wisdom could devise no way of escape. But divine wisdom did, and without compromising righteousness. How? By means of a *substitute*: sentence of death was executed on an innocent victim, because guilt had been legally transferred unto it. A lamb was provided for Israel, and it died in their stead.

Observe next, the *nature* of this transaction: “It is the LORD’S passover” (Exo 12:11). Those words bring before us a fundamental aspect of truth which is much neglected in evangelical preaching. Gospellers have much to say upon what Christ’s death accomplished for those who believe on Him, but far less upon what it effected *Godwards*. Yet that is clearly brought out in the first direct mention of the “lamb” in Scripture: “God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering” (Gen 22:8). It was not simply that God would “provide a lamb,” but that He would provide *Himself* one! The antitypical Lamb was appointed and supplied to glorify God, to vindicate His throne, magnify His Law, and satisfy His justice and holiness. The life and death of Christ brought infinite glory to God though not a sinner had been saved thereby. The two leading aspects of Christ’s atonement—Godward and upward—were shadowed again in the ritual for the day of atonement: “And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot *for the LORD*, and the other lot for the scapegoat” (Lev 16:7-8)—Israel’s substitute, which bore away their sins into a place uninhabited. Christ must first be “the Lord’s passover,” accepted by Him, before He could be “our passover” (1Co 5:7)—received by us.

Consider now the *substance* of God’s gracious provision for Israel, namely, “the lamb.” Though we cannot dwell upon details, we will furnish a broad outline for the benefit of young preachers. How well fitted was a lamb to be an emblem of the Saviour is at once apparent: so gentle and innocent, so mild and harmless, neither hurting others, nor seeming to have the capacity to resent an injury; useful in life (its fleece), valuable for food when killed.

(1) The Passover lamb was taken “out from the sheep” (Exo 12:5). “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren” (Deu 18:18). Christ, according to His humanity, was “made of the seed of David” (Rom 1:3). “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same” (Heb 2:14).

(2) It was taken from the flock (not on the first, but) “in the tenth day of [the] month” (verse 3). The Son of God did not become incarnate as soon as sin entered the world, but when “the fulness of the time was come” (Gal 4:4), after forty centuries of human history had passed: after man had been *fully tested* (10 is the number of his responsibility) and his *probation* (which 40 signifies) was completed—10 x 10 x 40.

(3) “Your lamb shall be without blemish” (Exo 12:5, and compare Lev 22:21-22). Nothing but a perfect sacrifice could satisfy an infinitely perfect God. One who had any sin in him could not make atonement for sinners. But where was such a one to be found? Nowhere among the fallen sons of men. That lamb “without blemish” pointed to the immaculate purity of Christ (Heb 7:26-27; 1Pe 1:19).

(4) “A male of the first year” (Exo 12:5): it was not to be too young or too old, but was to die in the fullness of its strength. So Christ died neither in childhood nor in old age, but in the prime of manhood—He was cut off “in the midst of [His] days” (Psa 102:24).

(5) “And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month” (Exo 12:6). For four days, the lamb, separated unto sacrifice, was kept tethered, apart from all others, during which time it could be fully inspected to perceive its flawlessness. Antotypically, that may be taken two ways: on the principle of “each day for a year” (Num 14:34; Eze 4:6)—before His public ministry began (which lasted between three and four years), the Father bore testimony to the perfection of the Lamb (Mat 3:17); taking it literally, during His last four days, Christ was under the closest scrutiny of men, and even His judge confessed, “I find no fault in him” (Joh 19:4, 6).

(6) The lamb must be slain: “The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening” (Exo 12:6). That is very striking. It was not Moses and Aaron, or the Levites, who slew it, but the entire people as represented by the heads of every household. Nor was it only the chief priests and elders who were responsible for the slaying of Christ; for when Pilate decided the issue as to whether Barabbas or Christ should be released, he did so on the popular vote of the common people, who *all* cried, “crucify him” (Mar 15:6-15). In like manner, it was the sins of each believer individually (Gal 2:20) and of the Church corporeally (Eph 5:25), which necessitated the death of Christ. It is also very remarkable to observe that though many thousands of lambs were slain that night, it was said, “Israel shall kill *it*”—not “them”! “There was only one before God’s mind—the Lamb of Calvary” (Urquhart).

(7) Its blood must be applied: “And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts,” etc. (Exo 12:7). Mental assent to the Gospel without a personal receiving of Christ avails not to deliver from judgment: there must be an appropriation of Christ, “faith in his blood” (Rom 3:25). A Saviour accepted, not a Saviour provided, actually saves.

(8) The sprinkled blood gave security. “When he seeth the blood...the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in” (Exo 12:23). And why? Because death had already done its work *there*! God’s eye was not on the house or its inmates, but on the atoning blood.

(9) “And the blood shall be to you for a token” (Exo 12:13)—i.e. “a token for good” (Psa 86:17). It was to assure their hearts, as the “token” given to Rahab (Josh 2:12) was a guarantee of her preservation. God would have the hearts of His people in perfect peace, even while hearing the cries of the stricken Egyptians. No harm should befall them, and no fear or distress while they rested on His sure promise! It is most important for the believer to distinguish between the foundation of his security and the basis of his peace: that which provided safe refuge from judgment was the slain lamb and its sprinkled blood; that which afforded a sure stay for the heart was the Word of One who cannot lie.

(10) “And they shall eat the flesh in that night” (Exo 12:8). This was God’s gracious provision for those within the house. Eating speaks of fellowship. It is Christ as the food of His people, feeding by faith upon Him for strength and sustenance of soul.

(11) It must be “roast with fire” (Exo 12:8). “Fire” here, as throughout, speaks of the wrath of a sin-hating God. The “roasting” of the lamb was a solemn figure of Christ suffering what was due to His people when He passed under and endured the awful wrath of God, as He was “made a curse” (Gal 3:13). It is that which explains the deeper meaning of His cry, “I thirst”: it was the effect of agony of soul as He endured the fierce heat of God’s wrath. “Nor sodden [boiled] at all with water” (Exo 12:9) tells us nothing was allowed to hinder the direct action of “fire” on the Sinbearer: God “spared not his own Son” (Rom 8:32).

(12) “With bitter herbs” (Exo 12:8) or remorse of conscience. The Christian cannot have “the fellowship of his sufferings” (Phi 3:10) without remembering it was *his* sins which made them needful.

(13) “And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded...and your staff in your hand” (Exo 12:11). Fellowship with Christ can only be had as we maintain our pilgrim character.

(14) “Neither shall ye break a bone thereof” (Exo 12:46, and see Joh 19:33-36)!

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

13. The Holy Bible, Part 5

For the benefit of new readers, we would say that in the preceding articles of this series, we have presented a portion of that abundant evidence which makes it unmistakably manifest that God has given us a clear revelation of Himself: in creation, in the constitution of man (physical, mental, and moral), in His government of this world (as evinced in the annals of history), in the advent to this earth of His incarnate Son, and in the Holy Scriptures. In our last, we based our first argument that the Bible is an inspired communication from God on the fact that man is in urgent *need* of a written revelation because his own faculties—especially as he is now a fallen and sinful creature—are insufficient as a guide to virtue and eternal happiness. Second, that there is therefore a *presumption in favour* of the Bible's being a revelation from God, since man urgently needs such and God is well able to supply it. Since all nature evinces that a merciful Creator has made suitable provision for every need of all His creatures, it is unthinkable that this supreme need of the highest of His earthly creatures should be neglected. To continue:

3. *Its own claims.* These are unambiguous, positive, decisive, leaving us in no doubt as to what the Scriptures profess to be. The Bible declares that, as a Book, it comes to us from God Himself. It urges that claim in various ways. Its very names proclaim its source. It is repeatedly denominated, “The Word of God.” It is so denominated because as we express our thoughts and make known our intentions by means of words, so in His Book, God has disclosed *His* mind and declared His will unto us. It is called, “the book of the LORD” (Isa 34:16), because He is its Author and because of the divine authority with which it is invested, demanding our unqualified subjection to its imperial edicts. It is termed, “the scripture of truth” (Dan 10:21), because it is without confusion, without contradiction, without the slightest admixture of error: infallible—in every verse, every word, every letter inspired, divine. It is designated, “the word of life” (Phi 2:16), because it is invested with the very breath of the Almighty, indelible and indestructible, in contradistinction from all the perishing productions of man. It is entitled, “the oracles of God” (Rom 3:2), because in it, God Himself is the speaker.

The Bible proclaims itself to be a divine revelation, a direct and inerrant communication from the living God, that He “spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began” (Luk 1:70). They announce that “the law of the LORD is perfect” (Psa 19:7)—without flaw or blemish; that “the word of God is quick, and powerful” (Heb 4:12)—living, pungent, dynamical; that “the word of the Lord endureth for ever” (1Pe 1:25)—surviving all the passages of time, withstanding all the efforts of enemies to destroy it. They affirm themselves to be “*the* holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation” (2Ti 3:15). The article there is emphatic being used to distinguish the Sacred Writings from all others, to aver their excellency and eminency over all the writings of men. The Holy One is their Author, they treat of the holy things of God, and call for holy hearts and lives from their readers; and just so far as our characters are formed and our conduct regulated by their precepts, will the fruits of holiness appear in our lives.

The instruments which God employed to bring to us the Word were themselves conscious of and frankly owned to the fact that they were but His mouthpieces or penmen. Again and again we find them avowing that truth. “Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD” (Jos 24:2). “The LORD spake thus to me” (Isa 8:11). “Hear ye...for the LORD hath spoken” (Jer 13:15). “Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken” (Amo 3:1). “The mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it” (Mic 4:4). Said the royal Psalmist, “The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue” (2Sa 23:2). So, too, when the apostles quoted a passage from the Old Testament, they gave their testimony to the same truth. When Peter addressed the disciples, he said, “this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake” (Act 1:16). “Lord, thou art God...Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said” (Act 4:24-25). “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers” (Act 28:25). Whoever were the human spokesmen or writers, the language of the Scriptures is the very words of God.

Not once or twice, but scores of times, there are passages which, without any preamble or apology, aver “Thus saith the Lord.” In the Bible, God is the Speaker. Chapter after chapter in Leviticus, it opens with “And the LORD spake...saying,” and so it runs to the end of the chapter. Moses was but a scribe; God, the Author of what is recorded. The question of inspiration is, in its ultimate analysis, the question of revelation itself. If the book be divine, then what it says of itself is divine. The question is one of *divine* testimony, and our business is simply to receive that testimony—without doubting or quibbling, with thankful and unreserved submission to its authority. When God speaks, He must be heeded. “If at this moment yonder were opened—the curtained canopy of star-sown clouds

rolled back; if amid the brightness of light ineffable, the Dread Eternal were Himself seen rising from His throne, and heard to speak in voice audible, it could not be more potent, more imperative, than what lies now before us upon inspiration's page"—G.S. Bishop.

God requires us to receive and accredit His Word, and to do so on His own *ipse dixit*. All faith rests on testimony; and the testimony on which faith in the Scriptures reposes is amply sufficient to support it, for it is divine. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater...he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son" (1Jo 5:9-10). If the witness of men of respectability and integrity be received in the judicatories of all nations, then most assuredly, the witness of God is infinitely more worthy of our acceptance. The best of men are fallible and fickle, yet in matters of the greatest importance, their testimony is credited—the affairs of the world would soon come to a standstill if it were not so. Then with how much more confidence may we receive the testimony of Him who is infallible and immutable, who can neither deceive, nor be deceived! How unspeakably dreadful the alternative: if we believe not God's record, that is virtually giving Him the lie, and regarding Him as a false witness! May the reader be delivered from such wickedness.

4. *No other explanation is even feasible.* Whence comes the Bible is a question deserving of the very best attention of every serious mind. The subjects of which it treats are of such tremendous importance, both to our present welfare and our future felicity, that the question of its derivation calls for the most diligent examination. The Bible is here, and it must be accounted for. It holds a unique place in the literature of mankind, and it has exerted an unrivalled influence in moulding the history of the world; and therefore, it calls loudly for an adequate rationale to be given of its origin. Only three explanations are possible: the Bible is either a deliberate imposture, manufactured by wicked men; or it is the product of deluded visionaries who vainly imagined they were giving forth inspired messages from heaven; or else it is what it claims to be: an infallible and authoritative revelation from God Himself unto the sons of men. Between those three alternatives, every thoughtful investigator of the matter must choose. If he ponders carefully the first two, and tests them by the evidence adduced in favour of the Bible's being a divine communication, he should have no difficulty in perceiving they are not only inadequate, but utterly absurd.

It is proverbial that "water will not rise above its own level," as it is self-evident that no cause can produce any effect superior to itself. Equally incredible is it that wicked men should bring forth a Book which has done far more than all other books combined (except those drawn from the Bible) in promoting morality and producing holiness. Grapes do not grow upon thistles! To aver that the Bible was produced by evil men is refuted by the very character of its teachings, which uniformly condemn dishonesty and declare that, "all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Rev 21:8). It is thoroughly irrational to suppose that the authors of the most impious and gigantic literary fraud ever imposed upon mankind (if such it be) should invent for themselves such a fearful doom as that! It must also be remembered that some of the penmen of the Bible laid down their lives for a testimony to its verity; but the annals of history contain no record of men willingly suffering martyrdom for a known lie, from which neither they nor their families received any advantage.

Another class of sceptics dismiss the Bible as the fanciful flights of poets, the ravings of mystics, the extravagancies of enthusiasts. Much in it is no doubt very beautiful, yet it is as unsubstantial as a dream, with no reality corresponding thereto, and those who credit the same are living only in a fool's paradise. They say that, If there be a God, He is so absolute and transcendent, so remote from this scene, as to take no personal notice of our affairs; that it is both unphilosophical and a slur on His greatness to affirm (as the ancient Psalm does), "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him" (Psa 103:13). Thus, we are asked to believe that mystics and fanatics have invented a god with tenderer and nobler attributes than the real God has. But to say that fancy has devised a superior god than actually exists is the acme of irrationality. Were it possible for us to choose what kind of excellencies deity should possess, would we not include among them pity linked with infinite power, using that power as its servant to tenderly minister unto the suffering?

Surely, this is the most amazing chimera that has ever been invented: that men have endowed God with grander qualities than He really possesses, that they have predicated of Him a perfection which He is incapable of exercising. Rather must we affirm that that wondrous statement, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Joh 3:16), is a revelation which opens to us a new moral kingdom, a kingdom of unimaginable benignity and grace. The message of redemption is a divine light breaking in upon us from above, a revelation that proves itself. That God should send here His own Son clothed with our humanity, to seek and to save rebels against His government, to suffer in their stead, and by His death [to] make full atonement for their sins, to provide His Spirit to conform them to His image, to make them His joint heirs and sharers of His eternal glory—is a concept which had never entered human heart or mind to

conceive. Yet it *is* worthy and becoming of our Maker. The Gospel is the noblest force which has ever touched human character.

As another has pertinently asked, “Is it a dishonour to God that, being great, He stoops to us? Does it make Him less? Is it a reproach to Him that He gives Himself to us? Would it be more for His glory if He mocked us? It is this very wedlock of the wisdom that planned the heavens, the measureless power that guides the stars, with the tenderness that stoops to the whispered prayer of a child, that counts the tears of a widow, that hears the sighs of the prodigal, which makes the unconceivable greatness of God. It completes the mighty curve of His attributes. And is it credible that we can conceive this amazing greatness and yet God not be capable of it?...The Bible represents God as saying, ‘my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts’ (Isa 55:8-9). And this *ought* to be true! The realities of God ought to be nobler than the dreams of men. It would be the perplexity and despair of man if this were not so”—William Henry Fitchett (1841-1928), *The Unrealised Logic of Religion* (1905).

Equally false is it to assert, as some ignorant infidels have done, that we owe the Bible to *the Church*. It is an indubitable historical fact that the larger part of the Bible was in known existence more than two hundred years before the dawn of the Christian era, and every doctrine, every precept and promise contained in the New Testament is based upon that earlier revelation. Such was the sufficiency of the Old Testament Scriptures that Paul could say they were “able to make thee wise unto salvation” (2Ti 3:15). While it be true that Christian churches existed before the New Testament was *written*, yet it must be borne in mind that there was the *spoken* Word by Christ, and His apostles ere the first of those churches was formed. On the day of Pentecost, the Old Testament was quoted and expounded, the revelation of God in Christ was proclaimed, and it was upon the acceptance of that Word that the New Testament came into being. Thus the fact is that the Word created the Church, and not vice versa. It was only after some of the apostles had died and others were engaged in extensive travel that the need arose for the permanent embodiment of the final portions of God’s revelation, and this was given gradually in the New Testament. From that time until now, the written Word has taken the place of the original spoken Word.

For centuries before the inauguration of Christianity, the Jews held the books which comprised the Old Testament as being the genuine productions of those penmen whose names they bear, and they were unanimously considered by them—without any exception or addition—to have been written under the immediate direction of the Spirit of God. Those books of the Old Testament had been preserved with the utmost veneration and care, and at the same time, had been jealously guarded from any spurious or apocryphal writings. It is a fact well authenticated that, while the Jews of Christ’s day were divided into numerous sects, which stood in the most direct opposition to one another, yet there was never any difference among them respecting the divinity and authority of the sacred writings. Josephus appealed to the public records of different nations and to many historical documents existing in his day, as indisputable evidence, in the opinion of the Gentile world, of the verity and fidelity of those portions of Israel’s history to which he referred. Even to this day, the bulk of the religious Jews retain an unshakable conviction of the divine origin of their religious laws and institutions. Yet their own Scriptures record their unparalleled hardness of heart, resistance to the light God gave them, and their rejection and murder of their own Messiah—things which would have been accorded no place in a spurious production.

That *the Jews* did not manufacture the Old Testament—on which the New is largely based—is apparent from other considerations. The immense disparity between the Old Testament as a book and the Hebrew people as a nation shows that the knowledge of God and of divine things contained in the former—but wanting in the latter—came *ab extra*, that it was communicated from on high. One has but to read the writings of Flavius Josephus (AD 37-100), the Jewish Targums and Talmud, or the Kabbala,¹ to recognize at once the vast difference there is between them and the Holy Scriptures. That might be illustrated at great length, from many different angles, but we will confine ourselves to a single feature, and treat of it in a way that the ordinary reader will have no difficulty in following us: the extreme *exclusiveness* of the Jews, and then call attention to a number of passages in the Old Testament which cannot possibly be accounted for in the light of that dominant national characteristic.

There has never been another people so outstandingly clannish in sentiment and so provincial in outlook as the Jews: nor had any other equal reason for so being. God dealt with them as with no other nation: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amo 3:2). “He hath not dealt so with any nation” (Psa 147:20). He forbade

¹ **Targums, Talmud, Kabbala** – *Targums*: translations of the Hebrew Scriptures into Aramaic. *Talmud*: a body of ancient Jewish literature consisting of two parts, the Mishnah (the text of oral laws and traditions edited by Rabbi Ha-Nasi A.D. 135-220) and the Gemara (commentaries on the Mishnah by the interpreters of the Law). *Kabbala*: a set of Jewish esoteric teachings meant to explain the inner meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures, in the relationship between an eternal/infinite Creator and the mortal/finite universe (His creation).

Israel to have anything to do with the religion of other nations, prohibited all marriages with them, and the learning of their ways. Yet they carried the spirit of bigotry and exclusiveness to an unwarrantable extent, far beyond the requirements of Scriptures. Their violent prejudice appears in that statement, “the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans” (Joh 4:9), in Peter’s reluctance to go unto Cornelius, and the unwillingness of the Christian church at Jerusalem to believe the grace of God extended to the uttermost part of the earth. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the teaching of the Old Testament was very far from inculcating that the Israelites must confine their benevolent affections within the narrow bounds of their own twelve tribes. No spirit of bigotry breathes in the sacred songs sung in their temple.

“God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among *all nations*. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth” (Psa 67:1-4). “All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name” (Psa 86:9). “O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth. Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among *the heathen*, his wonders among all people...Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts” (Psa 96:1-3, 8). Who, we ask, put such words as those into the psalmist’s mouth? Who caused them to be given a permanent record on the sacred scroll? Who preserved them intact for the thousand years which followed till the advent of Christ, during which interval the Jews were possessed of most fanatical egotism and the bitterest hatred of *the Gentiles*!

The same striking feature appears even in the Pentateuch.² “And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage” (Deu 26:5-6). The whole of that remarkable passage (verses 4-10)—which Israel were required to recite before God at one of their most solemn acts of worship—should be carefully weighed. What could more effectually repress their national pride than that confession? But who instructed them to make such a humble acknowledgement of their lowly origin? Who bade them utter this perpetual avowal of their base beginnings? But more: it was on the very basis of their lowly origin and the sore oppression their fathers had suffered in a foreign land that a number of most *un-“Jewish”* laws were framed—laws which bade them pity and relieve the stranger. If that fact be critically pondered, it should be evident that such precepts could not have originated from such a bigoted and hard-hearted people.

Those precepts were quite contrary to flesh and blood. It is natural for sinful men to strongly resent harsh treatment, for the memory of it to cherish rancour and malevolence, to feed the spirit of revenge, so that if the positions should be reversed, they would “get their own back.” Instead, we find the Mosaic Law enjoining the very opposite, inculcating the warmest and purest benevolence toward the wretched and defenceless of other nations. “Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exo 22:21). Yea, more: “But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt *love him* as thyself” (Lev 19:34). Now my reader, what explanation can possibly account for such benign statutes?—statutes which were repeatedly flouted by Israel! Who was it that originated and inculcated such unselfish tenderness? Who taught the haughty Jews to return good for evil? Who but the One who is both “no respecter of persons” (Act 10:34) and who is “very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (Jam 5:11).

ENJOYING GOD’S BEST

Part 1

In the January and February 1946 issues, we wrote two short articles entitled, “Enjoying God’s Best” and “Missing God’s Best”; and it must be confessed that we were rather surprised at receiving no criticisms, or at least questions, from some of our Calvinistic readers, for we felt it would be very difficult for them to “harmonize” their

² **Pentateuch** – the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures written by Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy.

contents with what they had been taught. That is not said in any invidious or satirical spirit, for some of our closest and warmest friends are Calvinists, nor is the writer in the least afraid or ashamed to avow himself one, yea, a *high* Calvinist—though not a “hyper.” There is a very real difference between the two, though few today are aware of it. A “high” Calvinist not only believes in the absolute sovereignty of God, in His having predestinated everything which comes to pass in time, in the unconditional choice of His people in Christ from all eternity, in particular redemption, in the invincible operations and effectual call of the Holy Spirit, but he also believes that God made choice of His elect irrespective of or without any foreview of their fall in Adam; and thus, he is a “supralapsarian” regarding God’s act as influenced by nothing outside of Himself.

But a “hyper” Calvinist is one who goes beyond the teaching of Scripture—from which alone the great Reformer formulated his theology—resorting to reasoning and philosophizing upon various aspects of truth, which leads to his repudiating other aspects thereof. He makes an idol of “consistency”—i.e. what appears to be consistent to *his* mind. He attempts to square everything by the rule of logic. Since he finds that Scripture teaches particular redemption, that Christ obeyed and suffered only in the stead and on the behalf of God’s elect, he regards the “free offer” of the Gospel to all who hear it as “contradictory.” Since fallen man be totally depraved, dead in trespasses and sins, utterly incapable of performing a spiritual act, he deems it “inconsistent” to exhort and call upon the unregenerate to repent and believe in order to their salvation. Since God be absolute sovereign, working in men both to will and to do of His good pleasure, bestowing or withholding as He pleases, he cannot see how that man is, at the same time, fully responsible for all his actions. Often he fails to perceive the connection which God has appointed between means and ends.

In like manner, since God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, to speak of an enjoying of His best (rather than His second or third best), and *missing* His best—strikes him as meaningless, if not erroneous, expressions. Before proceeding farther, let us explain what we intend by “enjoying God’s best.” We mean (as we wrote two years ago) for the saint to have daily communion with God, to walk in the light of His countenance, for His Word to be sweet unto our taste, light to our understanding, and strength to the inner man. It is for prayer to be a delight, for answers of peace to be received without intermission, for the channel of supplies to remain unchoked, open. It is to have the mind stayed upon Him, to have a conscience void of offence, to have full assurance of our acceptance in Christ. It is for our graces to be kept healthy and vigorous, so that faith, hope, love, meekness, patience, and zeal are in daily exercise. And such *should be* the experience of every Christian.

By God’s “best,” we mean a personal experience of His approbation, a manifest enjoyment of His favour in grace, in providence, and in nature. It is not to be limited unto the receiving of His special favours in a spiritual way, but includes as well His interpositions on our temporal behalf. It is to have the blessing of the Lord upon our lives, in all their varied aspects and relations, upon the soul and body alike. It is to enjoy the sense of His approval, and have Him showing Himself strong in our behalf. Though it does not mean that such a one will be exempted from the ordinary vicissitudes and trials of life, but rather that such will be sanctified unto him and result in increased blessing, for they not only make a way for God to put forth His power in delivering him from them or elevating his heart above them, but they also serve for the developing of his graces and provide opportunities for him to “glorify Him in the fire”; nevertheless, it *does* mean that such a one will escape those troubles and afflictions in which the follies of so many Christians involve them: it does mean that he will be immune from those sore chastisements which disobedience and a course of backsliding necessarily entail.

Before considering those just requirements of God which must be met, if we are to enjoy His best, let us point out that the particular aspects of truth which is here engaging our attention concerns not the divine decrees, but rather, the divine *government*: for the one consists solely for the exercise of God’s sovereign will, whereas the other is concerned also with the discharge of our responsibility. In no sense whatever is there the slightest failure in God’s accomplishment of His eternal purpose—either as a whole, or in any of its parts. But in many respects, God’s people fail to possess their possessions and enjoy those privileges and blessings to which the blood of Christ entitles them. This subject presents no difficulty to the writer, except the findings of suitable language to accurately express his thoughts; nor should it to the reader. The formation and the effectuation of God’s eternal decrees are in no wise affected by man: he can neither delay nor hasten the same. But the present government of this world by God *is*, in large measure, affected and determined by the actions of men (His own people included), so that in this life, they are, to a very considerable extent, made to reap according as they sow—both in spirituals and in temporals.

It is not sufficiently realized that the Bible has far, very far, more to say about this *present life* than it has about the future one, that it makes known the secrets of temporal felicity, as well as everlasting bliss. Granted that the latter is of immeasurably more importance than the former, yet the one is the prelude to the other; and unless God

be our satisfying portion here, He certainly will not be so hereafter. In their zeal to tell men how to escape from hell and make sure of heaven, many evangelical preachers have had all too little to say upon our conduct on earth; and consequently, many who entertain no doubts whatever that they will inhabit a mansion in the Father's house, are not nearly so much concerned about their present walk and warfare as they should be; and even though they reach their desired haven, such slackness results in great loss to them now, and will do so for ever. The teaching of Holy Writ is the very reverse of the plan followed by many an "orthodox pulpit": it not only gives much prominence to, but in Old and New Testament alike, its main emphasis is on our life in *this* world, giving instruction how we are to conduct ourselves here and now.

In like manner, there has been a grievous departure from the Analogy of Faith in the presentation of the attitude of God and His conduct towards men. Few indeed who have stressed the sovereignty of God have given even a proportionate place to His governmental dealings—either with nations or with individuals, the elect or the reprobate. Yet for every passage in His Word which speaks of God's eternal counsels, there are scores which describe His time dealings; and for every verse which alludes to God's secret or decretive will, there is a hundred which describe His revealed or preceptive will. Blessed indeed is it to ponder God's predestinating grace; equally important is it that we study those principles which regulate His providential dealings with us. The governmental ways of God—that is, His dealings with us in this life, both in our spiritual and temporal affairs—are determined by something more than an arbitrary sovereignty. God has established an inseparable connection between our conduct and its consequences, and He acts in such a way toward us as to make manifest the pleasure He takes in righteousness, and to give encouragement to those performing it; as He evidences His displeasure against the unrighteous and makes us to smart for the same.

It is a very great and serious mistake to conceive of the sovereignty of God as swallowing up all His perfections, and to attribute all His actions unto the mere exercise of His imperial will. Holy Writ does not; nor should we do so. Instead, much is said therein of God's acting both in mercy and righteousness, for *they* are the chief principles which regulate His governmental ways. It is true that mercy is shown by mere prerogative (Rom 9:18), but not so with righteousness. God can no more suspend the operation of His righteousness than He can cease to be. "For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness" (Psa 11:7); "The LORD is righteous in all his ways" (Psa 145:17); "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne" (Psa 97:2). It was predicted of the Messiah that "righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins" (Isa 11:5); and we are told that since He loved righteousness and hated iniquity, "*therefore* God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Psa 45:7). Alas that so many have completely lost the balance between God's sovereignty and God's righteousness. It is His *righteousness* which regulates all His dealings with the sons of men now, as it is "he [who] will judge the world in righteousness" (Act 17:31) in the Day to come. It is His righteousness which *requires* God to punish vice and reward virtue; and therefore, does He bless His obedient children and chasten His refractory ones.

The central thing which we wish to make clear in this article and to impress upon the reader is that God has established an inseparable connection between holiness and happiness, between our pleasing of Him and our enjoyment of His richest blessing; that since we are always the losers by sinning, so we are always the gainers by walking in the paths of righteousness; and that there will be an exact ratio between the measure in which we walk therein and our enjoyment of "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Heb 12:11). God has declared "them that honour me I will honour" (1Sa 2:30), and *that* expresses the general principle which we are here seeking to explain and illustrate—namely, that God's governmental dealings with us are regulated by our attitude toward Him and our conduct before Him: for in proportion as we honour the Lord, so will He honour us. But suppose we fail to honour God, suppose we do not obtain from Him that grace which He is ever ready to give unto those who earnestly seek it in a right way—what then? Why, we shall not enter into His best for us; we shall miss it. For as the same verse goes on to tell us, "and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1Sa 2:30).

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for *then* thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Jos 1:8). That expresses in plain and simple language the basis on which we may enter into and enjoy God's best for us. The believer is not to be regulated by his own inclinations or lean unto his own understanding; he is not to be governed by any consideration of expediency or the pleasing of his fellows, but seek to please God in all things, being actuated by a "thus saith the LORD" in everything he does. Nothing less than full and constant obedience to God is what is required of him. However distasteful to the flesh, whatever sneers it may produce from professing Christians, the saint must rigidly and perpetually act by the rule that God has given him to walk by. In so doing, he will be immeasurably the gainer, for the path of *obedience* is the path of *prosperity*. Conformity unto the revealed will of God may indeed entail trial; nevertheless, it will be richly compensated in this life, both in spiritual and temporal bounties.

It cannot be too strongly insisted upon that the path of God's precepts is the way of *blessing*. Though the treading thereof incurs the frowns of the profane world, and the criticism of not a few in the professing world, yet it ensures the smile and benediction of our Master! Those words, "for then thou shalt make thy way *prosperous*" (Jos 1:8), are from the mouth of "the God of truth" (Isa 65:16) and are to be received by us without the slightest quibbling, and treasured in our hearts. The "prosperity" does not always immediately appear, for faith has to be tried and patience developed; yet in the long run, it will most surely be found that in keeping the divine commandments, "there is great reward" (Psa 19:11). So Joshua found it: he adhered strictly to the divine Law, and God crowned his labours with success; and that, dear reader, is recorded for our encouragement. Yet if we would prosper as Joshua did, then we must act as he did! That conditional promise made to Joshua was very far from being a special one made to him only—rather does it belong equally to every servant and child of God, for His governmental ways have been the same in all dispensations. From the beginning of human history, it has always been true; and to the very end of history, it will continue so to be, that "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psa 84:11).

Long before Joshua was born, Elihu had affirmed, "If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures" (Job 36:11); and centuries after Joshua's death, the Holy Spirit declared through Zechariah, "Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper?" (2Ch 24:20). Nor is there any justification to insist that such statements pertained only to the Mosaic economy. If we unhesitatingly apply to our own day that precious word in Isaiah 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa 1:18), is it honest to refuse taking unto ourselves the very next verse, "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isa 1:19)? The principles which regulate God's providential dealings with His people are in no way altered by any change made in the outward form of His kingdom upon earth. The teaching of the New Testament is equally express: that "godliness is profitable unto *all* things, having promise of the life that *now is*, and of that which is to come" (1Ti 4:8); yet the fulfilment of that promise is conditional upon our keeping of the divine precepts, upon our personal piety.

There is a definite *proviso* on which we are warranted to hope for an enjoyment of God's best. That was announced by Joshua and Caleb when they said unto Israel, "*If* the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us" (Num 14:8). That term, "delight," has no reference there unto that divine love unto the souls of believers which is the source of their salvation, but rather to His complacency in their character and conduct. So also is it to be understood in the words used by David when he was fleeing from the conspiracy of Absalom: "Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation: But if he thus say, I have *no delight* in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him" (2Sa 15:25-26). David certainly could not mean by that language, If God have no love for my soul, I am willing to be for ever banished from Him; for such submission is required of none who lives under a dispensation of mercy. Rather did he signify, If God approve not of me as I am the head of His people, let Him take away my life if that so pleaseth Him.

As we must distinguish between the twofold "will," the twofold "counsel," and the twofold "pleasure" of God (see the "Prayers of the Apostles" article in this issue), so we must distinguish between His eternal love for and His present delight in us, between His acceptance of us in Christ and the acceptableness of our character and conduct unto Him—it is the *latter* which determines His governmental smile upon us. If any reader deems that distinction an artificial and forced one, then we ask him, Is no differentiation to be made between those words of Christ unto the Father, "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (Joh 17:24) and His declaration, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life...This commandment have I received of my Father" (Joh 10:17-18)? Is not one of the Father's love of Christ's person, and the other His approbation of His obedience? So again, must we not avoid confounding "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer 31:3) and "For the Father himself loveth you, *because* ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God" (Joh 16:27)? Of Enoch, it is said, "before his translation, he had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Heb 11:5); whereas of Israel in the wilderness, He declared, "I was grieved with that generation" (Heb 3:10)!

It must not be inferred from what has been said above that the one who walks in the paths of righteousness brings God into his debt or that he merits favour at His hands. Not so, for nothing that we can do profits *God* anything; and if we rendered perfect obedience unto His every precept, we had merely performed our duty and rendered unto God what is His rightful due. On the other hand, it is very plain that *we* profit from and are the gainers by our obedience. Scripture has not a little to say upon the subject of *rewards*. It goes so far as to teach that the joys of the future will bear a definite relation and proportion to our conduct in the present, such as obtains between sowing and reaping (Gal 6:7-8). If then the future rewarding of the saints according to their work (Rev 22:12) clashes

neither with the grace of God nor the merit of Christ, then the *present* rewarding of them cannot do so, for no difference in place or condition can make any difference as to the nature of things. Deity does not hesitate to take as one of His titles, “the LORD God of recompences” (Jer 51:56), and many are the passages which show Him recompensing righteousness even in this world.

FEBRUARY

SIN'S PRESENCE

There are two sides to a Christian's life: a light and a dark, an elevating and a depressing one. His experience is neither all joy nor all grief, but a commingling of both. It was so with the apostle Paul: “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2Co 6:10). When a person is regenerated, he is not there and then taken to heaven, but he is given both an earnest and a foretaste of it. Nor is sin then eradicated from his being, though its dominion over him is broken. It is indwelling corruption which casts its dark shadow over his joy. The varied experiences of the believer are occasioned by Christ's presence and sin's presence. If, on the one hand, it be blessedly true that Christ is with him all the days, even unto the end; on the other hand, it is solemnly true that sin indwells him all his days, even unto the end of his earthly history. Said Paul, “evil is present with me”; and that, not only occasionally, but sin “*dwelleth* in me” (Rom 7:20-21). Thus, as God's people feed upon the Lamb, it is “with bitter herbs they shall eat it” (Exo 12:8).

The Christian's consciousness of indwelling sin, his mourning over its defiling influence, his sincere efforts to strive against its solicitations, his penitent confessions to God of his failure to master this inveterate foe, are among the unmistakable evidences that he is a regenerate person—for certain it is that none who is dead in trespasses and sins realizes there is a sea of iniquity within his heart, defiling his very thoughts and imagination; still less does he make conscience of the same and lament it. Let the believer recall his own case: in the days of his unregeneracy, he was not cast down by what *now* distresses! We are bidden to “remember” what we were “in time past,” and then contrast the “But now” (Eph 2:11-13), that we may be shamed over the former and rejoice and give thanks for the latter. It is cause for fervent praise if your eyes have been opened to see “the sinfulness of sin,” and your heart to feel its obnoxiousness. Since it was not always thus, a great change has taken place—you have been made the subject of a miracle of grace.

But the *continuance* of indwelling sin presents a sore and perplexing problem to the Christian. That nothing is too hard for the Lord he is full assured. Why then is evil suffered to remain present with him? Why is he not rid of this hideous thing which he so much loathes and hates? Why should this horrible depravity be allowed to disturb his peace and mar his joy? Why does not the God of all grace rid him of this harassing tyrant? And it must ever be remembered that *His* thoughts and ways are often the very opposite of ours. Yet we must also remember they are infinitely wiser and better than ours. God then must have some valid reason why He leaves sin in His people; and since He loves them with a boundless and unchangeable love, it must be left in them for their benefit. Faith may be fully assured that evil continues to be present with the saint both for the glory of God and for his own good.

Thus, there is a bright side to even this dark cloud. We are apt to think it is a most deplorable thing that sin still indwells us and to imagine it would be far better if we were rid of it. But that is our ignorance. Yea, it is some thing worse: it is a spirit of opposition to God, a rebelling against His dealings with us, an impugning of His wisdom, a casting reflection upon His goodness. Since He has given such abundant proofs that He has our best interests at heart, it must be most reprehensible for any to call into question His ways with them. Rather, may we be fully persuaded that our loving Father had completely removed “the flesh” from the soul of His children at the moment of their regeneration had that been for their highest welfare. Since He has not done so, we must confidently conclude

that God has a benevolent purpose in suffering sin to indwell them to the end of their pilgrim journey. But does His Word furnish any hints of His gracious designs therein? Yes, but we must now limit ourselves unto one of them.

God leaves sin in His people to *promote their humility*. There is nothing which He abominates so much as pride. In Proverbs 6:16-17, the Holy Spirit has listed seven things which the Lord hates, and they are headed with “A proud look”! God feedeth the hungry, but the rich He sendeth empty away. He “giveth grace unto the humble,” but “resisteth the proud” (James 4:6). It is the egotistical and self-satisfied Laodiceans who are so loathsome in His sight that He spues them out of His mouth (Rev 3:16-17). Now Christian reader, is it really and truly the desire of thy heart that God will “hide pride” from thee (Job 33:17)? If by grace it be so, then are you willing for Him to use His own means and method in accomplishing your desire, even though it be an unpleasant process, yea, galling to your complacency? If you be willing for your natural religiousness to be blasted and to be stripped of your peacock feathers, then it will be by evil remaining in you and bestirring itself to your grief.

Second Timothy 3:2 shows (from its order) that pride springs from inordinate self-love. They who are undue lover of themselves soon grow proud of themselves, which is odious to God, for it robs Him of His glory. Since God will be glorious unto His saints, as well as glorified by them, He subdues their pride by leaving that in them which humbles their hearts, but makes them admire Him the more for His long-suffering. Divine light exposes filth within, of which they had no previous realization, causing them to cry with the leper, “Unclean, unclean” (Lev 13:45). They have such painful discoveries of indwelling sin as often makes them lament, “O wretched man that I am!” (Rom 7:24). But how thankful we should be if God makes us “abhor” ourselves (Job 42:6), and thereby make way for prizing Christ all the more! In this life, *holiness*, my reader, consists largely of pantings after it and grievings because we feel ourselves to be so unholiness.

What would happen to a man still left in this world if he were full of sin one day and then made absolutely sinless the next? Let our present experience supply the answer. Do we not find it very difficult to keep our proper place, both before God and our brethren, when the evil within us is subdued but a little? Is not *that* evidence we require something to deliver us from self-righteousness? Even the beloved Paul needed “a thorn in the flesh” lest he “be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations” given him (2Co 12:7). The man after God’s own heart prayed, “O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise” (Psa 51:15): as though he said, “If Thou, Lord, wilt help me to speak aright, I shall not proclaim my own worth nor boast of what I have done, but will give Thee all the glory.” As God left some of the Canaanites in the land to prove Israel (Jdg 2:21-22), so He leaves sin in us to humble us. We shall be sinless in heaven, and the sight of the “Lamb as it had been *slain*” (Rev 5:6) will for ever prevent the re-entry of pride into our souls.

Our consciousness of sin’s presence has, first, an *emptying* influence: it makes way for a pardoning and cleansing Christ, by convicting the soul of its deep need. Second, it has a continual *abasing* influence, bringing us to realize more and more our utter insufficiency and complete dependence upon God. Third, it has an *evangelical* influence, for it serves to make us more conscious of the perfect suitability of the great Physician for such lepers as we feel ourselves to be. Fourth, it has a *God-honouring* influence, for it brings the renewed soul to marvel increasingly at His “longsuffering to us-ward” (2Pe 3:9). Fifth, it should promote a spirit of *forbearance* to our fellows: we ought not to expect less failure in them than we find in ourselves.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

50. 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, Part 4

“So that may be glorified the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and of [the] Lord Jesus Christ” (2Th 1:12, *Bagster Interlinear*). Here we have, fourth, the *design* of this prayer; and fifth, its *effectuation*. That which the mind of the apostle centered upon was the honouring of Christ by the furthering of the salvation of His people, for in this world, the Head of the Church is now magnified through and by His members. The grand concern which occupied the heart, formed the thoughts, and motivated the activities of His ambassador, was the exalting of his beloved Lord. The whole of his strenuous and self-effacing Christian life is summed up in that memorable confession of his, “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in noth-

ing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phi 1:20-21). Accordingly, we find that blessed aim actuated him in his prayers equally with his preaching, during his ministerial labours or while suffering imprisonment.

In petitioning the Throne of Grace that these Thessalonians might be divinely enabled to highly esteem and walk worthily of their holy and heavenly calling, by performing every duty which the divine precepts enjoined; and by fulfilling the work of faith with power, the apostle aimed at the honouring of his Master. The design before him was that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ should be glorified in them, and they in Him. In 2 Thessalonians 1:10, he had comforted them with the declaration, "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." And therefore for which ("also we pray always," 2Th 1:11) he had supplicated God suitably thereto, thereby teaching them (and us) *the effect* which that blessed prospect should have upon our walk. The advent of the Redeemer in glory and the glorification of the Church at that time are set before us in Scripture as the grand consummation of the Christian vocation or calling. The hope of the Church is a powerful dynamic in the promotion of her present holiness (1Jo 3:2-3). Only those who truly delight in and pant after holiness will spiritually long for Christ's return and cry, "Make haste, my beloved" (Song 8:14).

It is often said that "we are saved to serve": personally, we prefer, "we are saved to please and honour Christ." His redeemed are left for a season in this scene to represent Him, to "shew forth the praises of him" (1Pe 2:9), to reflect (in their measure) His excellencies, to "follow his steps" as "an example" (1Pe 2:21) which He left them—which may be summarized in living wholly "to the glory of God" (1Co 10:31), and doing "good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal 6:10). The chief and highest end of the creature is to glorify its Creator; and therefore, it is made the fundamental principle of godliness: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1Co 10:31). It may be inquired, Why did the apostle pray, "That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified" (2Th 1:12) rather than "that *God* may be glorified"? More generally, because God has made Christ the partner of His glory: "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (Joh 5:23); "that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (Joh 14:13). More specifically, because the "persecutions and tribulations" (2Th 1:4) which the Thessalonians were enduring were for the Gospel's sake, for their uncompromising profession of the Saviour's name.

The acts of the natural man are prompted by self-love and are done to advance his own interests, comforts, and glory: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built...by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Dan 4:30). It is not from any consideration of or concern for the honour of God that they act. If they refrain from the commission of gross sins, it is for their own reputations, and not from regard to the divine Law. Those who are liberal in contributing to the poor and needy distribute their charity out of compassion to the suffering, and not with their eyes on the divine precept because God enjoins it. Even those of the unregenerate who claim to be Christians are regulated by what is agreeable to themselves, and not by love to Christ and respect for His authority and glory. They are willing to please God just so far as it does not displease them. Others, who wish to obtain a reputation for piety are like the Pharisees who tithed and fasted and made long prayers to satisfy their own ambition—to be seen, heard, and praised by men. But where a miracle of grace is wrought in the soul, self-pleasing is displaced by the denying of self, and gratitude and love now move him to seek the glory of God.

Yet though a new nature be imparted at regeneration, the old nature is not removed nor even bettered. The principle of "the flesh" still indwells the soul, and is continually clamouring for indulgence; and thus, there is a ceaseless conflict within the believer between sin and holiness. His responsibility and lifelong task is to mortify the one and nourish and exercise the other: to deny self and follow Christ. And it is at this very point we should frequently test ourselves, as it is here, we may most surely ascertain whether or no we be growing in grace: to what extent am I dying unto sin and living unto God? How far is my conduct determined by a concern for the divine glory? Have I formed the habit of challenging my inclinations and determinations with the question, "Will this be for the glory of God"? Every plan we form, every action we perform, is either pleasing or displeasing to God, honouring or dishonouring to Him—there is no mean between those alternatives. Each project I entertain will either further the interests of self or serve to magnify Christ, and it is for me to pause and consider *which* of those my heart is really set upon; otherwise, what difference is there between me and the respectable worldling!

"Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1Co 10:31). Am I a young man, giving serious thought to choosing a wife? Then I should first solemnly ponder the question, Do I desire marriage to the glory of God? If I be contemplating a change of situation or residence, or my thoughts turn to the taking of a pleasure journey, before making the decision, it is a bounden Christian duty to ask myself, Will such a course promote the honour of Christ,

is it for *His* sake I shall move in the matter? This must also actuate and regulate the minister of the Gospel. It is a horrible profanation of the sacred office to seek the applause of men or covet the fame of being “thought a great preacher.” There is something which must take precedence even over seeking the good of souls. If the salvation of sinners and the edifying of saints be my supreme concern, then I am making an idol of the creature, and efforts after “success”—rather than fidelity to my charge—will determine my course. But if I labour with an eye single to the glory of God and aim at magnifying Christ, then I shall be far more concerned about preaching the truth in its purity than in “seeing results.”

There are many weighty reasons and motives which should move the Christian to seek the glory of God in all that he does. That which is of the greatest value and consideration should be sought before all else; and surely God’s glory has an infinite excellency above all things, and therefore must be preferred before all creature good. Again, since God ever has before Him our good, we ought ever to keep in view His glory: He never forgets us, nor should we Him. Again, how it ought to concern us to make restitution for our former dishonouring of God! In our unregenerate days, we had no regard for Him: never a mercy of His but what we abused. How zealous, then, ought we now to be in ordering our conduct to His praise, and manifesting the genuineness of our repentance over the past by living wholly for Him in the present! Still more so, does the example of Christ show us our duty. “Christ pleased not himself” (Rom 15:3), but ever cherished God’s honour. “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour”?—No, rather, “Father, glorify *thy* name” (Joh 12:27-28). His example is our best instructor, and in it He has taught us to put the honour of God before our own interests and comfort.

Here are some of the ways by which God is glorified. By ascribing to Him that glory which is His due (Psa 29:1-2). By proclaiming His worth unto others (Psa 34:3). By love’s making Him our supreme delight (Psa 73:25). By implicit confidence in Him: Abraham “was strong in faith, [thereby] giving glory to God” (Rom 4:20). By our bodies being dedicated to Him (1Co 6:20). By yielding obedience: “That they [men] may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat 5:16). By our repentance (Rev 16:9). By confession of sin (Jos 7:19). By cultivating our graces: “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit” (Joh 15:8). By adoring His excellency: “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me” (Psa 50:23). By readiness to suffer for Him and patiently bear afflictions (1Pe 4:14-16). By disowning any credit to ourselves, attributing to Him all good in and from us (Psa 115:3). “That God in *all* things may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1Pe 4:11) is the end we should ever aim at, avoiding whatever is contrary thereto, making all subordinate and subservient to the same.

“That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, *and ye in him*” (2Th 1:12). Making the honour of Christ our supreme concern will preserve us from many snares and follies. All the disastrous bypaths into which we have wandered since we became Christians may be traced back to failure at this very point: instead of being actuated and regulated by the determination to magnify Christ, we yielded to a spirit of self-love and self-pleasing. In seeking the glory of Christ, we, at the same time, are furthering our own salvation, for we then act contrary to the promptings of indwelling sin and are being more conformed to the image of God’s Son. Thus, highly esteeming our calling and walking worthily thereof, fulfilling every precept of God’s goodness, and keeping our faith healthy and in vigorous exercise, we both honour Christ and advance our own spiritual interests. Moreover, what an unspeakable privilege and dignity is it to serve such a Master as ours! Is it not glorious indeed to please, yea, to endure persecution for such a glorious Saviour: “Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name” (Act 5:41)! But “if so be that we suffer with him,” we shall “be also glorified together” (Rom 8:17).

“And ye in him” has ultimate reference to the next life: the consummation of our salvation, the reward for honouring Christ in this. “God hath appointed this order, that we should glorify Him before He glorifies us; and there is much wisdom and righteousness in that appointment. It would greatly redound to God’s dishonour if He should glorify those that do not glorify Him, and make no difference between the godly and the wicked, those that break His laws and those that keep them. If both should fare alike, it would eclipse the righteousness of God’s government...God hath not only appointed that we should glorify Him before He glorifies us, but that we should glorify Him upon earth before He glorifies us in heaven. We have Christ for an example: ‘I have glorified thee on the earth:...And now, O Father, glorify thou me’ (Joh 17:4-5)...Christ takes special notice of those that glorify Him in the world, and it is one of His pleas for His disciples: ‘Father...I am glorified in them’ (Joh 17:5, 10). He is an Advocate in heaven for those that are factors for His kingdom upon earth...this glory is promised: ‘If any man serve me, him will my Father honour’ (Joh 12:26)” —Thomas Manton (1620-1677).

“According to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2Th 1:12) is what secures the fulfilment of this prayer. The wider reference is unto all that precedes: our acting suitably to God’s holy calling, our fulfilling every good counsel of His goodness and work of faith by His power, our glorifying of His Son, is all from and by divine grace. Scripture is plain and emphatic on this point, and so also must be the tongue and pen of God’s servants. It

was His sovereign favour which chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and equally so is each blessing which follows it. Therefore do we read of “the election of grace” (Rom 11:5), that our calling is “according to his own purpose and grace” (2Ti 1:9), that we have “believed through grace” (Act 18:27), that we are “justified freely by his grace” (Rom 3:24). It is the same wondrous grace which bears with our dullness and waywardness, which provides for our every need, which renews us day by day in the inner man, and which brings us safely to heaven.

“According to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” refers more immediately to the preceding clause “and ye in him,” which principally respects our glorification. For though our glorification be the issue and reward of our perseverance in faith and holiness, yet it is not a reward of debt, but of grace; not something we have merited, but which bestowed by God’s free bounty. Hence, we read of “the grace that is to be brought unto [us] at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1Pe 1:13). Thus, all ground for boasting is entirely removed from us, and the praise and glory is His alone. Nothing but His wondrous grace could overcome our obstinacy and bring us into willing subjection to God. Nothing less is able to maintain and keep us in the paths of righteousness. The principle of holiness which was imparted to us at regeneration is but a creature, and therefore, mutable and entirely dependent upon its Giver—both for strength and motion. We can only work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, as God worketh in us “both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:12-13). The flesh, the world, and the Devil, are far too powerful for us to overcome in our own might. And when the Headstone is brought forth, the whole Church will cry, “Grace, grace unto it” (Zec 4:7).

But if the *balance* of truth is to be preserved here, it requires to be pointed out that though the grace of God be the original cause of our salvation, yet as it does not preclude the worth and work of Christ as its meritorious cause, so neither does it exclude repentance, faith, and obedience, and the means: “By grace are ye saved *through faith*” (Eph 2:8). Though neither faith nor good works has any causal influence in our salvation, much less is a co-cause with the grace of God and of Christ; yet God has appointed this method and way of salvation. Principal causes do not exclude necessary means, but comprise them; and therefore, we must not set grace against grace and say that the elect will be saved whether they believe or no, or that the regenerate will reach heaven no matter how they live. Grace is only magnified by us as we insist that it works “through righteousness” (Rom 5:21), and by bringing forth its holy fruits. Basically and fundamentally, our salvation flows from the sovereign pleasure of God, the good will which He bears us; and it is effectually wrought in us by His power. Yet instrumentally and mediately, salvation issues from the discharge of our responsibility (for God ever treats with us as moral agents) from the heeding of His warning and in using the means He has appointed. “We...*believe* to the saving of the soul” (Heb 10:3-) and are “kept by the power of God *through faith*” (1Pe 1:5).

It is all-important to insist that “salvation is of the LORD” (Jon 2:9), so that all the glory be fully ascribed unto Him; and also, that we may be encouraged to seek grace from Him, for when sensible of our undeservingness and our ill-deserts, only the realization of His abundant favour will keep the heart from sinking. Yet it is none the less necessary to press the Christian’s responsibility in the use of all proper means, so that he may be preserved from lapsing into Antinomianism and fatalistic inertia. There is a balance to be preserved here: between a sense of our helplessness and our obligation to use the grace which we already have, yea, to seek further and fuller supplication of grace (Heb 4:16). Our entire dependency upon God and our full accountability unto Him are not contradictory, but complementary, parts of one whole. It is the grand privilege of faith to make free use of Christ; and it is our bounden duty to live *unto* Him; yet that is only possible by constantly drawing *from* Him. Without Christ, we can do nothing (Joh 15:5); but energized by Him, we can do all things (Phi 4:13). Then let us see to it that we “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2Ti 2:1).

“According to the grace of our God” is to be regarded, then, as referring to *the whole* of His benignant design toward us. It is on *that* basis all our supplies must be asked for, it is from that fountain all the streams of blessing do flow; and it is to that divine attribute all must be ascribed. It is the grace which sets His power to work on our behalf, and were the operation of His power suspended for a moment, then even the “new man” would instantly be paralysed. He “holdeth our soul in life” (Psa 66:9); and should He “let loose his hand,” we are at once “cut...off” (Job 6:9). To the resisting of any sin or the performing of any duty, we are in need of the gracious power of God moment by moment. Nevertheless, we are not mere automatons: “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it” (Phi 1:6); yet not without our concurrence—as though we were blocks of wood. Finally, note we must not so eye “the grace of our God” as to lose sight of “the Lord Jesus Christ” (2Th 1:12). In the Greek, there is only one article here; and it is in the singular number, which not only exhibits the unity of the divine nature, but also reveals the two Persons engaged in a common work.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

30. The Captain (5:11-15)

All the leading features of redemption were more or less shadowed forth by the Passover; and therein, God would keep those things in the minds and before the eyes of Israel by their annual memorial of the same. But not only did the Passover furnish a vivid portrayal of the Gospel, it was also a *means* for Israel's good, a gracious provision for their bodily needs. Before another day dawned, they were to leave Egypt and start out for the promised land; and by feeding on the lamb, strength was supplied for the journey which lay before them. Thus it is with the Christian: he must feed on Christ in order for strength as he passes through this wilderness, for the world supplies no nourishment for the soul. So it was at Gilgal (Jos 5:10): as the Passover had been the prelude to Israel's deliverance from Egypt and the commencement of their wilderness history, so it was made introductory to their new experience in Canaan: it was a blessed reminder that while they walked according to the divine precepts, they might count upon God's mighty power. As their feeding on the lamb in Egypt supplied energy for their wilderness journey, equally needful was its strength for the warfare in which they were about to engage.

"And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day" (Jos 5:11). Once more, we would observe how the Holy Spirit delights to take notice of and place on record the details of the saints' obedience. It had been expressly commanded that the pascal lamb must be eaten with "unleavened bread" (Exo 12:8), and strict compliance was here made with that order. They did not say, As long as it is *bread*, what else matters? but subjected their wills to God's. Throughout the Scriptures "leaven" is emblematical of corruption and evil; and therefore, it had been a horrible incongruity and most unsuited to use leavened bread at a feast wherein the immaculate purity of Christ was set forth in the lamb "without blemish." The least tampering with the divine ordinances alters their significance, mars their beauty, and is an act of presumption on man's part. If they be not kept in the letter of them, they certainly are not in their spirit, for true love seeks to please its object in all things.

"In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel" (Exo 12:18-19). Thus, when it is said in Joshua 5:10 that when the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, they "kept the passover," we are to understand that for a whole week, they observed the same. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) pointed out, "They kept the passover in the plains of Jericho as it were in defiance of the Canaanites that were round about them and enraged against them, and yet could not give them any disturbance. Thus, God gave them an early instance of the performance of that promise, that when they went up to keep the feasts, their land should be taken under the special protection of divine providence: Exodus 34:24, 'Neither shall any man desire thy land.' He now 'preparest a table before [them] in the presence of [their] enemies' (Psa 23:5)."

"And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day" (Jos 5:11). A supply of food was already to hand when they entered Canaan: probably in granaries abandoned by its inhabitants as they took refuge in the walled city of Jericho. The Lord is no Egyptian taskmaster, requiring His people to make bricks without supplying them with straw. Now that "the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD" was to be eaten seven days (Lev 23:6), an abundant quantity of grain was available for them. It is blessed to observe that before they used any of it for their own comfort, it was made into unleavened cakes in their worship of Jehovah. Thus did they act on the basis of that essential precept, "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the *firstfruits* of all thine increase" (Pro 3:9). And as the Lord Jesus has taught us, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Mat 6:33), He is to be given the pre-eminence by us in all things; and accordingly as we honour Him, so will He honour us.

This supply of corn upon Israel's first entrance into Canaan was *an earnest* of that promise which God has made through Moses: "And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not" (Deu 6:10-11); the complete fulfillment whereof is recorded in Joshua 24:13. Typically, the "old corn of the land" (Jos 5:11-12), equally with the manna, spoke of Christ (Joh 12:24), yet in a very different character. The manna—"a small round thing" (Exo 16:14), which lay on the ground and was Israel's wilderness food—was an emblem of Christ in His humiliation; but the old corn of Canaan pointed

to Christ in His exaltation. The Christian needs to meditate and act in faith on Christ—not only as He is presented to us in all His moral perfections in the four Gospels, but also upon His official glories as they are set forth in the epistles; particularly does he need to be occupied with Him as portrayed in Hebrews as our great High Priest and Intercessor.

In the earlier articles of this series, we laid considerable emphasis on the fact that the spiritual value and the practical *use* which *we* should make of the book of Joshua is that we should see unfolded therein the principles by which the Christian is to enter into a present possession and enjoyment of his inheritance, and the secrets of successfully fighting the good fight of faith and the spiritual warfare to which he is called. We sought to make plain what are some of those basic principles and essential secrets, as they are illustrated and exemplified by the historical incidents recorded in the first four chapters of this book; and before turning from the first two sections of chapter 5, let us stress the truth that two more of them are here intimated as foreshadowed in the circumcising of the Israelites and their keeping of the Passover. The Christian must be diligent in mortifying his lusts if he would walk in newness of life; and equally necessary is it that he feed daily on Christ—considered both as the sacrificial Lamb and as the great High Priest—in order to obtain strength to overcome the flesh, the world, and the devil. Practically, the corn of Canaan is a portion of our inheritance which faith is to *now* appropriate.

“And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year” (Jos 5:12). “To show that it did not come by chance, or by common providence as snow or hail does, but by the special designation of divine wisdom and goodness; for as it came just when they needed it, so it continued as long as they had occasion for it, and no longer” (M. Henry). The practical lesson which we are to draw therefrom is that we are not to expect extraordinary supplies when they can be had in an ordinary way: God works no unnecessary miracles. It is blessed to remember that the Lord had not discontinued the manna when the people despised it (Num 11:6), nor even when He severed His covenant relation with that evil generation; but had mercifully continued to give it for the sake of their children, who had now grown up and entered Canaan. Here ends the first main division of the book: Joshua 1:1-9 is the Introduction; 1:10-12, concerns the passage of the Jordan; 5:12-13, the conquest of Canaan.

“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?” (Jos 5:13). Though this verse begins a new section of the book, yet it opens with the word “And”—not simply to preserve the continuity of the narrative, but especially to link this incident with what immediately precedes. God has promised to honour those who honour Him, and Joshua had done so in the circumcising of the people and in the strict observance of the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread; and now the Lord bestows a signal favour upon His servant. How much we lose by failing to render unto our God that full and implicit obedience which is His due! “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest* myself to him” (Joh 14:21) declares the Saviour. That is exactly what He was here doing unto obedient Joshua! It is of His spiritual manifestations to the soul we deprive ourselves by disobedience.

“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked” (Jos 5:13). Probably he was here engaged in reconnoitering the walled city with a view to determining his best plan of campaign against it, for as Israel’s leader, that was his obvious duty; nor would the firm expectation that the Lord should show Himself strong on behalf of His people discharge him from the performing of it. Even when we are fully assured that God is for us and will undertake for us, it is required that we act as rational creatures, use all proper means and precautions, and put forth our best efforts. To refuse doing so on the pretext of relying wholly on God to do all for us is not faith but presumption. Though Christ was about to supply a miraculous draught of fishes, yet He bade Peter, “Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught” (Luk 5:4). True, we must not lean unto our own understanding, nor rely on our own strength; yet both the one and the other are to be exercised by us. It was, then, while Joshua was in the path of duty, discharging his responsibility, that the Lord met with him! Only while similarly engaged are *we* warranted in expecting His help.

“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked” (Jos 5:13). The doubling of the verb seems to intimate a two-fold significance about Joshua’s action—a natural and a spiritual: that after viewing the enemy’s citadel, he supplicated the Lord. The *usage* of the verbs confirms this. The “lifted up” his eyes in a natural way, taking a comprehensive survey of things, occurs in Genesis 13:10, 14; while it is found in a spiritual sense in “Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul” (Psa 25:1); for “looked,” see Genesis 8:13 and Exodus 2:25. “And, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand” (Jos 5:13). This represented a real test to Joshua’s valour. God had bidden him, “Be strong and of a good courage” (Jos 1:6), and now he

is put to the proof. There is nothing whatever here to intimate that Joshua beheld this Man in a vision, but rather, that He appeared before him objectively and tangibly. Even though He had “his sword drawn in his hand,” Israel’s leader did not panic and flee, but boldly advanced “unto him” (Jos 5:13). We should harbour no fear while in the path of duty, but count upon the divine promise, “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Psa 34:7).

On the other hand, Joshua did not rashly draw his own sword and engage this Man in conflict. Instead, he inquired, “Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?” (Jos 5:13), which challenge intimates Joshua recognized that this stranger was no Israelite. A moment later, he was to discover this Person was more than “a man.” Previously, the Lord had *spoken* unto Joshua (Jos 1:1; 3:7; 4:1, 15), but had made no visible manifestation of Himself unto His servant until now. Observe well how God suits the revelation of Himself unto His saints according to their circumstances and needs: to Abraham in his tent, He appeared as a traveler (Gen 18:1, 2, 13), to Moses at the backside of the desert in a bush (Exo 3:1-2), to Joshua at the beginning of his campaign as “a man of war” (compare Exo 15:3). In the celebrating of the Passover, Christ had been prefigured as the Lamb slain (Exo 12:11); here in Joshua 5:13, with drawn sword in hand, He appeared as “the Lion of the tribe of Juda” (Rev 5:5). It was one of the pre-incarnate appearances of the Son of God, in human form, which brings before us a most blessed yet profoundly mysterious subject, concerning which the reader will probably welcome a few details.

In respect to Their Godhead, each of the three divine Persons is equally invisible: the Triune God is seen alone in Christ. The invisibility of the divine Being to mortal eyes is clearly taught in Old and New Testament alike. “For there shall no man see me, and live” (Exo 33:20), “no man hath seen God at any time” (Joh 1:18), “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see” (1Ti 6:16). That raises the question, How are we to understand those passages in the Old Testament where it is said, “And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel [‘the face of God’]: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (Gen 32:30), “and they saw the God of Israel” (Exo 24:10). In many passages, it was not only that God was seen in vision or symbol, but corporately and actually. As, for example, by Moses: “If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With *him* will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude [‘form’ or ‘likeness’] of the LORD shall he behold” (Num 12:6-8). Those are what infidels term as “contradictions.”

The New Testament makes it known that another Person of the same essence as the Father has had for His office the making known of God unto His people: “The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (Joh 1:18), “he that hath seen me,” said Christ, “hath seen the Father” (Joh 14:9), “Who is the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15 and compare Heb 1:3). The intimate communion between the two Persons appears in Exodus 23:20-21: “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.” Observe how much language is used there by one Person about another Person as precludes our identifying Him as a single Person; yet both are certainly divine. Thus, we must not exclude Jehovah the Father wholly from these communications to the Old Testament saints and attribute all the messages unto the Son immediately. We are to admit the presence of the first Person *per se* (by Himself), as well as the second: two Persons with divine attributes, employing the name of Jehovah in common; the one the Sender, the other the Sent—the latter communicating directly with men.

In each instance, the theophanic manifestation was made by God the Son, sometimes in the form of an angel; at others, in the form of man. It is the same Person, whether called, “the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob” (Exo 3:16), “the God of Israel” (Exo 34:23), or “the messenger [Angel] of the covenant” (Mal 3:1). Those mysterious appearances were so many intimations that the Son even then personated the character of the Mediator, under which He would yet reveal Himself openly. It was God the Son who thus appeared to Hagar (Gen 16:7), Abraham (Gen 18:1), Jacob (Gen 32:24-30), Israel (Jdg 2:1), Gideon (Jdg 6:12-18), Manoah (Jdg 13:21). In Malachi 3:1, “the messenger [Angel] of the covenant” is called “the Lord” of “his temple.” Those theophanies not only disclosed a personal distinction in the Godhead, but show the pre-existence and Deity of our Redeemer. That the Jehovah who manifested Himself again and again unto Israel in the wilderness was none other than the Mediator, is unequivocally established by 1 Corinthians 10:4, 9: “for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was *Christ*...Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.” See also Hebrews 11:26.

The appearances of the Son of God to men in human form—sometimes in vision (Eze 1:26; Dan 10:5-6), sometimes in prophecy (Psa 89:17; Dan 7:13), sometimes tangibly (Gen 32:24; Jos 5:13)—were so many anticipations of

the Word becoming flesh, and were in order to acquaint the Church with the Person of her Head by providing a blessed intercourse between them. They were endearing manifestations of Christ to His saints (and to none other!) of His love, that His “delights [even then] were with the sons of men” (Pro 8:31). It is most blessed to observe how many and varied ways the Lord Jesus took to display His personal love unto His people by vision and open revelation, by type and tangible similitude, in the early ages of the world, until the time that He became incarnate and tabernacled among men. They were all designed to prepare the minds of His people for His becoming the Son of man and furnishing the supreme proof of His love for them in New Testament times. He graciously adopted such methods to indicate how much He longed for the fullness of time when He should put away their sins and bring in an everlasting righteousness for them.

“And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?” (Jos 5:14). Joshua now discovered it was far more than “a man” who stood before him; and therefore, did he prostrate himself before Him and humbly sought His will. Had this visitor been only an angel, he had rebuked Joshua for worshipping him (Rev 19:10; 22:8-9); but this Person accepted it, thereby evincing His Deity! This faithful servant of His now had a special visit from his Lord to inaugurate the great enterprise on which he was about to engage, namely, the putting of the inhabitants of Canaan to the sword. It was the sign and token that complete victory should be Israel’s, a guarantee that success should be granted their warfare. This “man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand” (Jos 5:13) had come as no idle spectator of the conflict, but to command and direct every movement of their battles. “As captain of the host of the LORD am I now come”: at the head of the angelic hierarchy stands the Angel of the Lord, “the captain of [our] salvation” (Heb 2:10).

“And the captain of the LORD’S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so” (Jos 5:15). Here was further proof that the One speaking to Joshua was infinitely above the highest celestial creature, for the arch-angel’s presence had not rendered the very ground whereon he stood sacred. It was in fact none other than the august Person before whom the seraphim veil their faces and cry, “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts” (Isa 6:3 and compare Joh 12:41). It will be noted that the token of reverence required from Joshua was identical with that demanded of Moses by “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” at the burning bush (Exo 3:5-6). That order for the removing of his shoes not only linked together the two incidents, but supplied a further assurance of God’s promise to His servant: “As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee” (Jos 1:5). What an encouragement for faith was that! Who could stand before the Captain of the Lord’s host? What was there for Israel to fear under such a Leader! Note how the Spirit again registers Joshua’s obedience to the command to remove his shoes: “And Joshua did so” (Jos 5:15). Nothing is too small for God’s notice. Our every act is recorded by Him—how solemn! How blessed!

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

14. The Holy Bible, Part 6

It also requires to be pointed out that the Pentateuch contains a narration of many events which took place in the actual lifetime, yea, before the eyes of the very people who were called upon to receive those books as authentic. Thus, there was no opportunity for Moses, or any one else, to palm off upon the Hebrews a lot of fictions, for each one of them would know at once whether the records of their cruel bondage in Egypt, the judgments which Jehovah is said to have executed there, and the miraculous deliverance of His people at the Red Sea, were true or not. Had those events been of a commonplace character, few perhaps had been sufficiently interested to scrutinize the narratives of them; still less have taken the trouble to refute them were they untrue. But in view of their extraordinary nature—and especially since those miracles were designed to *authenticate a new religion* upon which their future hopes were to be based, and by which their present deportment was to be regulated—it is unthinkable that a whole nation gave a mechanical assent; and still more so that they unitedly endorsed evidence which they knew to be false, especially when those same narratives inculcated a code of conduct which they certainly had never designed of their own accord.

But more. Not only were many of the Mosaic institutions radically different from those practised by all other nations and from what the Hebrews had themselves observed in Egypt, but they also involved numerous rites which required constant attention and which must have been most irksome and unpleasant. Moreover, those ceremonies subjected the Israelites to considerable expense by the costly sacrifices they were frequently required to offer and the tithes they were commanded to pay the priests. Furthermore, some of the laws bound upon them were of such a character that it is altogether unaccountable—on the principles of political wisdom—that any legislator should have proposed, or that a whole nation should meekly have submitted to them. Such was the law of the Sabbath year, which forbade them tilling or sowing the ground for a whole twelve months (Exo 23:10-11), such was the law ordering all the males to journey from every part of the land to the tabernacle (Deu 16:16)—leaving their homes unprotected; the law which prohibited their king multiplying horses (Deu 17:16); and more especially the law of jubilee, when all mortgaged property had to be restored to the original owners and all slaves freed (Lev 25:10).

Now we submit that it is utterly incredible to suppose that any sane legislator would, on his own authority, have imposed enactments which interfered so seriously with both private and public liberty, and which involved such hazards as the people dying of starvation while their fields lay fallow, and their wives and children being murdered by invaders when all their men-folk were far removed from them. Still more inconceivable is it that, instead of bitterly resenting and openly revolting against such unpopular statutes, the whole nation should quietly acquiesce therein. It is quite pointless to say that Israel was imposed upon by Moses, that he deceived them into believing those laws were of divine authority. No such deception was possible, for the simple reason that the entire nation was assembled at Sinai and had witnessed the supernatural and awe-inspiring phenomena when the Lord had descended and given those laws audibly—they had with their own ears heard a portion of it published. Israel's reception of such a Law can only be accounted for on the basis that they were fully assured it proceeded from God Himself.

Having demonstrated that the Scriptures could not have been manufactured by either wicked impostors or deluded fanatics, that they were not invented by the Christian Church or the ancient Jews, we are shut up to the only remaining alternative—namely, that they are a revelation from God, His own inspired and infallible Word. No other choice is left; no other explanation is credible. Every other attempt to explain their origin is found, upon critical examination, to be not only altogether inadequate, but utterly absurd. If a thinking man finds it difficult, nay, impossible, to explain a created universe apart from a divine Creator, it is no less so for him to account for the Book of books without a *divine Author*. This is a matter which admits of no compromise: if the Bible has come to us from God, then it has claims upon us which infinitely transcend those of all other writings; if it is not, then it is an impious fraud, unworthy of our attention. There is no middle ground! Moreover, if the Bible be not what it claims to be, then we are left without *any* revelation which, with any reliability or authority, can impart to us the knowledge of God, or warrant its reception by mankind!

5. *It bears the hallmark of genuineness:* the contents of the Bible are just what might be looked for. What are the essential characteristics we should expect to find in a written communication from God unto fallen mankind? Would they not be, first, the imparting to us of a knowledge of the true God; and second, of that instruction which is best suited to our varied needs? Such is precisely what we have in the Bible. The grand truth taught throughout the Sacred Scriptures is that God does all things for His own glory and for the manifestation of His own perfections. And is not that exactly in accord with right reason? Once men are led to entertain any true conceptions of the Supreme Being, they are brought to the irresistible conclusion that One who is self-existent and self-sufficient, the Creator and Proprietor of the universe could not be swayed by any creature or moved to action from a regard to anything outside of Himself, or irrespective of Himself; that in all His works, both of creation and providence, He will have a supreme regard unto His own honour and the maintaining of His own perfections.

If then the Bible be the Word of God—proceeding from Himself, stamped with the autograph of His own authority—we naturally expect to find it is possessed of *that* characteristic and directed to that end. Thus in fact it is. The cardinal design of the Sacred Scriptures is to make God known, to exhibit the peerless excellencies of his character, to teach us the homage and adoration which are His due. Their supreme end is to display to us the glorious attributes of God, that we may learn to form the most elevated conception of His Being, our own entire dependency upon Him, our deep obligations to show forth His praise. The scope of the entire Bible is to teach us our relations to God, and that the business of our lives is to give Him His true place in our hearts, to act always so as to please Him. Yet the very reverse of *that* is what obtains in human practice: in view of which we are forced to conclude that had men originated the Bible, its teaching thereon had been very different, and that it had contained no such statements as that “The LORD hath made all things for himself” (Pro 16:4) and “whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1Co 10:31).

Again, would we not naturally expect to find a revelation from God couched in a strain very different from that in which one man speaks to another? Since the Creator be so high above the creature, does it not befit Him to address us in terms which become His august majesty? Such is just what we find in the Bible. Its instructions are delivered to us not in an argumentative form, but in an authoritative manner, for while arguments are suited to equals, they would be quite out of place for the All-wise when directing the ignorant. Its precepts are not proffered to us as so much good advice, which we are free to heed or not at our pleasure, but rather as imperial edicts which we disregard to our eternal undoing. The commandments of Scripture admit of no questioning: “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not” are its peremptory terms. In the most uncompromising way, and without the least semblance of apology, the Bible claims the absolute right to dictate unto all men what they should do, condemns them for their failure, and pronounces sentence of judgment upon every offender. From Genesis to Revelation, the contents of Holy Writ are set forth in dictatorial language beyond which there is no appeal. It speaks throughout as from an infinitely elevated plane.

Moreover, the Bible does not single out for address merely the ignorant and the base, but issues its orders unto all classes alike. The cultured as well as the illiterate, the high as well as the low, the rich equally with the poor, are imperatively told what they must do and from what they must abstain. And that one feature alone places the Bible, my reader, in a class by itself; yet if it possessed not the same, then we should have grave reason to suspect its authenticity. It would be most incongruous for the Ancient of days to use a conciliatory tone and employ the language of obsequiousness when vouchsafing a communication to creatures who are but of yesterday. So far from the language of dogmatism being unsuited, it is exactly what might be looked for in a revelation from the most High. Nevertheless, the dictatorial ring of the Bible accords it a unique place in the realm of literature. There is no other book in the world which demands, on pain of eternal perdition, the total submission of all mankind unto its authority; as there is none other which pronounces a fearful curse on any one who has the audacity to take away from its contents. The ring of imperial authority which sounds through all its chapters indicates that it is the voice of the living God who is the speaker.

Yet it will also follow that if the Bible be a divine revelation, then it must be suited to the needs of man—and not simply this or that man, but of all without distinction. One of the clearest marks of the handiwork of God in the material creation is that of design and adaptation: that all His productions are perfectly fitted to answer the ends for which they are made—as the human hand to perform so many different tasks. We should, therefore, expect to find this same characteristic stamped upon the Bible; nor is that expectation disappointed. It imparts to us the knowledge of God’s glorious character and our relations to Him, and reveals the means by which we may regain His favour and secure our own eternal happiness. The Holy Scriptures furnish us with an accurate diagnosis of the human heart and all its manifold workings. They describe to us our enemies and make known the stratagems which they employ, and how they are to be resisted and overcome. They discover to us the character of that malady which has smitten our moral nature, and the great Physician who is able to recover us therefrom. They specify the most serious of the dangers which menace us, and faithfully warn us against the same. They supply instruction which, if heeded, promotes our welfare in every way.

The Bible makes known to us how wisdom, strength, and true joy are to be obtained here, and how heaven may be our portion hereafter. It supplies salutary counsels which are admirably suited to all our varied circumstances. It is adapted equally to the young as the aged, to those in prosperity or those in adversity. Its language is simple enough for those of little education, yet it has depths in it which the most learned cannot fathom. In the Scriptures, there is as great variety as there is in Nature, something to meet the most diverse temperaments and tastes: history, poetry, biography, prophecy, legislation, the essentials of hygiene, profound mysteries, and a message of glad tidings to those in despair. Moreover, the Bible is self-explanatory. No reference library requires to be consulted in order to arrive at the meaning of anything in it: one part interprets another. The New Testament supplements the Old, and by patiently comparing Scripture with Scripture, the diligent reader may ascertain the signification of any figure, symbol, or term used therein; though its spiritual secrets are disclosed only unto the prayerful and the obedient.

As the light is accommodated to the eye and the eye formed and fitted to receive the light, so though the Scriptures have come from heaven, yet are they perfectly suited to those who live on earth. They contain all the information that is required by man as a moral and accountable being. There is no important problem relating to either our temporal or eternal welfare upon which the Bible does not supply excellent counsel. Though its contents be ineffably sublime, they are at the same time intensely practical, meeting every moral and spiritual need, adapted alike to Jew and Gentile, ancient or modern, rich or poor. The Bible not only makes known how the state should be governed and the church ordered, but it furnishes full instruction to direct the individual and to regulate the home. In a word, the Bible is qualified to be “a lamp unto [our] feet and a light unto [our] path” (Psa 119:105). When then we

examine this Book which claims to come from God, and find it possesses all those marks and evidences which could reasonably be expected or desired, that it is exactly suited to answer all the ends of a divine revelation, we are obliged to conclude that our Creator has graciously met our deep need, and therefore, that revelation should be received by us with the utmost reverence and welcomed with the deepest thanksgiving.

6. *Christ and the Scriptures.* What was *His* attitude toward them? What was His estimate of them? What use did He make of them? The answers to those questions are of supreme importance and must settle the matter once and for all, for what is the opinion of any man worth when placed over against the verdict of the Son of God! Give then your best attention while we seek to furnish a reply to those inquiries. Negatively, Christ never cast the slightest doubt upon their validity, or called into question their authenticity. When His detractors reminded Him, “Moses wrote unto us” such and such a thing, He did not say that Moses was wrong, but told them they “err, because [they] know not the scriptures” (Mar 12:19-24). When a lawyer sought to ensnare Him, so far from brushing aside the authority of the Scriptures, He enforced the same, saying, “What is written in the law?” (Luk 10:26). When engaged in any controversy, His invariable appeal was unto the Old Testament, and declared that what David said was “by the Holy Ghost” (Mar 12:36). Not once did He intimate that it was unreliable and untrustworthy.

But let us turn to the positive side. Behold the Lord Jesus when He was assaulted by the devil, and note well that the only weapon He made use of was the sword of the Spirit. Each time He repulsed the tempter with a sentence from the Old Testament (Mat 4)! And observe that as soon as that mysterious conflict was over, God—to evince His approbation of Christ’s conduct—sent the angels to minister “unto him” (Mar 1:13). Mark how He commenced His public ministry, by entering the synagogue, reading aloud from the prophet Isaiah, and saying, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luk 4:16-22). Hear Him as He declared, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Mat 5:17-18). He had come to enforce the teachings of the Old Testament in their minutest detail, to honour and magnify the same, by rendering a personal and perfect obedience to them. He owned the Scriptures as “the word of God” (Mar 7:13) just as they stood, without any reservation or qualification; thereby authenticating all the books of the Old Testament.

So far from regarding the Old Testament as being full of myths and fables, He taught that Abraham, Lot, Moses, and Daniel were real entities. He expressly ratified the very incidents at which the sceptics scoff: the Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven (Luk 17:27-29), and Jonah being three days and nights in the whale’s belly (Mat 12:40); thereby denying they were but “folk lore” and establishing their historicity, Christ placed the words of Moses on a par with His own (Joh 5:46-47). Said He, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luk 16:31), which again evinces our Lord’s estimate of the Old Testament. It was of supreme authority to Him. When vindicating Himself for affirming His deity, after quoting from the Psalms, He added, “and the scripture cannot be broken” (Joh 10:35)—it is infallible, inviolable. When engaged in prayer to the Father, He solemnly declared, “Thy word is truth” (Joh 17:17): not simply contains the truth, or even is true, but “*is truth*”—without the least tincture of error, the word of Him “that cannot lie” (Ti 1:2).

When His enemies came to arrest Him in the garden and Peter drew his sword, the Saviour rebuked him, saying, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?”; yet note well how He at once added, “But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” (Mat 26:53-54). Very blessed is that: showing that the written Word was what regulated His every action, and that it was His strong consolation in his darkest hour. Reverently behold Him on the cross, and observe Him placing homage upon the sacred psalter by using *its* words when undergoing the extreme anguish of divine desertion (Psa 22:1; Mat 27:46). But more: “Jesus...that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst” (Joh 19:28). There was yet one detail predicted of His dying sufferings which had not been accomplished, namely, that “in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (Psa 69:21); and therefore, in subjection to the divine authority of the Old Testament, He cried, “I thirst”! After rising in triumph from the grave, we find our blessed Lord again magnifying the Scriptures: “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luk 24:27).

Thus we are left in no doubt whatever of Christ’s attitude toward, estimate of, and the use which He made of the Scriptures. He ever treated them with the utmost reverence, affirmed their divine authority, and considered that one word of *theirs* put an end to all controversy. He averred the Old Testament was “the word of God”—entirely inerrant, verbally inspired, as a whole and in all its parts. He affirmed that the Scriptures are the final court of appeal, and asserted their perpetuity. For the Christian, the testimony of Christ is final: he requires no further evidence

or argument. Nor should the non-Christians. It is the height of absurdity to suppose that One who was endowed with infinitely superior wisdom to Solomon should have been imposed upon by a fraud; as it would be horrible blasphemy to say that He knowingly set His imprimatur upon what He knew to be false. Whose judgment, my young friend, do you prefer: that of the so-called, “advanced thinkers” or the verdict of the Son of God? Which deem you the more trustworthy?

ENJOYING GOD’S BEST

Part 2

We have already alluded to Psalm 19:11, where we are told of God’s statutes and judgments that “in keeping of them there is great reward”; and we simply call attention now to the tense of that statement: not “shall be,” but *is so* now. A part of that present “reward” is described in such verses as “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend [be a ‘stumbling-block’ to] them” (Psa 119:165); “And the work of righteousness [right doing] shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever” (Isa 32:17). Such too is the testimony of Psalm 58:11, “So that a man shall say, Verily there *is* a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in [governs, administers the affairs of] the earth.” “The righteous [i.e. the one whose practices conform to the Rule of Righteousness] shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon...To shew that the LORD is upright” (Psa 92:12-15)—i.e. to make it evident that He takes notice of and richly blesses such. “Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth” (Pro 11:31). On the other hand, “The LORD...will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him” (Hos 12:2).

It is an unalterable law of the divine government that as we sow, so shall we reap. That principle is enunciated and illustrated all through the Scriptures. On the one hand, “they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind” (Hos 8:7); on the other, “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy” (Hos 10:12). “Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same” (Job 4:8). “Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way” (Pro 1:31). “But to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward” (Pro 11:18). Our Lord taught precisely the same thing when He said, “There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this *present* time, and in the world to come life everlasting” (Luk 18:29-30). So too the apostles: “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2Co 9:6). “And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace” (Jam 3:18). It is lamentable that such passages are so rarely heard from the pulpit.

It is right here that we have the key to a class of passages which has puzzled and perplexed not a few, namely, those which speak of the Lord’s *repenting*. To say that such an expression is a figure of speech, God’s condescending to employ our language, though true, really *explains* nothing. But the difficulty is at once removed when it be seen that the reference is not to the modifying of God’s eternal decrees, but rather unto His governmental ways; signifying that when men alter their attitude and conduct toward Him, the Lord changes in His *dealings* with them—withholding the judgment threatened, or bestowing the blessing which their sins had kept back. The general principle is clearly expressed in, “At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; *If* that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; *If* it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them” (Jer 18:7-10).

There is no “if” whatever about the divine foreordination, but there *is* in connection with human responsibility. Necessarily so, for in the enforcing thereof, the alternatives of recompense must be stated. Many of the woes which God pronounces against kingdoms are not declarations of His eternal decrees or infallible predictions of what is about to take place, but rather ethical intimations of His sore displeasure against sin, and solemn threatenings of what must inevitably follow if there be no change for the better in those denounced: whether or no those impending judgments are to become historic realities is contingent upon their readiness to heed those warnings or their refusal to do so. The passage quoted above enunciates that basic moral law by which God governs the world, telling us that

He approves of obedience and righteousness wherever it be found, and rewards the same; whereas He hates the opposite and punishes it (see Pro 14:34). Jeremiah 18 sets not before us God as the determiner of human destiny, but as the dispenser of temporal awards, governing in equity and in accordance with the discharge of human accountability, and showing He is ever ready to prosper the righteous.

The same principle pertains unto the individual. “Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments” (1Sa 15:10-11). That does not mean God *regretted* His former act of enthroning Saul, but that because of his defection, the Lord would *reverse* it and depose him (1Sa 15:26). Thus we see that God’s governmental actions are determined—in part, at least—by man’s conduct. We say “in part,” for God does not act uniformly; and some of His ways in providence are “past finding out,” as when He suffers the righteous to be severely afflicted, and the wicked to flourish like a green bay tree. If righteousness were always visibly rewarded and wickedness punished in this life, there would be no room for the exercise of faith in God’s justice, for the Day of Judgment would be anticipated instead of presaged. Nevertheless, if we strike a balance and take the history of each nation or individual as a whole, God’s moral government is now apparent, for we are daily made to see and feel that we are the losers by sinning and the gainers by holiness.

If the balance is to be duly preserved here and a proper concept formed of God’s moral government, then it requires to be pointed out that His justice is tempered with *mercy*, as well as patience. Therefore does He grant “space to repent” (Rev 2:21), and where that clemency be availed of, God acts accordingly. For as many of those divine promises which respect earthly good are conditional upon the performance of obedience, so many of the divine judgments threatened are averted upon a reformation of manners. “If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose [better, ‘think’] to do unto them because of the evil of their doings” (Jer 26:3). Perhaps the most remarkable example of that is seen in the case of wicked Ahab, who, when he heard the sentence of woe pronounced, “rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.” And we are told that the Lord said, “*Because* he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son’s days” (1Ki 21:20-29).

Let us now consider more definitely a few of those Scriptures which make known what God requires of us if we are to enter into and enjoy His best. Some of them have already been before us in a general way, but they require to be examined from a more particular viewpoint. “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for *then* thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and *then* thou shalt have good success” (Jos 1:8). That is so plain no interpreter is needed. “Then,” first, when our speech is ordered by God’s Word, all of our converse being consonant thereto. “The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.” And why? “The law of his God is in his heart” (Psa 37:30-31). Second, in order thereto, it must be made our constant “meditation.” It is by daily pondering the words of Scripture that we obtain a better understanding of them, fix the same in our memories, and become more fully conformed to them in our souls. Third, that our meditation must be with a definite design and practical end: to “do,” to walk obediently.

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him” (2Ch 16:9). The word generally used for “perfect” (*tamim*) signifies sincere, but here a different one (*shalem*) is employed, meaning *whole*. A “whole heart” is in contrast with a “divided” one (Hos 10:2), which pertains to him who vainly seeks to serve two masters: the “double minded man” who “is unstable in all his ways” (Jam 1:8). Those with a whole heart love the Lord their God with all their mind, soul, and strength (Mar 12:30). They make Him their portion, find their delight in Him, constantly seek to please and glorify Him. Their affections are undivided, their aim in life is one, like Caleb, they “*wholly* followed the LORD” (Deu 1:36). And such receive distinctive favours from Him. The “eyes of the LORD” speaks of His knowledge and their running “to and fro throughout the whole earth” (2Ch 16:9) means that He governs this world in infinite wisdom. The reference is to His *providential* dealings: His eye directs His hand, and both are employed in His giving special supplies and support to those who make Him their All in all.

“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psa 1:3). *There* is what we intend by one’s “enjoying God’s *best*.” But to whom does the “he” refer? Why, to the “blessed man” described in the context. The one who has completely broken with the world: who “walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful” (Psa 1:1). Observe that the man whom God pronounces “blessed” is one that is careful about his *walk*. He refuses to follow the advice of the unregenerate. They will urge him to be broad-minded and warn him against being too strict, and press upon him the maxims of the world, but he heeds

them not. He is very particular about his associates, knowing that those with whom he is intimate will either be a help or a hindrance to him spiritually. Evil communications corrupt good manners, and therefore, he refuses to fraternize with the Christless. And so must you, young Christian, if you desire the smile of God to be upon you.

This opening psalm strikes the keynote of the whole psalter, and has for its theme the blessedness of the righteous—i.e. those who tread the paths of righteousness; and contrasts the portion and doom of the ungodly. And the first thing emphasized of the righteous one is that he has turned his back upon the world, for it is at *that* point practical godliness begins. There can be no walking with God, no real communing with Christ, no treading of “the way of peace” (Luk 1:79) until that word is heeded: “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2Co 6:17). Second, it is said of this blessed man, “But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psa 1:2). He is completely subject to God’s authority and makes His revealed will the rule of his life. Nor does he force himself to do so against his inclinations, for his *delight* is in the same. That is evidenced by its constantly engaging his thoughts, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mat 6:21). The mind is regulated by the affections: what the heart is most set upon most engages our thoughts—as gold does the covetous. And the one who conforms to the requirements of Psalm 1:1-2 will certainly experience the blessings of Psalm 1:3.

There is the less need for us to dwell upon other passages, for they speak for themselves. “The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing” (Psa 34:10). That is, those who put Him first (Mat 6:33), who seek Him wholeheartedly (Jer 29:13), who diligently inquire after His will and earnestly endeavour to please and glorify Him in all things, shall not lack any good—which is assured them as an encouragement for obedience. “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Psa 84:11). As the Puritan, Thomas Brooks (1608-1680) pointed out, “Now this choice, this large promise, is made over only to the upright; and therefore, as you would have any share in it, maintain your uprightness.” In his explanation of “them that walk uprightly,” John Gill (1697-1771) included, “Who have their conversation according to the Gospel of Christ, and walk in the sincerity of their hearts.” “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding [see margin] have all they that do his commandments” (Psa 111:10). Upon which J. Gill said, “Some understand it ‘good success’ or ‘prosperity,’” and added, “such usually have prosperity in soul and *body*, in things *temporal* and spiritual,” with which we fully concur.

“Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man” (Pro 3:3-4). Was it not so with Joseph in Egypt (Gen 39)? Was it not so with David in Saul’s household (1Sa 18)? Was it not so with Daniel and his fellows in Babylon? “For God giveth to a man that is *good* in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy” (Ecc 2:26): the phrase “a man that is good in his sight” is rendered “whoso pleaseth God” in Ecclesiastes 7:26. The passages which teach that God deals with men in this life according to their conduct are too many to cite, and the marvel is that the minds of so few professing Christians of this age are really affected by them. Take that well-known word, which has been illustrated all through history, “I will bless them that bless thee [Abram], and curse him that curseth thee” (Gen 12:3), which so far from being exceptional, only exemplifies the principle we are seeking to demonstrate. Take again, “Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth” (Psa 41:1-2).

Consider now some concrete cases. “And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for *because* thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee...And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; *because* thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gen 22:15-18). What could possibly be plainer? So again God said to Isaac, “And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries...*Because* that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments,” etc. (Gen 26:4-5). “But my servant Caleb, *because* he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, *him* will I bring into the land” (Num 14:24). “Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto *him* [Phinehas] my covenant of peace: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; *because* he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel” (Num 25:12-13). “Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb...*because* that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel” (Jos 14:14).

Said David, “The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me” (2Sa 22:21). It seems strange that any one possessed of a spiritual mind should be perplexed by these words, for if they be understood according to their original and obvious meaning, there is nothing in them to occasion any difficulty. Let them be read in the light of their context, and they are clear and simple. David was alluding to God’s delivering of him from Goliath and Saul, and from others of his foes: what had been his

conduct toward them? Had he committed any serious crimes such as warranted their hostility? Had he grievously wronged any of them? Had they justly or unjustly sought his life? Read the record of David's history, and it will be found that it contains not a hint that he coveted the throne or hated Saul. As a fact, he was entirely innocent of any evil designs against any of them who so sorely persecuted him. This is plain from one of his prayers to God, "Let not them that are mine enemies *wrongfully* rejoice over me: neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause" (Psa 35:19).

It was because David had neither given his enemies just reason for the persecution—and because so far from retaliating, he had borne them no malice—that he now enjoyed the testimony of a good conscience. His character has been grievously aspersed and many hideous things laid to his charge, but his conduct had been upright and conscientious to an uncommon degree. "By all his persecutions by Saul, he would not injure him or his party; nay, he employed every opportunity to serve the cause of Israel, though rewarded with envy, treachery, and ingratitude"—Thomas Scott (1747-1821). When we are maligned and opposed by men, it is inestimable consolation to have the assurance of our own heart unto our innocency and integrity; and therefore, we should spare no pains when passing through a season of such trial in exercising ourselves "to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Act 24:16). David, then, was not here giving vent to the boasting of a pharisaical spirit, but was avowing his innocency before the bar of *human* equity. One is not guilty of pride in knowing himself to be innocent, nor is he so when realizing that God is rewarding him in providence because of his integrity, for each is an evident matter of fact.

In saying, "The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness," David enunciated one of the principles operative in the divine government of the world. "Albeit that the dispensations of divine grace are to the fullest degree sovereign and irrespective of human merit, yet in the dealings of Providence, there is often discernible a rule of justice by which the injured are at length avenged, and the righteous ultimately delivered"—Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892). The statement evinces an intelligent grasp of the viewpoint from which David was writing, namely the governmental ways of God in time, and *not* the ground upon which He saves eternally. Those declarations of the psalmist had nothing whatever to do with his justification in the high courts of heaven, but concerned the guiltlessness of his conduct toward his enemies on earth, because of which God delivered him from them. It would indeed be most reprehensible for us to transfer such thoughts as are expressed in 2 Samuel 22:20-28, from the realm of providential government into the spirit and everlasting kingdom; for *there*, grace reigns not only supreme, but alone, in the distribution of divine favours. On the other hand, a godly man with a clear conscience must not deny his own consciousness and hypocritically make himself out to be worse than he is.

There are those who would dismiss by a wave of the hand what has been adduced before by the saying, All that is Old Testament teaching, what occurred under the dispensation of Law. But such an objection is utterly pointless, for the principles of the divine government are *the same* in every era; and therefore, the teaching of the New Testament on this subject is identical with that of the Old. For example: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Mat 5:7). That has nothing whatever to do with "salvation by works," for in those verses, Christ is describing the character of His true disciples. Here He tells us they are "merciful," and in consequence, "shall obtain mercy." It is not that God requires the unregenerate to be merciful in order to entitle them unto His saving mercy, but rather that the regenerate *are* merciful; and according as they act in their true character, so will God order His governmental ways and paternal discipline toward them—"with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Mat 7:2). On the one hand, "With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful" (Psa 18:25); on the other, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mat 6:15).

That both Christ and the Father act toward Christians in keeping with their conduct is clear from John 14:21, 23—such "manifestations" are withheld from those who fail to walk obediently. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Heb 6:10), which clearly implies that He would be unrighteous if He did not reward their benevolence. "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it" (1Pe 3:10-11). "We have here an excellent prescription for a comfortable, happy life in this querulous, ill-natured world"—Matthew Henry (1662-1714). To those who follow that prescription, J. Gill said, "Such shall inherit the blessing both *here* and hereafter:" "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, *because* we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1Jo 3:22)! "*Because* thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev 3:10).

MARCH

IDENTIFICATION OF THE GODLY

For the past few years, we have endeavored to help some of God's unestablished children by devoting one article annually (under this title) to the particular end of resolving their uncertainty. In order that they may recognize their spiritual portrait, we seek to describe one or other of those features of the regenerate which the Holy Spirit has drawn in the Scriptures. So far from despising those who are deeply exercised as to their actual state, refusing to "give themselves the benefit of the doubt," we admire their caution. God has exhorted His people to "make [their] calling and election sure" (2Pe 1:10), and one of the ways we may set about doing so is to prayerfully and humbly compare our hearts and lives with those marks of grace, or fruits of the Spirit, which are delineated in the Bible. God's Word is likened unto a "glass" in which we may behold ourselves (Jam 1:23-24) and perceive what we are by nature, and what we have been made by grace. May each of us be granted eyes to see ourselves as that divine Mirror represents us.

"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word...It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes...I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (Psa 119:67, 71, 75). We link these three verses together because they treat of the same subject, namely the attitude of the heart of one who had been afflicted by God. Each of them breathes the language of a gracious soul, and not that of a natural man. Each of them acknowledges the beneficial effects of sanctified trials. Each of them evidences a humble heart, for so far from murmuring at God's dispensations—unpleasant though they be to flesh and blood—there is a grateful acknowledgement of their benevolent design. Each of them is a confession made not while smarting under the rod, but *after* it has done its appointed work. If our readers can truthfully make such language their own, then have they good reason to conclude they are bound in the same "bundle of life" (1Sa 25:29) as David.

The first is the expression of an *honest* heart, for it freely owns that before affliction he had "gone astray." Since the "flesh" still remains in the Christian's heart, he is very prone to stray from God; yea, unless he be diligent in watching and praying against temptation and daily mortifying his lusts, he is certain to do so. That evil tendency is much stimulated by temporal success, for then we are far more apt to indulge the flesh than deny it. "But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; *then* he forsook God" (Deu 32:15). "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear" (Jer 22:21). By such backsliding, we bring down upon ourselves the rod of God—to curb further excesses of carnality, and to drive us back into the paths of righteousness. God often sends a worm to smite the gourd of our creature comforts (Jon 4:7), and prosperity is followed by adversity; but if that affliction be blest to us, then do we keep the Word as we did not previously (Luk 2:19).

The second is the breathing of a *grateful* heart: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted" (Psa 119:71). Very different is the sentiment of the natural man. Scripture declares, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth" (Job 5:17), but the world imagines that happy is he who is exempt from trials and troubles. Which do you agree with, my reader? Yet it is one thing to give a general assent to the inspired declaration, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law" (Psa 94:12), but it is quite another to learn by experience the benefits of affliction. To be meekly reconciled to our tribulations is a great mercy, but to have personal proof that, though the medicine be unpalatable, its effects are salutary, is yet better. Such is the result in those who are "exercised" under the chastening hand of Their Father (Heb 12:11). "The Philistines could not understand Samson's riddle—how 'Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness' (Jdg 14:14). As little can the world comprehend the fruitfulness of the Christian's trials: how his gracious Lord sweetens the 'bitter' waters of Marah (Exo 15:23)"—Charles Bridges (1794-1869).

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted" (Psa 119:71). God has many ways of afflicting. In the context, David mentions those who had opposed and maligned him. At the time, he may have felt it keenly, but later, he real-

ized it was a mercy. It is good for us when *we* have solid reason to make this acknowledgment. What is our chief “good”? Is it not the enjoyment of God? Then how thankful should we be for anything which draws us nearer unto Him! “LORD, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them” (Isa 26:16). God is then sought unto more earnestly and persistently. When settled on our leas, our devotions are very apt to become formal and mechanical, but when our nest is disturbed, we “*pour out* a prayer” or a “secret speech” (margin)—i.e. the groanings of the heart. Sanctified afflictions wean us from the creature, make the conscience more tender, call into exercise our graces, and quicken us in the path of duty. If we can discover such beneficial effects, must we not exclaim, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted”!

The third is the language of *discernment*. “I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are *right*, and that thou in *faithfulness* hast afflicted me” (Psa 119:75)—“judgments” here refer not (as often in the Psalms) to the equitable laws of God, but to His governmental dealings—in punishing the wicked or in correcting His people. Nor was David speaking of the knowledge of carnal reason, but of that which faith and a spiritual experience supplies. He condemned himself, acknowledging that his waywardness had called for the rod. When the empty professor is sorely afflicted, he says, “What have I done to deserve this?” Others less rebellious, but equally self-righteous, ask, “Why should I be singled out as a mark for adversity?” Very different are the sentiments of the godly: they *vindicate* the Lord. So far from deeming themselves to be dealt with unjustly, or even harshly, they exonerate the hand that smites them. The wicked recognize not the One who is dealing with them, looking no farther than secondary causes or human instruments. But the eyes of faith behold Him who is invisible: not only as a provider and comforter, but also as a chastiser and afflicter; and that, not only in love, but in righteousness: “Thy judgments are *right*.”

“Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.” Numerous sermons have been preached upon the faithfulness of God and many pieces written upon this divine perfection, yet few have preserved the balance thereon. It requires to be shown that God is not only true to His Word in making good His promises, but also in fulfilling His threatenings; faithful not only in providing for His people, but also in dealing with their follies. We frequently hear of God’s covenant-faithfulness, but we are not so often reminded that *chastisement* is one of the articles in His covenant. “If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments...Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes...My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips” (Psa 89:30-34). “Our Father is no Eli: He will not suffer His children to sin without rebuke”—Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892). Therefore, it is their duty to *own* His integrity while enduring His faithful discipline. This is what David here did: he acknowledged that God was fulfilling His covenant engagement, and he made that avowal not sullenly, but thankfully; yea, he made it adoringly, for he knew that God also had his welfare in view.

Now, my reader, measure yourself by what has been pointed out above. Do *you* say, “I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him” (Mic 7:9)? Have you learned by experience that affliction is made a school to God’s people, in which they learn many valuable lessons—both about themselves and God, and about their duties and privileges? Have you discovered by first-hand acquaintance that chastisement is a beneficial medicine to subdue pride, purge of carnality, and heal backslidings? Has the rod recovered you from your wanderings? Can you say from the heart, “It is *good* for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn [experimentally] thy statutes” (Psa 119:71)? Do you freely own that God’s providential dealings with you—His “judgments”—are *right*: just and equitable? Yea, do you feel that God has dealt far more leniently than your “iniquities deserve” (Ezr 9:13)? Do you aver that God is faithful, not only in Himself, but in smiting you? Then you have Scriptural ground for concluding that a miracle of grace has been wrought in your soul.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

51. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

We frequently take occasion in these pages to emphasize the importance and need of preserving *the balance* of truth, for in so doing, we are really calling attention to the method followed by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, and that cannot be ignored without our suffering serious loss. There is a most blessed mingling together in the Word of those different elements which are so essential unto a well-rounded Christian life—as in the natural world [where] God has provided various kinds of food suited to the several needs of our bodies. A striking example of this is

found in the immediate context of that prayer, which is here to engage our attention. In 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 13 and 14, one of the fundamental articles of our most holy faith is expressed; yet not in a cold and formal manner, but rather as that which occasioned deep and constant thanksgiving. Next, in verse 15, the corresponding duty is enforced, the obligations which such a disclosure of divine grace devolves upon the favoured objects and recipients of it. Then follows our prayer, which, as we shall see, really grows out of verses 13 to 15. Thus we have here: doctrinal declaration, practical exhortation, and earnest supplication—and *that* is what both preachers and hearers should ever blend together, and in that order.

What has just been pointed out is too weighty for us to dismiss without a further word of amplification. After describing the fearful judgment which God sends upon those who receive not His truth in the love of it, the apostle's mind turned unto those who were the objects of the divine favour, which moved him to exclaim, "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2Th 2:13). That should ever be the effect upon a child of God as he solemnly contemplates the doom of unbelievers: hearty thanksgiving should issue from his soul at the realization that the Lord eternally set His heart upon an elect company whom He appointed unto deliverance from the wrath to come. But what we would here particularly note is that God's eternal election does not preclude effectual calling, nor does either render needless the exercise of our moral agency: those "beloved of the Lord"—all of them, yet none other—are "chosen...to salvation *through* sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Those three things must never be separated.

First, from the beginning, "chosen...to salvation": God's sovereign and eternal decree being the originating cause of salvation. Second, that decree is fulfilled "through" or by means of the "sanctification of the Spirit," the reference being to His quickening operation, when by the miracle of regeneration, He sets them apart from those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Third, God's eternal decree is only accomplished when the subjects of it personally appropriate the truth of the Gospel unto themselves. While in their unregenerate state, they were incapable of any saving "belief of the truth," for their corrupt hearts were hostile to it, in love with error and sin. But when the miracle of grace is wrought within them, their enmity against God is slain, and the Gospel is welcomed as exactly suited to their dire need, and is cordially embraced by them. Thus, they spell out their election and evince their effectual call by the Holy Spirit through their "belief of the truth." Thereby, the beloved of the Lord are brought to concur with God's will in their salvation in the way of His appointing. So far from the elect being saved—whether they believe or no—they do not enter into God's salvation except through their "belief of the truth."

Further, the regeneration of God's beloved—their belief of the truth, and their initial participation in God's so great salvation—does not render them unfit subjects for exhortation; on the contrary, their accountability must be enforced and their moral agency brought into exercise. Those who have received spiritual life require instructing, calling upon, to "stir up the gift of God, which is in thee" (2Ti 1:6), and urged to perform their duties. Accordingly, we find the apostle at once bidding them, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2Th 2:15). Paul did not deem such an exhortation "legalistic," nor useless, because assured that "ye both do and *will do* the things which we command you" (2Th 3:4). The operations of divine grace do not set aside the discharge of human responsibility, but are an equipping thereunto: our concurrence with God is required unto the end of our earthly course. Yet such exhorting of the saints thereunto is far from implying any sufficiency in them to comply therewith in their own strength. Paul knew full well his order would prevail little with them without the divine blessing upon the same; therefore did he add supplication thereunto.

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work" (2Th 2:16-17). As we have pointed out on former occasions, these Thessalonian saints were enduring a great fight of affliction from without; and therefore did their ministerial father here seek to occupy them with the rich compensations and provisions which the divine Lovers of their souls had made for their peace and cheer. They had been experiencing many "persecutions and tribulations" (2Th 1:4); and therefore did he make earnest intercession for them that they might be further comforted of God and energized by His grace unto the close of life. Having already considered the setting or connections of this prayer, it remains for us to ponder, first, its *addressees*, or the objects to whom it is made; second, its *grounds of confidence* for an answer; third, its specific *requests*; and seeking to make application of the whole unto ourselves today.

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father" are the Addressees. In the original, there is an emphasis which is not preserved in our more euphonious translation, the Greek reading, "Now Himself Lord, our Jesus Christ, and God and Father our." First, let us carefully notice the fact that here is still another instance where prayer is made directly unto the Redeemer. While it is incumbent upon us to approach the Father and direct our pe-

titions unto Him in and through the mediation of our great High Priest—owning the fact that there is no other way and means of access to Him—yet it is equally our privilege and duty to address ourselves immediately to the Son, that *He* may receive the honour and homage which are His due as being one with the Father; and also that we should acknowledge Him as the purchaser and bestower of all our spiritual blessings. The “which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation” that immediately follows takes in both the Son and the Father, and since we are indebted to the One as much as to the Other, Each is to be equally loved, revered, and magnified by us. Especially should faith be acted upon both the Father and the Son in a season of persecution and tribulation since we are assured that Both have our best interests at heart.

Second, let us carefully attend to the manner in which the Son is here presented to our notice: “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself.” There is an order and emphasis here which are sadly lacking in modern ministry. The apostle declared, “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus *the Lord*” (2Co 4:5), “preaching peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)” (Act 10:36). Christ is “Lord” in two ways. First, by that right which pertains to Him as the Creator, which right belongs to Him equally with the Father and the Spirit. As the Creator of the world, He is the Sovereign of it, as appeared by the winds and waves obeying His word. Second, by a new right of dominion, which belongs to Him as Redeemer. This is partly by divine donation: “All power is *given* unto me in heaven and in earth” (Mat 28:18); “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God *hath made* that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Act 2:36); having “put all things under his feet” (Eph 1:22). It is also His right by purchase and conquest: “For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living” (Rom 14:9). By His death He merited; and by His resurrection, He attained unto the exalted station of universal dominion—“upholding all things by the word of his power” (Heb 1:3 and compare Rev 1:18).

By a *passive subjection*, all creatures in heaven and in earth are under the power and dominion of the Son of God and our Redeemer, as will openly appear at the last great Day, when in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, “of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phi 2:10-11). And therefore are even the kings and great men of the earth now bidden to “Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling” (Psa 2:10-11). Likewise, is everyone who hears the Gospel required to do so, for therein are Christ’s dignities and rights made known unto men, and those who “*obey not* the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2Th 1:8-9). Thus, the first duty of the evangelist is to press upon his hearers the claims of Christ: calling upon them to throw down “the weapons of [their] warfare” (2Co 10:4) against Him and submit to His scepter, to cease serving sin and Satan and yield themselves to His sway. Upon His entrance into this world, the divine announcement was made, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luk 2:11), for it is only as the throne of the heart be freely offered unto Christ that He becomes the “Saviour” of any one—i.e. of those who cease being rebels against Him.

That which distinguishes Christians from non-Christians is that they have surrendered themselves to the authority of Christ: that He is their Lord by *voluntary submission*. “But first gave their own selves to the Lord” (2Co 8:5)—that is, they repudiated the world, the flesh, and the devil, took His yoke upon them, and solemnly covenanted to henceforth love and serve Him alone (Isa 26:13). The word to Christians is, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus *the Lord*, so walk ye in him” (Col 2:6). They have intelligently and freely accepted Him as their Lord, renouncing all other “lords” and idols, enthroning Him in their affections, and desiring Him to rule their lives. That is exactly what a true conversion consists of: a turning from sin to Christ, a ceasing from self-pleasing, to be in subjection to His authority; and the sins of all such (and of none other) are pardoned as they trust in His blood. That is the order in our present verse: “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself.” He is not “*our* Jesus Christ” until He has first been received as *Lord*! That is ever the order of Scripture: “My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luk 1:46-47). “The everlasting kingdom of our [1] Lord and [2] Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 1:11). “Through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 2:20). “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 3:18).

Man, with his invariable perversity, has reversed *God’s* order. Modern evangelism urges giddy worldlings, with sense of their lost condition, to “accept Christ as their personal Saviour”; and when such “converts” prove unsatisfactory to the “churches,” special meetings are arranged where they are pressed to “consecrate themselves unto Christ as Lord.” Christ must be received according to God’s appointed terms: He is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey* him” (Heb 5:9). But the heart-language of all who despise and reject Him is, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luk 19:14). In contrast, of the saints it is said, “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself.” To which the apostle here added, “And God, even our Father.” He too stands in a double relation to us: our “God” by sovereign dominion, and our “Father” by gracious regeneration. The two divine Persons were here conjointly addressed to evince Their co-equality and to teach us that we must not look to and rest in the Mediator unto

the exclusion or even the neglect of exercising a lively faith upon the One who sent Him. Having referred first to the One whose work on the soul is the more immediate, the apostle guards against giving the impression that the Father is any less deeply interested in our welfare than is the Son.

“Which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.” Those words reveal the various *grounds* for the apostle’s confidence that an answer would be granted to the petitions which follow. They are to be regarded as “the grounds of audience and success,” as they are well styled by Thomas Manton (1620-1677)—from whose sermons on this prayer we shall draw in the sequel. This clause is intimately connected with the preceding one, as its opening “Which” intimates, for that pronoun includes both the Persons here addressed. First, “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself.” In this divine adoration, the apostle would exalt *Him* in the esteem of the saints as co-equal with the Father. The emphatic “Himself” at the beginning of the sentence was designed to contrast *His* almighty power and infinite love with the comparatively feeble affection which Paul bore unto the suffering Thessalonians and the ministerial assistance he sought to render them, as well as with *their* inability to “stand fast” in their own strength. Second, “And God, even our Father.” He too had their welfare equally at heart and must be given equal place in their thoughts and affections as commended to them by the endearing “our”—*our* God and Father.

“Which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.” Taking the three together, we may observe what a strong emphasis is here laid upon the fact that the saints’ consolations and comforts proceed from pure and bounteous benignity. First, we are shown that divine love is their fountain or original; then we are told the same are “given” us, and nothing is more free than a gift; and last, they are plainly declared to be “through grace.” Therein the apostle found encouragement and emboldenment to seek further blessings for these saints. And thus, too, it needs to be with us when about to pray. Nothing is more assuring to the heart than the realization that we are approaching the bounteous One “that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not” (Jam 1:5). Nothing is better suited to dispel our doubts and fears than the knowledge that it is at “the throne of *grace*” (Heb 4:16) we are invited to boldly draw nigh. Well suited is such a throne unto beggars, who have no merits of their own. Equally fitted for the ill-deserving and defiled, who come to confess their sins. Let all such recall that they are coming to “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10), whose mercy is free, infinite, and “endureth for ever.”

Considering separately or distinctly these grounds of assurance for a hearing at the Mercyseat, we may view the divine love as the cause, and the everlasting consolation and good hope as the effects of the same. “Which hath loved us” refers to both the Son and the Father. In the economy of redemption, the love of the Father is first, for so far from Christ having procured the love of the Father unto His people, it was His love which furnished Him for them. “For God so loved the world, that *he* gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Joh 3:16). The love of God unto His elect is the spring of all their blessings. It was His love which chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world: “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated [them] unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself” (Eph 1:4-5). It was His love which provided a Saviour for them: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1Jo 4:10). It was His love which gave the Holy Spirit to quicken us: “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer 31:3). It is His love which chastens us when we sin (Heb 12:6), and which suffers nothing to separate us from Him in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:39).

Equally is the love of the Son made manifest in His redemption of His people. It was His love for them which made Him willing to become their surety, to take upon Himself the form of a servant, and to be made in the likeness of sin’s flesh. It was His love for them which moved Him to take upon Himself their debts and discharge their obligations, being made under the Law that He might render perfect obedience unto its precepts in their behalf, and suffer its awful curse in their stead. “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph 5:25). “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Joh 15:13). How we need to pray with the apostle that we may “*know* the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge” (Eph 3:19)—that is, that we may be constantly occupied with it, that we may have more spiritual conceptions of it, be nourished by and swallowed up in it. Says the Saviour of our souls, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you” (Joh 15:9): particularly should that be remembered as we draw nigh to Him in prayer. What liberty of approach and freedom of utterance are mine when I realize I am about to petition the One “who loved me, and gave himself for *me*” (Gal 2:20), and that His love is ever the same toward me!

Though it falls not strictly within the scope of our present verse, yet for the benefit of young preachers, we will devote one paragraph to the love of the Spirit, for which we are as much indebted as for the Father’s and the Son’s. “*God is love*” (1Jo 4:8, 16) is to be understood equally of each of the three Persons. In Romans 15:30, distinct men-

tion is made of “the love of the Spirit,” yet how little is ever heard of the same! The entire work and ministry of the Spirit unto the saints is one of fathomless and amazing love. It is in love that He sought them out when they were dead in sin. It is in love that He quickened them into newness of life, for nothing but love could have moved Him to take pity upon such vile and leprous creatures. It is in incomprehensible love that He takes up His abode within our hearts. What a marvel that the Holy Spirit should indwell such worms of the earth and make our bodies His temples! It is in love that He bears with our infirmities and “maketh intercession for us” (Rom 8:26-27). Infinitely patient is His long-suffering unto us. It is in love that He bears witness with our spirits that we are the sons of God. It is in love that He teaches, guides, strengthens, fructifies, and preserves us unto the end. Then let us be far more on our guard against *grieving* this Lover of our souls.

“Which hath loved us.” *That* is what the apostle eyed first as he was about to make supplication for those tried saints; and that is what *our* faith must never lose sight of, for nothing else will so keep our hearts warm and our affections fresh unto God. All of God’s dispensations unto and all of His dealings with us should be considered in the light of His infinite and unchanging love for us. Yet that is only possible as *faith* is daily exercised thereon. When His providences are contemplated and interpreted by carnal reason, unbelief will cloud our vision, and we give the devil an advantage to inject into our minds poisonous and blasphemous aspersions against God. It is one of the Enemy’s favourite devices to induce a Christian to entertain doubts of God’s love toward him, especially so in a time of trial or tribulation; and nought but “the shield of faith” (Eph 6:16) can stop his fiery darts. Faith resists his evil suggestions, looks away from the things seen, and lays hold upon the declarations and promises of Him who has covenanted with his people: “I will not turn away from them, to do them good” (Jer 32:40). *There* is solid ground to rest upon amid the storms of life. There is an unfailing cordial for the fainting heart.

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.*

—William Cowper (1731-1800)

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

31. Jericho, Part 1 (6:1-2)

We have now arrived at what is perhaps the most interesting and instructive incident recorded in this book, namely, the fall of Jericho, which appears to have been the principal stronghold of the Canaanites. Up to this point, everything had been more or less preliminary and preparatory; now the real task before them must be faced and tackled: the Canaanites must be dispossessed if Israel were to occupy their goodly heritage. They had already received very great encouragement in connection with the Jordan, where the Lord had so signally undertaken for them by the might of His power. Having attended to the important duty of circumcision and having kept the feast of the Passover, they were now fitted and furnished to go forward. What a parable was that of the beginning of the Christian life! Having been made the subject of the miracle of regeneration, plucked as a brand from the burning, the sinner saved by divine grace now enters upon a new life—one as radically different in character as Israel’s after they left the wilderness behind. Having obediently submitted to the ordinance of baptism and fed on the antitypical Lamb, the believer is not to settle upon his oars, but is called upon to engage in spiritual warfare and glorify God “as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2Ti 2:3), serving under His banner and doing exploits, overcoming his foes and entering into a present possession of his inheritance.

Jericho was a frontier town and key city. It was a powerful fortress barring Israel's ingress. Its capture was indispensable before any progress could be made by Israel in conquering and occupying the land of Canaan. It was the enemy's leading fastness, which doubtless they considered to be quite impregnable; and the destruction of it would not only be a great encouragement unto Israel, but must still further dismay the remaining Canaanites. In its overthrow, we perceive how different are the ways of God from man's, and with what ease His accomplishes His purposes. Here we behold how futile are the efforts of those who oppose Him, and how worthless the refuges in which they vainly seek shelter. In this memorable episode, we are taught how the people of God are to act if they would have Him show Himself strong in their behalf: how that carnal scheming and worldly methods are given no place; but instead, faith, obedience, courage, and patience must be exercised, if they would obtain the victory over their foes. In what is here to be before us, we see not Israel acting on the defensive, seeking to protect themselves from the attacks of others, but rather under divine orders, taking the initiative and assuming the offensive, which tells us there is an *active side* to the Christian warfare, as well as a passive one—something which is too often forgotten by many of us.

We must not lose sight of the close connection between what is now to be before us and that which engaged our attention in the preceding article. There we beheld Joshua alone by Jericho, apparently reconnoitering that fortress and noting its formidable strength—compare our remarks on chapter 3, verses 1 and 2, where Israel was required to take full stock of the flooded river which barred their entrance into Canaan. While so engaged, Israel's leader was suddenly confronted with a mysterious Personage “with his sword drawn in his hand” who, upon being asked, “Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?” replied, “Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come” (Jos 5:13-14). Just as Jehovah had appeared to Moses at the burning bush, before he entered upon his great task of leading the children of Israel out of the house of bondage and Moses received assurance that God had “come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exo 3:8), so Joshua was then given promise that an all-sufficient Leader would take charge of Israel's host and conduct them to complete victory. That we *should* link together Exodus 3:1-10, and Joshua 5:13-15, is intimated by the fact that on each occasion, the appearing of the Lord was marked by the command, “Loose thy shoe” (Jos 5:15) [“Put off thy shoes from off thy feet” (Exo 3:5)].

As stated in our last article, the second main division of the book of Joshua commences as chapter 5, verse 13 (that section which has for its theme, *The Conquest of the Land*); and therefore, it behoves us to pay extra close attention to its *opening* verses. The incident described therein is not only introductory to what follows in the next six chapters, but it furnishes the key to their right interpretation. The appearing of the Angel of the Lord unto Moses at the burning bush had a deeper design than the strengthening of his heart, being a symbolical representation of the people of God then—in “the iron furnace” (Deu 4:20) and the “furnace of affliction” (Isa 48:10)—and that the Lord Himself was present with them in it: “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them” (Isa 63:9, and compare Mat 25:36; Act 9:10-13). But in Joshua 5:13-15, the Lord is viewed as no longer suffering in and with His people, but stands forth as their Captain, to command and lead them in battle. It was plain intimation that this was not Israel's quarrel in which they should seek divine assistance; but Jehovah's own quarrel, and Israel was but a division of *His* “host.” The wars of Israel are expressly called “the wars of the LORD” (Num 21:14). Israel's destruction of the Canaanites was no private vengeance, but divine, because their iniquities were now come to the “full” (Gen 15:16; Lev 18:25-28).

Far more was involved here than appears on the surface; and it is only by carefully comparing Scripture with Scripture that we can discover what was really taking place behind the scenes. The dispossession of the Canaanites from their native land should cause us no uneasiness, for it was no unrighteous act on Israel's part; rather were they made the instruments of God's holy judgment upon those who had persisted so long in their abominations that nought remained but their extermination. We need to look above the human side of things here, and contemplate them in the light of that expression, “the wars of the LORD” (Num 21:14), for that is what they were. It was more than human forces which were involved on both sides, namely, divine and infernal Jehovah Himself was now waging war upon Satan and his hosts. The Canaanites were devoted to idolatry and necromancy, using divination, being enchanters, witches, charmers, consultants with familiar spirits; and as Moses had announced, “because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee” (Deu 18:9-14)! As the apostle also informs us, “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to *devils*, and not to God” (1Co 10:20). God, then, was here waging war upon the powers of darkness, and—as was evident at the Red Sea—none could withstand *Him*.

The subject is admittedly mysterious, yet sufficient light is cast upon it by the Word of God to enable us to perceive something of its real character. When man apostatized from God, he became the captive of the devil; and when Christ came here to effect the redemption of His enslaved people, He had first to conquer their captor. The Gospels make it clear that Christ's conflict was far more than one with men who hated Him, namely, against the

prince of this world—it was Satan who “entered...into Judas” (Luk 22:3) and moved him to perform his dastardly work. The “strong man armed” (Luk 11:21) kept his palace, and his goods were in peace. But when “a stronger than he shall come upon him,” He overcame him and took from him all his armour which he trusted, and “divideth his spoils” (Luk 11:21-22, and compare Isa 53:12); “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death” (Heb 2:14); “having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Col 2:15). Likewise, His soldiers are bidden to “put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”; the reason given being, “for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:11-12)! How little is this realized!

“Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in” (Jos 6:1). This at once arrests our attention. They were not willing to issue forth and fight against Israel in the open. The fear of the Lord was upon them. What Jehovah wrought for His obedient people at the Jordan had struck terror into their souls. They were made to realize that One was with them who could not be withstood. “And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their *heart melted*, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel” (Jos 5:1). Consequently, their hope now lay in the height and strength of the walls of Jericho. There they sheltered, yet in a spirit of uneasiness. When there is an ungrieved Spirit in the midst of God’s people, not only are *they* made the subjects of His quickening, fructifying, and comforting influences, but those that are *without* are awed by His power! It is the absence of His restraint which explains the present lawlessness of society.

“Now Jericho was straitly shut up.” The attentive reader will observe that the margin has it, “did shut up and was shut up.” It is an expressive emphasis in the Hebrew, like dying “thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17) and “in blessing I will bless thee” (Gen 22:17). All the passages of ingress and egress were closed: the heavy gates barred, the inhabitants shut in by the massive walls. But what could *such* measures avail them? What are bolts and bars unto Him who can make the iron gate of a city “[open] to them of his own accord” (Act 12:10), and cause “all the doors” of a prison to be opened when He pleases (Act 16:26)? Verily, “except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Psa 127:1). How little is that apprehended by this materialistic generation, who give little or no thought at all unto the agency of God in human affairs! What a rude awakening awaits them at the moment of death, and in the Day to come, when it shall be made to appear before an assembled universe that any other refuge than Christ Himself in which sinners sought shelter, stood them in no better stead in the hour of trial than Jericho did the Canaanites!

Jericho was one of those well-secured cities of Canaan; of which it is said, “The cities are walled, and very great” (Num 13:28); and which, to the carnal spies, appeared utterly unassailable (Deu 1:28). It was therefore a *challenge to faith*—just as was Jordan. God did not work that first miracle before Israel’s faith was put to the proof, but *afterward*. The priests bearing the ark were required, at the divine command, “When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan” (Jos 3:8); and it was not until they had complied with that order that the Lord wrought so wondrously for them: “And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped *in* the brim of the water...That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap” (Jos 3:15-16). So it was at Jericho. The Captain of the Lord’s host had declared He would undertake for Israel, yet here was this citadel barred against them! Its gates were not opened by divine hand, nor was its king panic-stricken so that he surrendered to them. No; “Jericho was straitly shut up.” *That* was what confronted outward sight! So it is in our experiences today. “According to your faith be it unto you” (Mat 9:29—it is in response to *that*, God works.

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour” (Jos 6:2). Very blessed is that. The Lord graciously made free with His servant, and before the campaign opened, assured him of the complete success of the same. But let us not fail to call to mind that which had immediately preceded this favour, for there is an inseparable moral connection between them, which it behoves us to note. Joshua himself, the priests, and the whole nation had exercised an exemplary obedience to the divine will and had manifested a real concern for the divine glory—in circumcising the men and in celebrating the Passover feast. It is ever God’s way to make free with us when everything is right between Him and our souls. Thus we have illustrated and exemplified here yet another effect that always follows when there is an ungrieved Spirit in the midst of a company of saints. Not only does He awe those who are without, but divine communications are freely vouchsafed unto those who are within! That ought to be a normal and regular experience, and not an occasional and extraordinary one. As the Lord Jesus declared, “He that hath my commandments, and *keepeth them*, he it is that

loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest* myself to him” (Joh 14:21).

Above, we have said that this confronting of Jericho “straitly shut up” was a challenge to faith, and that God acts “according to” our faith. But faith must ever have a foundation to rest upon, and here one was afforded the same. That word, “See, I have given into thine hand Jericho,” was instructive and emphatic. “See” was a definite call to view things with the eye of the spirit rather than that of the body: contemplate this obstacle by faith and not by carnal reason. Just as at the Red Sea, the word was, “Stand still, and *see* the salvation of the LORD, which he *will* shew to you to day: . . . The LORD shall fight for you” (Exo 14:13-14). Yet they saw not that “salvation” or deliverance *outwardly* until they had, in faith and obedience, complied with the divine order, “speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward” (Exo 14:15). They were required to “see” God’s promised deliverance by faith before it was accomplished unto outward sight! It was the same thing here: “See, I have given into thine hand Jericho.” Have you, my reader, *thus* “seeth” that blessed One of whom previously you had only “heard” (Job 42:5)? Have you thus “[seen] him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27)? Have you thus “seen” your final and complete victory over sin and death? Have you thus *seen* that place which your Redeemer has gone to prepare for you? That is what faith is: “the *substance* of things hoped for, the *evidence* of things not seen” (Heb 11:1)!

But let us now direct attention unto a different aspect of this gracious message of Jehovah’s unto Joshua and emphasize another word in it: “See, I have *given* into thine hand Jericho.” That needs to be carefully attended to in this connection by some of our readers, for it refutes one of the principal errors of the “Dispensationalists,” who declare that under the old covenant, God dealt with his people in an entirely different manner from what He now does with His saints under the new covenant—insisting that throughout the Mosaic economy, everything was regulated by law and strict justice, whereas Christians are dealt with by grace and are not under the law. What crass ignorance such teaching betrays! Teaching which is expressly disproved by Romans 4:1-8, and the whole of Hebrews 11. From the days of Abel until the end of the world, God has only one way of salvation for lost sinners: by grace, through faith, not through works. Yet it is a grace which ever maintains the requirements of holiness and enforces human responsibility, as it is a faith which manifests its reality and spirituality by performing good works. The temporal inheritance that was bestowed upon the nation of Israel proceeded as truly from divine bounty, or free grace, as does the eternal inheritance of the Church. Necessarily so, for the earthly Canaan was a figure and emblem of the heavenly Canaan, and the type perfectly conformed to the anti-type. It was a divine *gift* and not a wage which Israel earned by their own efforts.

ENJOYING GOD’S BEST

Part 3

Having shown at some length in the preceding articles that the Old and New Testament alike teach there *is* such a thing as entering into and enjoying God’s best—that if we meet His just requirements, He will make our way prosperous—we must turn now to the darker side of the subject, and face the fact that it is sadly possible to *miss* God’s best and bring down upon ourselves adversity. God has not only promised “no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Psa 84:11), but He has also plainly informed us, “Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you” (Jer 5:25). Upon which John Gill (1697-1771) said, “These mercies were kept back from them in order to humble them, and to bring them to a sense of their sins, and an acknowledgement of them.” Adversities do not come upon us at haphazard, but from the hand of God; nor does He appoint them arbitrarily, but righteously. God will no more wink at the sins of His people than He will at those of the worldlings: were He to do so, He would not maintain the honour of his house. As Thomas Manton (1620-1677) also pointed out on Jeremiah 5:25, “If there be any restraint of God’s blessing, it is because of man’s sin.”

“The way of transgressors is hard” (Pro 13:15): while no doubt the primary reference there is unto the wicked, yet the principle expressed applies unmistakably to the redeemed as well. If, on the one hand, in keeping God’s commandments there is “great reward,” on the other hand, the breaking of them involves great loss. If it be true that Wisdom’s “ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Pro 3:17), certain it is that if we turn from

her ways, we shall be made to smart for it. Alas, how often we stand in our own light and choke the current of God's favours. It is not only an "evil thing," but a "bitter" one to forsake the "LORD [our] God" (Jer 2:19). That is why sin is so often termed "folly," for it is not only a crime against God, but madness toward ourselves. Many are the mischiefs caused by our sinning, the chief of which is that we obstruct the flow of God's blessings. Sin costs us dear, for it not only immediately takes from us, but it prevents our future receiving of divine bounties. In other words, willful sinning prevents our receiving God's best for us.

"Believe in the LORD your God, *so* shall ye be established; believe his prophets, *so* shall ye prosper" (2Ch 20:20) states the principle clearly enough. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and your souls shall be settled in peace and joy; receive with submission every discovery of His will through His Word and servants, and His providential smile shall be your portion. But, conversely, lean unto your own understanding and suffer unbelief to prevail, and assurance and tranquility of soul will wane and vanish; let self-will and self-pleasing dominate, and His providences will frown upon you. The connection between conduct and its consequences cannot be broken. Walk in the way of faith and holiness and God is pleased, and will evidence His pleasure toward us; enter the paths of unrighteousness and God is provoked, and will visit His displeasure upon us. When Israel's land was laid waste and their cities were burned, they were told, "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way?" (Jer 2:17). Upon which Matthew Henry (1662-1714) said, "Whatever trouble we are in at any time, we may thank ourselves for it, for we bring it upon our own hands by our forsaking of God." "The curse causeless shall not come" (Pro 26:2).

Missing God's best is true of the *unsaved*. As long as unbelievers are left in this world, opportunity is given them of escaping from the wrath to come. Therefore they are exhorted—in the Scriptures, if not from the pulpit—"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isa 55:6). For the same reason, there is a *door* represented as being *open* to them, which the Master of the house will one day rise up and shut to (Luk 13:24-25). Nothing could more clearly express the danger of delay than the language used in such passages. Nor is there anything in them which at all clashes with the divine decrees. As one has pointed out, "All allow that men have opportunity in *natural* things to do what they do not, and to obtain what they obtain not; and if that be consistent with a universal providence which performeth all things that are appointed for us (Job 23:14), why cannot the other consist with the purpose of Him who does nothing without a plan, but 'worketh all things after the counsel of his own will' (Eph 1:11)."

Slothfulness is no excuse in those who refuse to improve their lot; nor is intemperance any extenuation for a man's bringing upon himself physical, financial, and moral disaster. Still less does either prejudice or indolence release any from his accountability to accept the free offer of the Gospel. "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?" (Pro 17:16). The "price in the hand" signifies the means and opportunity. "Wisdom" may be understood both naturally and spiritually. The "fool" is the one who fails to obtain what he might well and should procure. The reason he does not is simply that he lacks "a heart" or desire and determination. As M. Henry said, "He has set his heart upon other things, so that he has no heart to do his duty, or to the great concerns of this soul." Such fools the world is full of: they prefer sin to holiness, this world rather than heaven. "He who in his bargains exchanges precious things for trifles is a fool. Thus do men sell their time which is their money given for eternity, and they sell it for things unsatisfying, they sell themselves for naught"—Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680); and thereby they miss God's best.

"Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?" (Pro 17:16). After interpreting those words first as natural wisdom and knowledge, and "the price" as the worldly substance which a foolish man spends on riotous living, instead of purchasing useful books for the improvement of his mind, none other than John Gill said upon its higher application: "Spiritual wisdom and knowledge: the means of which are reading the Word, frequent opportunities for attending on a Gospel ministry...conversation with Gospel ministers and other Christians; but instead of making use of these, he neglects, slights, and despises them. And it is asked, with some degree of indignation and astonishment, why or to what purpose a fool is favoured with such means? *seeing* he hath no heart to it? To wisdom: he does not desire it, nor to make use of the price or means in order to obtain it; all is lost upon him, and it is hard to account for why he should have this price when he makes such an ill use of it." But J. Gill created his own difficulty: God provides the non-elect with spiritual means and opportunities to enforce their responsibility, so that their blood shall be upon their own heads, that the blame is *theirs* for missing His best.

But it is the Christian's doing so that we have chiefly in mind. Sad indeed is it to behold so many of them living more under the frown of God than His smile; and sadder still that so few of them have been taught *why* it is so with them, and *how* to recover themselves. The New Testament makes it clear that many of the primitive saints "ran

well” for a time, and then something hindered them. Observation shows that the majority of believers “follow [the Lord] fully” (Num 14:24) at the *outset*, but soon leave their “first love” (Rev 2:4). At the beginning, they respond readily to the promptings of the Spirit and adjust their lives to the requirements of the Word—until some demand is made upon them, some self-denying duty is met with, and they balk. Then the Holy Spirit is grieved, His enabling power is withheld, their peace and joy wane, and a spiritual decline sets in. Unless they put right with God what is wrong—repent of and contritely confess their sad failure—the rod of chastisement falls upon them; but instead of being “exercised thereby” (Heb 12:11) some fatalistically accept it as “their appointed lot,” and are nothing bettered thereby.

Now the Lord has plainly warned His people that if they meet not His just requirements, so far from enjoying His best, adversity will be their portion. “Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God. *Else* if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you” (Jos 23:11-13). The Jews held Canaan by the tenure of their obedience, and so do those who belong to “the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16) now possess and enjoy their spiritual Canaan in proportion to their obedience. But as God has forewarned, “If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail” (Psa 89:30-33).

That passage makes it unmistakably clear that while the chastenings from our Father proceed from both His faithfulness and holy love, yet they are also marks of His displeasure; and that while they are designed for our good—the recovery of us from our backsliding—yet they have been provoked by our own waywardness. The Father’s rod is not wielded by an arbitrary sovereignty, but by righteousness. It is expressly declared, “For he *doth not afflict willingly* nor grieve the children of men” (Lam 3:33), but only as we give Him occasion to do so. That important statement has not received the attention it deserves, especially by those who have so focused their thoughts upon God’s eternal decrees as to quite lose sight of his governmental ways. Hence the tragic thing is that when chastisement becomes *their* portion, they know of nothing better than to “bow to God’s sovereign will,” which is very little different in principle from the world’s policy of “seeking to make the best of a bad job,” or “we must grit our teeth and endure it.” Such a fatalistic and supine attitude ill becomes a regenerate soul; instead, he is required to be “exercised thereby” (Heb 12:11).

Only too often such “bowing to the will of God” is so far from being a mark of spirituality; it rather evinces a sluggish conscience. God bids His people, “*Hear ye the rod*” (Mic 6:9). It has a message for the heart, but we profit nothing unless we ascertain what the rod is saying to us—why it is that God is now smiting us! In order to discover its message, we need to humbly ask the Lord, “*Shew me* wherefore thou contendest with me” (Job 10:2); “cause me to understand wherein I have erred” (Job 6:24); reveal to me wherein I have displeased Thee, that I may contritely acknowledge my offence and be more on my guard against a repetition of it. The holiness of God will not tolerate sin in the saints, and when they go on in the same unrepentingly, then He declares, “Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns” (Hos 2:6). Note well “*thy way*”—not “my way.” God sets the briars of trials and the sharp thorns of afflictions in the path of His disobedient children. If that suffices not to bring them to their senses, then he adds, “And make a wall, that she shall not find her paths” (Hos 2:6)—His providences block the realization of their carnal and covetous desires.

“But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I *should* soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries...He *should* have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee” (Psa 81:11-16). When we meet with a passage like this, our first duty is to receive it with meekness, and not to inquire, How is it to be harmonized with the invincibility of the divine decrees? Our second duty is to prayerfully endeavour to understand its sense, and not to explain away its terms. We must not draw inferences from it which contradict other declarations of Holy Writ—either concerning the accomplishment of God’s purpose or His dealing with us according to our conduct. Instead of reasoning about their teaching, we need to turn these verses into earnest petition begging God to preserve us from such sinful folly as marked Israel on this occasion.

There is nothing in those verses which should occasion any difficulty for the Calvinist, for they treat not of the eternal foreordinations of God, but of His governmental ways with men in this life. For the same reason, there is

nothing in them which in any wise supports the Arminian delusion that, having created men free moral agents, God is unable to do for them and with them what He desires without reducing them to mere machines. We should, then, proceed on that which is obvious in them, and not confuse ourselves by reading into them anything obscure. The key to them is found in verses 11-12: Israel walked contrary to God's will—not His decreative, but His preceptive. They acted not according to the divine commandments, but in their self-will and self-pleasing, determined to have their own way; and in consequence, they forfeited God's best for them. Instead of His subduing their enemies, He allowed the heathen to vanquish them. Instead of providing abundant harvests, He sent them famines (2Sa 21:1). Instead of giving them pastors after His own heart, He suffered them to be deceived by false prophets (compare 2Th 2:10-11).

"O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea" (Isa 48:18). On which even J. Gill said, "Their prosperity, temporal and spiritual, had been abundant, and would always have continued, have been increasing and everflowing." Failure to walk in the paths of God's precepts deprives us of many a blessing. In his review of *The Life and Letters of the Late James Bourne* (*Gospel Standard*, October 1861), Joseph Charles Philpot (1802-1869) said, "There is deep truth in the following extract"—a sentence or two of which we here quote: "If I pay no reverence to such a word as this, 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good' (Rom 12:21), I shall fall into bondage, and find my prayer shut out. It will prove a hindrance to my approaches to God, for 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me' (Psa 66:18)...If you attend not to the word of *exhortation*, you will find no end of misery, and the sensible lack of the Lord's presence; you will have no communion with His people, no blessing of God upon the work of your hands."

After describing the sore judgments of God which were about to fall upon the wayward children of Israel, His faithful servant told them plainly, "Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart" (Jer 4:18). Upon which J. Gill said, "Those calamities coming upon them, they had none to blame but themselves; it was their *own* sinful ways and works whereby that this ruin and destruction came on them." Consider also this passage: "Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. *Why?* saith the LORD of hosts" (Hag 1:9). This searching question was put for their sakes, "that they might be made sensible of it, and in order to introduce what follows: 'Because of mine house that is waste'—which they suffered to lie waste, and did not concern themselves about the rebuilding of it; this the Lord resented, and for this reason blasted all their labours; and 'ye run every man unto his own house'"—J. Gill. How many a Christian today might trace God's "blowing upon" *his* temporal affairs unto his putting his carnal interests before the Lord's!

Consider now some individual examples. Do not the closing incidents recorded in the life of Lot make plain demonstration that *he* "missed God's best"? Witness his being forcibly conducted out of Sodom by the angels, where all his earthly possessions, his sons, and his sons-in-law perished; and when his wife was turned into a pillar of salt for her defiance. Behold his intemperance in the cave, then unwittingly committing incest with his own daughters—the last thing chronicled of him! But "[was] there not a cause"? Go back and mark him separating from godly Abraham, coveting the plain of Jordan, "[pitching] his tent toward Sodom" (Gen 13:12). Though "the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly" (Gen 13:13), yet Lot settled in their midst, and even "sat in the gate of Sodom" (Gen 19:1)—i.e. held office there! Is it not equally evident that *Jacob* too missed God's best? Hear his own sad confession near the close of his career: "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been" (Gen 47:9). And is the explanation far to seek? Read his history, and it should at once be apparent that he was made to reap exactly as he had sown.

The chequered life of David supplies us with more than one or two illustrations of the same principle. Few men have experienced such sore social and domestic trials as he did. Not only was David caused much trouble by political traitors in his kingdom, but, what was far more painful, the members of his own family brought down heavy sorrows upon him. The second book of Samuel records one calamity after another. His favourite wife turned against him (2Sam 6:20-22), his daughter Tamar was raped by her half-brother (2Sam 13:14), and his son Amnon was murdered (2Sam 13:28-29). His favourite son, Absalom, sought to wrest the kingdom from him, and then met with an ignominious end (2Sam 18:14). Before David's death, yet another of his sons sought to obtain the throne (1Ki 1:5), and he too was murdered (1Ki 2:24-25). Since the Lord afflicts not willingly, but only as our sins give occasion, it behoves us to attend closely to what led up to and brought upon David those great afflictions. Nor have we far to seek. Read 2 Samuel 3:2-5, and note his *six wives*: he gave way to the lusts of the flesh, and of the flesh he "[reaped] corruption" (Gal 6:8)!

Painful though it be for us to dwell upon the failings and falls of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, especially since in so many respects, he puts both writer and reader to shame; yet it must be remembered that “for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for *our learning*” (Rom 15:4)—that we might heed such warnings, and be preserved from similar backslidings. His grievous offence against Uriah and Bathsheba is prefaced by the fact that he was indulging in slothful ease, instead of performing his duty (2Sa 11:1-2)—observe well the ominous “But” at the close of verse 1! Though David sincerely and bitterly repented of those sins and obtained the Lord’s forgiveness, yet by them he missed His best; and for the rest of his days, lived under more or less *adverse* providences, and the “sword” never departed from his house (2Sa 12:10). Nothing could more plainly evince that a holy God takes notice of our actions and deals with us accordingly, or make it manifest that it is our own folly which brings down the rod of God upon us. We read the historical portions of Scripture to little purpose or profit, unless their practical lessons are taken to heart by us. Our consciences require to be searched by these narratives far more than our minds to be informed by them!

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

15. The Holy Bible, Part 7

7. *Its uniqueness.* Viewed simply as a book, the Bible stands far apart from all others. Amid the writings of the ancients or the productions of our moderns, there is nothing which, for a moment, bears comparison with it. The Bible not only occupies a prominent place in literature, but an unrivalled one. Consider its amazing *circulation*. The number of its editions is to be counted not by the dozen or even the hundred, but literally by the thousand. And not merely tens or hundreds of thousands of copies have been printed, but hundreds of millions! That at once separates it by an immeasurable distance from everything penned by man. Consider its unequalled *translation*. It has been rendered into all the multitudinous dialects of the earth. Those of every nation now have the Bible in their own tongue. It has been printed in more than six hundred languages! That too is without any parallel. The most famous and popular compositions of men have not been translated into one tenth as many tongues. Consider its *by-products*: countless works have been devoted to its exposition, millions of sermons preached and published on portions of it. That also is without any precedent.

Consider further the laborious *indexes* which have been made upon its contents. There are voluminous concordances which not only list every word used in the Scriptures, but all the occurrences of them—in many cases, scores, and in not a few, hundreds, of references. Now, we do not possess complete concordances of any of the writings of the most renowned human author, wherein is collated every occurrence of each word he used. And why? Because no such nicety, no such significance, pertains to *his* language as makes the sense of a passage or the force of an argument turn upon a single word. Much less has the ablest of human authors employed all his terms with exact consistency and correspondence throughout the whole of his writings. Yet such *is* the case with the Bible—wherein no less than forty different men were used as its scribes! The *Concordance* loudly proclaims the uniqueness of the Bible. It tacitly declares that not simply this or that term, but every word from Genesis to Revelation is God-breathed, and that every occurrence of each word was directed by His unerring wisdom.

The *perpetuity of their text* is unique. The Sacred Scriptures were written originally in Hebrew and Greek, which are the only languages that, dating back of all tradition, are still recognized as living vehicles of thought. The language spoken in the streets of modern Athens is identically the same, to its very accents, as that used by Plato and Socrates, yea, of Homer’s *Iliad*, which was composed almost three thousand years ago. In like manner, the Hebrew of the Talmud is the Hebrew of the book of Genesis. What a remarkable survival, or rather a miracle, of divine power! That becomes more apparent when we contrast how other ancient tongues have long since passed away. The Egyptian of the builders of the pyramids has perished. The Syrian used by Rabshakeh is no more. The dialect spoken by the original Britons is now unknown. Yet the Hebrew employed by Moses is spoken by the Jewish rabbis today, and the Greek used by the apostle Paul is heard in Salonica at this hour. Here then is a striking and unparalleled fact: that the languages in which God wrote His Word have outlived all their contemporaries and have remained unchanged throughout the centuries!

Even on its surface, the Bible differs from all other books. That appears in the *style* of its writings. Two languages were used which are quite diverse in their manner of inscription. The Hebrew is written and read from right to left, whereas the Greek (and all modern languages) is written and read from left to right. The Scriptures make no comment upon that arresting and striking contrast, but leave the reader to interpret the fact in the light of their contents. Once attention be focused upon the same, its significance is at once apparent: in the singular reversal of its text, the Bible teaches us the two most fundamental and radical facts in human history: man's apostasy from God, and his restoration. The "right hand" is that of dignity and privilege (Psa 110:1), the "left hand" is that of disgrace and condemnation (Mat 25:41). The Old Testament, written in Hebrew, is an amplification of that statement, "Man being in honour abideth not" (Psa 49:12), being a record of his departure from God, with all its evil consequences. The New Testament, written in Greek, has for its leading theme how the wanderer is restored to God, how the prodigal returns to the Father's house.

As another has pointed out, the uniqueness of the Bible appears (again) in that its conjugation of the Hebrew verb puts man in his proper place. "In all Occidental languages, the verb is conjugated from the first person to the third—'I,' 'Thou,' 'He.' The Hebrew, in reversal of the human thought, is conjugated from the third down and backward to the first: beginning with God, then my neighbour, then myself last—'He,' 'Thou,' 'I.' This is the divine order: self-obliterating and beautiful. That peculiarity is very much more than an interesting detail in philology: it embodies and expresses a profound spiritual truth. It accords God His due pre-eminency, and thereby teaches us that all right thinking must start with *Him* and work downward to man. For that very reason, the Scriptures open with the words, "In the beginning *God*" (Gen 1:1). No theology can be sound unless it makes that truth its foundation and starting point. The initiative is ever with God: "We love him, because he first loved us" (1Jo 4:19). Once God be accorded His rightful place in our affections, man is automatically put where he belongs—but which, apart from divine revelation and divine grace, he never takes!

8. *Its delineation of God.* The portrayal of Deity supplied by the Bible is so very different from and so vastly superior to that furnished by all other sources, we are forced to conclude it cannot be of human invention. Beginning with the Old Testament, let us single out two statements which were penned by Moses. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is *one* LORD" (Deu 6:4). That is a startling, yea, a unique declaration, at complete variance with the conceptions of all his contemporaries. Polytheism—or a belief in and worship of a plurality of gods—prevailed universally among the heathen. Whence then did Moses obtain his knowledge of the true God, who is one in His essence? Certainly not from the Egyptians, for their king confessed, "I know not the LORD" (Exo 5:2). "The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty"—who continue impenitent and despise an atoning sacrifice (Exo 34:6-7). Such a conception of the divine perfections is as far beyond the reach of man's mind as heaven is above the earth. Search the philosophers, the mystics, and religious teachers of the ancients, and nothing can be found which in the least resembles such a blessed conception of God as that.

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isa 57:15). "Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath *mine* hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is *poor* and of a contrite spirit" (Isa 66:1-2). The majesty of such language at once distinguishes it from all human compositions and evinces it was not fabricated by the brain of man. But suppose for the sake of argument that the mind of man *had* soared to such an elevated conception of Deity as is portrayed in the first part of those passages, it had certainly not conceived of what follows in the second part. Therein God is presented not only in the greatness of His infinite excellency above all creatures, but also in His amazing condescension unto the meanest of men. Those verses not only exhibit the transcendency of the Creator, but make known the marvels of His *grace*, which He accounts "the praise of [His] glory" (Eph 1:6).

Turning to the New Testament, we will confine ourselves to three brief statements: "God is a Spirit" (Joh 4:24), "God is light" (1Jo 1:5), "God is love" (1Jo 4:8). Those three descriptions of Deity furnish us with a truer and more elevated view of Him than could the most elaborate definitions of human eloquence and genius. They announce the spirituality, the purity, and the benevolence of God. The first purports to be a record of words spoken by Christ during His earthly ministry; the second and third to be inspired declarations given by the Holy Spirit through a human instrument. If their divine origin be denied, then the sceptic is faced with this problem: all three were penned by an unlettered fisherman! Whence did he derive such conceptions?—conceptions before which philosophy is abashed. The sublimity and the comprehensiveness of those brief expressions are without any peer, or even parallel. If they originated from one unlearned, it would be a much greater marvel and miracle than that he wrote them under divine dictation. Much more might be added by entering into a detailed enumeration of all the wondrous attributes of God,

but sufficient has been pointed out to establish how immeasurably grander is the Bible's delineation of God than anything found in the writings of men.

9. *Its representation of man.* The account which the Bible gives of man is radically different from that supplied by all human compositions. That sin and misery exist, yea, abound in the world, is a patent fact, however unpleasant it may be. The daily newspapers report it, the police courts illustrate it, the prisons witness thereto. Nor is this fearful moral disease confined to any one nation, or even limited to any particular strata of society, but is common to all. It is no new epidemic, for it has prevailed in all periods of history. Every human attempt to banish or even curb it has failed. Legislation, education, increased wages, and improved environments have produced no change for the better. Sin is too deeply rooted and widely spread in human nature for the remedial efforts of social reformers to extirpate it. The wisest men who reject the divine explanation of this tragic mystery are completely in the dark as to the real nature and origin of the malady. The Bible is the only book in existence which truly describes the sinful condition of man, accurately diagnoses his case, and ascribes it to an adequate cause. It teaches that as a result of his defection from God at the beginning of human history, he is a fallen, ruined, guilty, lost creature.

The picture which the Scripture gives of man is a deeply humiliating one, radically different from all drawn by human pencils. It is so because human writers describe how man views himself and how he appears in the eyes of his fellows; the Bible alone informs us what man is in the sight of *God*! His unerring Word affirms, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom 3:10)—not a single member of our race who is conformed to the divine Rule. That Word solemnly asserts, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom 3:12) according to the divine Standard of conduct: not one in his natural condition whose actions proceed from a holy principle, acts out of love to God, or with an eye single to His glory. Such statements as those are much too unpalatable to proud human nature to have been made by any who sought to palm off an alleged communication from heaven designed for universal acceptance. The Bible also shows *why* we cannot meet the just requirements of our Maker: each of us is "shapen in iniquity" and conceived in sin (Psa 51:5). Depravity is transmitted from parent to child: each one enters this world with a defiled nature, with a bent toward evil.

Since the foundation be polluted, all the streams issuing therefrom are foul. Fallen Adam "begat a son in his own [moral] likeness, after his [sinful] image" (Gen 5:3); and thus, it has been with each succeeding generation. "Man be born like a wild ass's colt" (Job 11:12)—thoroughly intractable, hating restraint, wanting to have his own way. Think you, my reader, such a description of human nature as that was invented by man? "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies" (Psa 58:3). Entering this world "alienated from the life of God" (Eph 4:18), that which is bred in the bone quickly comes out in the flesh. No child requires to be taught to tell lies—it is natural for him to do so, and the more he be left free to "develop his own personality" without "inhibitions," the more will his delinquency appear. "Every man at his best state is altogether vanity" (Psa 39:5)—an empty bubble, yea, as vain as a peacock. He is as unsubstantial as the wind. "Men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity" (Psa 62:9). Man, who so glories in himself, had never originated such an estimate of himself.

Instead of making Satan the author of all our iniquities, the Holy bible teaches, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness...All these evil things come *from within*, and defile the man" (Mar 7:21-23). External temptations would have no power unless there were something within us to which they could appeal: a lighted match is a menace to a barrel of gun powder, but not so to one filled with water! That explains why all the efforts of statesmen, educators, social reformers, are unavailing to effect any improvement of man: they are incapable of reaching the seat of his moral disease; at most, they can but place outward restraints on him. It is vain to move the hands of a watch or polish its case if the mainspring be broken. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9) is another concept which had never originated in the human mind, for it is quite contrary to our ideas and too abasing for our acceptance. Such a pride-withering delineation of human nature as the Bible furnishes could have been supplied by none other than God Himself.

The Bible not only paints human nature in the colours of truth and reality, but it also reveals how it has come to be what it now is. The existence of moral evil has been acknowledged in every age, for it was far too palpable and potent to be denied; but whence it came and how it originated proved to be a problem, which the wisest, without divine revelation, were unable to solve. To ascribe it to the malignity of matter (as some of the ancients did) is a manifest absurdity, for matter possesses no moral qualities, and could not corrupt the heart and mind, however closely it were placed in connection with them. The Scriptures inform us that "Man being in honour abideth not" (Psa 49:12). The Hebrew word for "man" there is *Adam*; and that verse informs us that the father of our race continued not in the state of purity in which God created him. He disobeyed his Maker, lost his innocence by his own

fault, and having corrupted himself, has communicated his depravity unto all his descendants. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12). The root was vitiated, and therefore, every part of the tree springing from it is tainted.

10. *Its teaching on sin.* As might well be expected, the teaching of Holy Writ thereon is as different from that of fallen man’s, as is light from darkness. So long as it breaks not forth in open crime, to the injury of their own interests, those of this world regard sin lightly and minimize its seriousness. In many quarters, sin is regarded as being merely a species of ignorance, and the sinner is looked upon as more to be pitied than blamed. The various terms which are commonly used as substitutes for sin indicate how inadequate and low is the popular conception: infirmities, mistakes, shortcomings, and youthful follies, they speak of—rather than iniquities, transgressions, disobedience, and wickedness. In the Bible, sin is never palliated or extenuated, but from first to last, its heinousness and enormity are insisted upon. The Word of truth declares that “sin is very grievous” (Gen 18:20), that “abominable thing that [the Lord] hate” (Jer 44:4). It regards sin as being “red like crimson” (Isa 1:18) and declares it to be “exceeding sinful” (Rom 7:13). It likens sin to “the poison of asps” (Rom 3:13), to the “scum” of a seething-pot, to the loathsome disease of leprosy.

The Bible declares, “the *thought* of foolishness is sin” (Pro 24:9)—what human mind devised such a standard as that! It teaches that “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom 14:23), so that unbelief and doubting are reprobated. It insists that “to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (Jam 4:17), so that sins of omission—equally with those of commission—are condemned; yea, sins of *ignorance* are culpable (Lev 5:17), for with God’s Word in our hands, ignorance is inexcusable. Holy Writ teaches that sin is more than an act, namely, an attitude which precedes and produces the action. “Sin is lawlessness” (1Jo 3:4, R.V.), spiritual anarchy, and a state of rebellion against the Lawgiver Himself. It insists that we are sinners by nature before we are sinners by practice. It does not restrict its indictments to any particular class, but declares that “*all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Now a book which uniformly depicts sin as a vile and hideous thing which strips man of every excuse, which avers that “every imagination of the thoughts of [man’s] heart [is] only evil continually” (Gen 6:5), and which brings in “all the world...guilty before God” (Rom 3:19), could not have been created by fallen creatures, but must have come from the thrice Holy One.

The same applies with equal force to the teaching of the Scriptures concerning *the punishment of sin*. A defective view of sin necessarily leads to an inadequate conception of what is due unto it. Man looks at sin and its deserts solely from the human viewpoint, but the Bible exhibits its malignity in the light of God’s broken Law, and shows it to be one of infinite enormity and guilt, which—where the atoning sacrifice of Christ be rejected—demands and receives eternal punishment. The Word of truth reveals that all who die in their sins will be consciously tormented for ever and ever in “hell fire” (Mat 18:9), and there will not be a drop of water to relieve the sufferer. The sphere of their anguish is described as “the blackness of darkness for ever” (Jude 1:13)—for not a ray of hope ever enters there—and where there is “wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Mat 13:42). None but the Holy One, who alone is capable of determining what is due to rebels against Himself, could have lifted the veil and given us a glimpse of the terrible character of sin’s wages. The fact that this solemn truth is so distasteful to all and so widely rejected—and yet occupies a place of so much prominence in the Bible—is one of the many proofs that it is not of human origin.

APRIL

GOD’S LOVINGKINDNESS

In the closing paragraphs of our March cover-page article, reference was made to the *faithfulness* of God; here we propose to engage the reader with another of His excellencies—one of which every Christian has received innumerable proofs. We turn unto a consideration of God's lovingkindness, because it is our desire and aim to maintain a due proportion in treating of the divine perfections, for all of us are very apt to entertain one-sided ideas and views of the same. There is a balance to be preserved here (as everywhere), as appears in those two summarized statements of the divine attributes, "God is light" (1Jo 1:5), "God is love" (1Jo 4:8). The sterner and more awe-inspiring aspects of the divine character are offset by the gentler and more winsome ones. It is to our irreparable loss if our minds dwell almost exclusively on God's sovereignty and majesty, or His holiness and justice; we need to meditate frequently (though not exclusively!) upon His goodness and mercy. Nothing short of a full-orbed view of the divine perfections—as they are revealed in Holy Writ—should content us.

Scripture speaks of "the *multitude* of his loving kindnesses" (Isa 63:7), and who is capable of numbering them? Said the Psalmist, "How *excellent* is thy lovingkindness, O God!" (Psa 36:7): no pen of man, no tongue of angel, can adequately express it. We read of God's "*marvellous* lovingkindness" (Psa 17:7), and surely it verily is. Familiar as may be this blessed attribute of God's unto people, yet is it something entirely peculiar unto divine revelation. None of the ancients ever dreamed of investing his gods with any such endearing perfection as this. None of the objects worshipped by present-day heathens is conceived of as possessed of gentleness and tenderness: very much the reverse, as the hideous features of their idols exhibit. Philosophers regard it as a serious reflection upon the honour of the Absolute to ascribe such qualities unto it. But the Scriptures have much to say upon God's lovingkindness, or His paternal favour unto His people, and His tender affection towards them.

The first time this divine perfection is mentioned in the Word is in that wondrous and glorious manifestation of Deity which was vouchsafed unto Moses, when Jehovah proclaimed His "Name"—i.e. Himself as made known. "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in *goodness* and truth" (Exo 34:6); though much more frequently the Hebrew word, *chesed*, is rendered "kindness" and "lovingkindness." In our English Bibles, the initial reference, as connected with God, is Psalm 17:7, where David prayed, "Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee." "Marvellous" it truly is that One so infinitely above us, so inconceivably glorious, so ineffably holy, should not only deign to notice such worms of the earth, but set His heart upon them, give His Son for them, send His Spirit to indwell them, and so bear with all their imperfections and waywardness as never to remove His lovingkindness from them.

Consider some of the evidences and exercises of this divine attribute unto the saints. "In love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself" (Eph 1:4-5); and, as the previous verse shows, that love was engaged on their behalf before this world came into existence. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him" (1Jo 4:9), which was His amazing provision for us as fallen creatures. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer 31:3)—i.e. unto Myself, by the quickening operations of My Spirit, by the invincible power of My grace, by creating in you a deep sense of need, by attracting you by My winsomeness. "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies" (Hos 2:19). Having made us willing in the day of His power to give up ourselves unto Him, the Lord enters into an everlasting marriage contract with us.

This lovingkindness of the Lord is never removed from His children. To our reason and sense, it may *appear* to be so, yet it never is; for since the believer be in Christ, nothing can separate him from the love of God (Rom 8:39). God has solemnly engaged Himself by covenant, and our sins cannot make it void. God has sworn that if His children keep not His commandments, He will "visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes"; yet He at once adds, "Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from *him*, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail: My covenant will I not break" (Psa 89:30-35). Observe well the change of number from "their" and "them" to "him": the lovingkindness of God toward His people is centered in Christ. It is because His exercise of lovingkindness is a covenant engagement that it is repeatedly linked to His "truth" (Psa 40:11; 138:2), showing that it proceeds to us by promise, and therefore, we should never despair.

"For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee" (Isa 54:10). No, that covenant has been ratified by the blood of its Mediator, by which blood the enmity (occasioned by sin) has been removed and perfect reconciliation effected. God knows the thoughts which He entertains unto those embraced in His covenant and who have been reconciled to Him, namely, "thoughts of peace, and not of evil" (Jer 29:11). Therefore are we assured, "The LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me" (Psa 42:8). What a word is that! Not merely that the Lord will give or bestow, but *command* His lovingkindness: it

is given by decree, bestowed by royal engagement, as He also commands “deliverances” (Psa 44:4), “strength” (Psa 68:28), “the blessing, even life for evermore” (Psa 133:3), which announces that nothing can possibly hinder these bestowments. Well then, may we exclaim, “Thy lovingkindness is better than life” (Psa 63:3)!

And what ought to be our response thereto? First, “Be ye therefore followers [“imitators”] of God, as dear children; And walk in love” (Eph 5:1-2). “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness” (Col 3:12). Thus it was with David: “Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth” (Psa 26:3). His mind was employed thereon, he delighted to ponder it, and it refreshed his soul to do so; yea, it moulded his conduct. The more we are occupied with God’s goodness, the more careful shall we be about our obedience—the constraints of God’s love and grace are more powerful to the regenerate than the terrors of His Law! “How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings” (Psa 36:7). Thus, second, a sense of this divine perfection strengthens faith and promotes confidence in God.

Third, it should stimulate the spirit of worship: “Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee” (Psa 63:3; Psa 117). Fourth, it should be our cordial when depressed: “Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness [same Hebrew word] be for my comfort” (Psa 119:76). It was so with Christ in His anguish (Psa 69:17). Fifth, it should be made our plea in prayer: “Quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness” (Psa 119:159). David applied to that divine attribute for new strength and increased vigour. Sixth, it should be appealed to when we have fallen by the wayside: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness” (Psa 51:1): deal with me according to the gentlest of Thy attributes, make my case an exemplification of Thy tenderness. Seventh, it should be a petition in our evening devotions: “Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning” (Psa 143:8): arouse me with my soul in tune therewith, let my waking thoughts be of Thy goodness.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

52. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, Part 2

“And God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace” (2Th 2:16). Divine love is the fountain; everlasting consolation and good hope are the streams which flow from it. God’s love for His people preceded their fall into sin—both historically and as foreseen by Him—for it was a love of complacency, and not of compassion or pity, which He bore them. As the first Adam was “the figure of him that was to come” (Rom 5:14), so Eve was the original type of the Church as the Bride of Christ (Gen 2:24; Eph 5:31-32). Eve was created and given to Adam by God *before* he transgressed, and she was as pure and upright as he was, fully suited to be his wife and companion. A holy Adam and a holy Eve were united in wedlock prior to the entrance of evil into this world. That was a blessed adumbration of the fact that God appointed a sinless and holy Church to be the Wife and Companion of His Son; and accordingly, she was given a marriage union with Him in the eternal purpose of God antecedent to His foreview of Adam’s defection and the Church’s fall in him—her federal head—for he was equally the head of all mankind. That Eve kept not her first estate in no wise affected the fact that she was Adam’s sinless wife previously.

In Eden, God caused to be typed out in a most wonderful way His secret and everlasting counsels respecting His own elect. His love unto them was like Himself: incomprehensible, infinite, immutable. Nothing could change or cloud it. So far from sin quenching His love, it only provided occasion for Him to manifest its strength and durability, and to go forth in mercy and compassion. As Adam did not cast off his wife when she yielded to the Serpent’s wiles, neither did God revoke His benign purpose when the Church became dead in trespasses and sins through the Fall. Nay, it seems clear from the Word that “Adam was *not* deceived” (1Ti 2:14), that out of love to Eve, he voluntarily and deliberately joined her in her fallen condition—thereby foreshadowing the abounding love of Christ for His Church in being willing not only to assume our nature, and in all things “to be made like unto his brethren” (Heb 2:17), but also to be “made...sin for us” (2Co 5:21) and “bear [our] iniquities” (Isa 53:11); and in consequence, be “made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13).

“And hath given us everlasting consolation.” There is some difference of opinion among the commentators whether that “consolation” is to be regarded as exclusively an objective one, or whether it also includes our subjective experience of the same. Personally, we consider it is wholly objective, or outside of ourselves, though in proportion as faith is acted upon it, shall we enjoy the blessedness of the same. We base that view, first, upon the tense of the verb, “*hath given*”—not is now “*giving*” us, as it would read if our present experience were being described. Second, because of the qualifying word, “*everlasting*,” which signifies that the “consolation” here spoken of is a durable, immutable, and eternal one; whereas nothing is more fluctuating and fleeting than the inward consolation which most of the saints enjoy in this life, for their frames and feelings appear to be almost as variable as the weather—now on the mountain top, then in the valley, if not in the slough of despond. And third, unless we regard this “*everlasting consolation*” as an objective one—that is, as having reference to the matter or substance of our peace and joy—we confound it with the “*comfort your hearts*” in the next verse, where the apostle makes request that they might have the experimental effect and personal sense of the same *within* them.

“And hath given us everlasting consolation.” Unto what was the apostle referring? The answer to that question may be stated in two different forms. Thomas Manton (1620-1677) gives it, “in the new covenant”; and that provides a satisfactory meaning, for under the “old covenant” with the nation of Israel, the promises and blessings set forth therein were earthly and temporal ones. But the new covenant contains “a better hope” and “better promises” (Heb 7:19; 8:6), as the whole of that epistle is designed to set forth. But personally, we prefer to say that it is in *the Gospel* that God has given us “*everlasting consolation*,” for though the Gospel enunciates the new covenant, it is also and primarily a transcript of the everlasting covenant which God made with Christ, viewed as the Head of His people; and it is “the everlasting covenant” which is the foundation of all the believer’s consolations and hopes. In the Gospel is revealed the contents of that everlasting covenant, as Romans 16:25-26 affirms. Take away the Gospel, and the very foundation of our consolation and hope is removed. That is made clear in 1 Corinthians 15, where, after stating that the salient facts of the Gospel are that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, Paul pointed out to those who denied His resurrection, “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1Co 15:14).

Paul then went on to declare, “If in *this* life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1Co 15:19), which was the reverse way of showing that in the Gospel, God has given us “*everlasting consolation*”—ratified by Christ’s resurrection. Those words of 1 Corinthians 15:19 make it clear that we have no ground for hope beyond this life, except in the divine revelation made in the Gospel. Nay, we may go farther and affirm that even for this present life, there is no hope for any sinner apart from the revelation of Christ in the Gospel of God’s grace. It cannot be too plainly and emphatically insisted upon today that if the Gospel be jettisoned, there is no well-grounded hope for any man—either for this life, or the life to come. The Christless—be they living moral or immoral lives—are described by the infallible pen of Inspiration as “having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). And such “hope” as they *do* cherish is but an imaginary, a blind, an impudent and presumptuous one; and in the moment of death, it will be found to be an empty deceit. “The hypocrite’s hope shall perish” (Job 8:13). Make sure, my reader, that *your* hope is grounded upon the Gospel.

“Which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation.” The word “consolation” means “the alleviation of misery, solace”; and it is in the Gospel (and nowhere else) that we learn of the wondrous and gracious provision which God has made for His people considered as lost sinners. As intimated above, the “which hath loved us” goes back to the source of all, when the triune God set His heart upon the Church and blessed it “with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3). Then came the divine foreview of the Church’s defection in the Adam Fall, which opened the way for a further manifestation of God’s superabounding grace. That was evidenced in the everlasting covenant, in which arrangements were made for the Son to save His people from their sins, and for the Spirit to quicken them into newness of life. The Gospel contains a transcript of that everlasting covenant, proclaiming the distinctive goodness and gracious acts of each of the persons of the Godhead, which Gospel is fully expounded in the epistle to the Romans, as its opening verse indicates, and compare chapters 1:9, 16, 17; 16:25-27! In the Gospel, God hath given us everlasting consolation, revealing therein the remedy for sin, His provision for our holiness and happiness, the endless bliss He hath “prepared for them that love him” (1Co 2:9).

The “*everlasting consolation*” is in marked contrast with the evanescent pleasure afforded by the creature, which perishes with the using; and from the temporal portion allotted Israel as a nation. That which God has provided for His beloved Church is an *endless* one: it dies not with the body, but is as enduring as the soul: proceeding from God Himself, issuing from His free grace, grounded upon His sure Word. If it be asked, of what does this “*everlasting consolation*” consist? We answer, in a complete and effectual alleviation of the misery which our fall in Adam produced, and from all the dire consequences of the same. By Adam’s disobedience, the Church became judicially alienated from God and experimentally separated from Him. By the entrance of sin the favour, the life, the

image of God in the soul, was lost, and fellowship with Him totally severed. All of which was graphically represented by the driving out of man and God's placing "at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gen 3:24). But the Gospel makes known how the work of the last Adam reverses all that, resulting in the reconciliation of the Church unto God, restoring it to His unclouded favour, renewing her after His image, and bringing her into communion with Him.

"And hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." Those gifts—though quite distinct—are really two parts of one whole: the former referring to the believer's present portion; the latter, unto his future. Both of them are the fruitage of that "everlasting righteousness" which Christ brought in for His people (Dan 9:24), having wrought out the same for them as their Representative, by not only suffering in their stead the full penalty of the broken Law, but also by rendering a perfect obedience unto its precept on their behalf. Thereby Christ not only makes complete atonement for all their transgressions, so that the guilt and pollution of the same are for ever removed from the sight of the Judge of all, but thereby obtaining for them an indefeasible title to the *reward* of the Law, so that they are justified or pronounced righteous before Him with full acceptance. The reward of the Law is "life" (Rom 7:10)—as its penalty is death—eternal life, and accordingly we read of "eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, *promised* before the world began" (Ti 1:2); and therefore, before any part of the Scriptures was written; and consequently, the reference must be unto the promise made to our federal Head in the everlasting covenant. The believer enjoys now both an earnest and a foretaste of that "eternal life."

"And hath given us...good hope." This too refers not to any inward comfort, but to that which is the sure *ground* of comfort. In this verse, Paul contemplates not the grace of hope in the believer's soul, but rather the object upon which that grace is to be exercised. The "good hope" equally with the "everlasting consolation" is here entirely objective, namely, that which is set before us in the Gospel. Thus, "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel" (Col 1:5), where "hope" is put for the object of it, namely, the glorious and blessed estate which is reserved for us hereafter. In Scripture, "hope" always contemplates something *future*, of which we are not yet in actual possession: "Hope that is seen [experienced or possessed] is not *hope*: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom 8:24-25), though there it is the *grace* of "hope" which is in exercise. "That...we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope *set before* us" (Heb 6:18). There again "hope" is put for its object, and as faith "lays hold" of the same, "strong consolation" is produced in the soul.

In attempting to define the substance and character of our "good hope through grace," we cannot do better than follow the outline supplied by T. Manton. First, it consists of the personal return of our Redeemer: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Ti 2:13). "Hope" is there described by its grand Object, when He shall be seen no more "through a glass, darkly" but "face to face" (1Co 13:12); when all the holy longings and aspirations of His redeemed will be fully realized. Then will Christ see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, possessed of what He purchased, and conducting the Church into the eternal abode which He has prepared for her. In proportion as our faith is exercised on that promise, and as our love burns and yearns for the Lover of our souls, shall we be "looking for," eagerly awaiting, His appearing. Second, the resurrection of the dead: "And have hope toward God...that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Act 24:15, and compare 26:6-8). It is at the return of Christ the living saints will be changed, and the sleeping ones raised in power and glory, and "fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phi 3:21; 1Co 15; 1Th 4:16-17).

Third, the vision of God in Christ, when we shall at length be admitted into His presence, see Him as He is, and be made like Him both for holiness and happiness (1Jo 3:2). Fourth, our heavenly inheritance: an inheritance which is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for [us]" (1Pe 1:4). That will consist of "fullness of joy" in God's presence, "pleasures for evermore" at His right hand (Psa 16:11). Think you not, Christian reader, that all of that is a "good hope"!—and it is wholly "through grace," and in no wise earned by human merits. Have we not good cause, sure ground, to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom 5:2)! But it is only as faith is in exercise upon what God has revealed in the Gospel concerning the same that we *do rejoice*. It was unto this supreme good, namely, the eternal vision and fruition of God, that the eye of David was fixed when he said, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Psa 17:15). Then let us be more in prayer that the grace of hope within us may be more engaged with these glorious objects of hope without us. This brings us to:

The special requests made by the apostle in this prayer: "Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work" (2Th 2:17). In that first petition, Paul was asking that an effectual *application* might be made unto

the souls of those persecuted saints of the everlasting consolation and good hope which was given them in the Gospel. “Comfort your hearts”: Note the present tense, in contrast with the “hath given us” in the preceding verse. Clear proof is this that what was there before us is entirely objective, for if the “consolation” and “good hope” respected their experience, there was no need to ask for their hearts to be comforted. That which was here supplicated was that they might have an inward enjoyment of the same: that the glorious contents of the Gospel should be brought home in power to their hearts: that the substance of their consolation and the object of their hope would be made so real and solid as to fill them with peace and joy. Paul desired that they might have such a satisfying and blissful realization of the divine love and its manifestations unto them, that no tribulations and sufferings should be able to rob them, or even becloud the same in their apprehensions.

Here, as always, more was implied than was actually expressed. In order for such “comfort” to be experienced, *their graces* must be in exercise. The revelation which God has made to us in the Gospel profits us nothing until it be personally appropriated by faith. The wonderful vista of the future which is there unveiled to the saints animates them not unless the grace of hope be engaged with the same. Gospel faith and Gospel hope are twin graces in the soul, which, though distinguishable, cannot be severed any more than can light and heat in the sun. Faith exists not without hope, and hope has no being apart from faith. Such as Christian’s faith is, so is his hope. They are alike founded on and rooted in God’s Word. Faith receives Christ as He is there set forth; hope confidently expects all the blessings therein promised. Christ is equally the Object of our faith and of our hope; yea, He *is* “our hope” (1Ti 1:1): its substance and its cause. Both work “by love” (Gal 5:6), which is the fulfilling of the Law. Faith is more than intellectual, hope is more than emotional; both are spiritual and dynamical, conforming the soul to the character of their objects.

But while it be the believer’s responsibility to keep his graces in constant exercise, yet it lies not absolutely in his own power to do so; and therefore, did the apostle conjointly supplicate the Lord Jesus Christ and God their Father to “comfort [the] hearts” of the Thessalonians. It is a great mercy for the distressed to be truly comforted, yet it lies not in the power of any creature to administer the same. That is the prerogative of the Almighty: “I, even I, am he that comforteth you” (Isa 51:12); and therefore is He designated “the God of all comfort” (2Co 1:3). “God, that comforteth those that are cast down” (2Co 7:6). He may in His sovereign condescension use instruments in so doing, but the power and blessing are entirely His. In His gracious ministry unto the Church, the Spirit is denominated “the Comforter” (Joh 16:7), for He is the immediate Author of all our experimental consolations, as He is the Quickener, maintainer and fructifier of our graces. Therefore do we read that “For we *through the Spirit* wait for the hope of righteousness by faith” (Gal 5:5). He alone can make us cheerful amid sufferings, patient during the period of waiting the fulfilment of the promise, persevering in duty when there is so much to discourage.

“Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.” The two petitions are closely related, as more clearly appears when the meaning of our English word “comfort” is understood: *com-fortis*, “with strength.” The Greek word here rendered “comfort” is literally “to call alongside—help.” It is not a soporific or pain-deadener, as “comfort” imports in ordinary usage, but a renewing of moral energy, a spiritual vivication in view of trials yet to be faced. Such “comfort” God alone is capable of imparting. “Comfort is a strengthening of the mind when it is in danger of being weakened by fears and sorrows, or the strength and stay of the heart in trouble: ‘This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me’ (Psa 119:50). ‘Thou hast put gladness in my heart’ (Psa 4:7). God’s comfort is like a soaking shower, that goes to the root and refresheth the plants of the earth, more than a morning dew, that wets only the surface. Other comforts tickle the senses and refresh the outward man, but this penetrateth to the heart”—T. Manton.

“And stablish you in every good word and work,” which is only possible as God first “comforts” or strengthens us with might in the inner man. As none but God can comfort or strengthen, so He alone can “stablish” and enable us to persevere. There is a powerful tendency in us to stray (Psa 119:176). Good for us when we feel the need of crying, “Prone to wander? Lord, I feel it; prone to leave the God I love; Here’s my heart; O take and seal it; seal it for Thy courts above.” Nevertheless, we must ever bear in mind that these petitions imply *our obligations*. Though we cannot comfort ourselves, yet it is our responsibility to avoid the things which hinder: carnal fears, worldly delights, sins against conscience which destroy our peace, grieving the Spirit. So too we must seek to be instruments in God’s hands of comforting others: by speaking words to those who are weary, lifting up the hands which hang down. Likewise, it is our duty to use those means which promote our establishment in the Faith, and beware of everything that tends to make us waver and temporize. To falter in the path of duty soon chills our joy.

“By ‘every good work’ is meant sound doctrine; by ‘every good work,’ holiness of life. Establishment in faith and holiness is a needful blessing, and earnestly to be sought of God”—T. Manton. It is a prayer for increased grace and for the quickening of our graces; particularly that we may ever obey our Lord Jesus Christ and love our Father.

The singular number of the verbs “comforted” and “stablish” (which, of course, is not reproduced in the English) intimates the unity of the two Persons, which are the common Objects of the verbs—compare 1 Thessalonians 3:11. The equality of the Persons is seen in these petitions being addressed jointly to Both. It only remains for us to point out that the “hath loved” of 2 Thessalonians 2:16 looks back to verse 13, the “good hope” to verse 14, and the petitions of verse 17 to the exhortation of verse 15.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

32. Jericho, Part 2 (6:3-5)

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour” (Jos 6:2). That gracious declaration was not only a challenge unto the exercise of faith, and an evidence of God’s bounty, but it was also designed to subdue all the workings of self-sufficiency. The proud flesh remains in all God’s people, and the best of them are prone to take unto themselves that credit and praise which belong alone unto God. But that “see [take note of, keep steadily in mind, that] *I have given* into thine hand Jericho” was meant to exclude all boasting. It was not only a word to encourage and animate, but also one to *humble*, signifying that the success of this venture must be ascribed unto the Lord Himself, apart from whom *we* “can do nothing” (Joh 15:5). Victory over our enemies must never be ascribed to our own prowess: rather are we to aver, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake” (Psa 115:1). Jericho was Israel’s by divine donation, and therefore, its capture was to be attributed wholly unto the God of all grace. “What hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst *receive* it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (1Co 4:7). What need there is for that truth to be pressed today upon a boastful and vainglorious Christendom!

When the people of Lystra saw the healing of the cripple, they sought to render divine homage unto Barnabas and Paul, which, when they beheld, “rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you” (Act 14:14-15). O for more of that self-effacing spirit. How dishonouring it is unto God to have so many professing Christians eulogizing worms of the dust and using such expressions as “He is a great man,” “a remarkable preacher,” “a wonderful Bible teacher.” What glory doth the Lord get therefrom? None. No wonder the unction of the Spirit is now so generally withheld! Moreover, nothing is so apt to destroy a preacher’s usefulness as to puff him up with flattery; certainly nothing is so insulting to the Spirit and more calculated to cause Him to withdraw His blessing than such idolatrous man-worship. How much better to say, “Such a preacher is highly favoured of the Lord in being so gifted by Him.” “The pastor was much helped by God in his sermon this morning.” “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (Jam 1:17); and therefore, it behoves us to thankfully acknowledge the Giver and freely render unto Him undivided praise for every blessing which He vouchsafes us through His servants, whether it comes in an oral or written form.

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour” (6:2). Taking that verse as a whole, we may perceive the Lord’s concern for His own honour. He is very jealous of the same, saying, “I will not give my glory unto another” (Isa 48:11). Let us not forget that Herod was eaten up of worms “because he gave not God the glory” (Act 12:23)! It was to prevent Israel’s committing this sin the Lord here made this affirmation unto their leader. It was in order that His people might freely own, “he hath done marvellous things: *his* right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory” (Psa 98:1). How often the Scriptures record such statements as these: “To day the LORD hath wrought salvation [deliverance] in Israel” (1Sa 11:13); “So the LORD saved Israel that day” (1Sa 14:23); “The LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel” (1Sa 19:5); “The LORD wrought a great victory that day” (2Sa 23:10); “By him [Naaman] the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria” (2Ki 5:1). Alas, how little is such language now heard! David had been taught this God-honouring and self-abasing truth, as is shown by his words, “Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight” (Psa 144:1). Such should be the acknowledgement made by us in connection with our spiritual warfare and every success granted us in the Christian life.

“And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams’ horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him” (Jos 6:3-5). In view of the preceding verse, that may strike some of our readers as a very strange requirement. If the Lord had definitely given Jericho into the hands of Joshua, why were such elaborate preparations as these necessary for its overthrow? Let those who feel the force of any such difficulty weigh attentively what we are about to say. In reality, those verses exemplify and illustrate a principle which it is most important for us to apprehend. That principle may be stated thus: The disclosure of God’s gracious purpose and the absolute certainty of its accomplishment in no wise renders needless the discharge of our responsibilities. God’s assuring us of the sureness of the end does not set aside the indispensability of the use of means. Thus, here again, as everywhere, we see preserved the balance of Truth.

So far from the divine promises being designed to promote inactivity on our part, they are given as a spur unto the same, to assure us that if our efforts square with the divine Rule, they will not be in vain. The gracious declaration that God had given Jericho into the hand of Israel did not discharge them from the performance of their duty, but was to assure them of certain success in the same. That principle operates *throughout* in the accomplishment of the divine purpose. The truth of election is not revealed in order to license a spirit of fatalism, but to rejoice our hearts by the knowledge that the whole of Adam’s race is not doomed to destruction. Nor are the elect mechanically delivered from destruction apart from any action of theirs, for though they be “chosen...to salvation,” yet it is “through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2Th 2:13)—unless the Truth be embraced by them, no salvation would be theirs, for “he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mar 16:16). Likewise, the revealed truth that Christ will yet “see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isa 53:11), that “all that the Father giveth [Him] *shall* come to [Him]” (Joh 6:37), does not render needless the preaching of the Gospel to every creature—for that preaching is the very means which God has appointed and which the Holy Spirit makes effectual in drawing unto Christ those for whom He died. We must not divide what God has joined together.

It is the sundering of those things which God has connected—wherein He has made the one dependent upon another—which has wrought so much evil and caused so many useless divisions among His people. For example, in the twin truths of divine preservation and Christian perseverance. Our assurance of glorification in no wise sets aside the need for care and caution, self-denial, and striving against sin on our part. There is a narrow way to be trodden if Life is to be reached (Mat 7:14), a race to be run if the prize is to be secured (Heb 12:1; Phi 3:14). We are indeed “kept by the power of God,” yet “through faith” (1Pe 1:5) and not irrespective of its exercise; and faith eyes and makes use of the divine precepts equally with the divine promises, and heeds God’s admonitions and warnings as well as appropriates His comforts and encouragements. God has nowhere declared that He will preserve the reckless and presumptuous. He preserves in faith and holiness, and not in carnality and worldliness. Christ has guaranteed the eternal security of a certain company, but He was careful to first describe the marks of those who belong to it: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and *they* shall never perish” (Joh 10:27-28), but no such assurance is given unto any who disregard His voice and follow a course of self-will and self-pleasing. God’s promise of Heaven to the believer is far from signifying that he will not have to fight his way there.

The appointed means must never be separated from the appointed end. Strength for the body is obtained through the mouth, and health is not maintained without observing the rules of hygiene. Crops will not be produced unless the ground be prepared and sown. Yet in connection with spiritual matters, we need to be particularly careful that we employ only those methods and use none but those means which God has appointed. “And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive *lawfully*” (2Ti 2:5). For *us* to determine the methods and select those means which appeal most to us when engaged in the service of God is presumptuous, a species of self-will, laying us open to the charge of “Who hath required *this* at your hand”? (Isa 1:12); and for us to ask God’s blessing upon the same is only seeking to make Him of our mind. Let us not forget the solemn warning pointed by the death of Uzzah, when the Lord God made a breach in Israel because they “sought him not after the due order” (1Ch 15:13). We must keep closely to God’s “due order” if we are to have His approbation. That was one of the outstanding lessons here taught Joshua. He was not left free to follow his own devices, but must adhere strictly to the plan God gave him, following out His instructions to the very letter if Jericho was to fall before Israel.

How passing strange those instructions must have appeared! How utterly inadequate such means for such an enterprise! How futile would such a procedure seem unto carnal reason! “No trenches were to be opened, no batteries erected, no battering-rams drawn up, nor any military preparations made”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714). Who

ever heard of a mighty fortress being completely demolished in response to a company of people walking around it? Ah, God's ways are not only very different from man's, but they are designed to stain his pride and secure the glory unto Himself. The leader and lawgiver of Israel was preserved in a frail ark of bulrushes. The mighty giant of the Philistines was overcome by a sling and a stone. The prophet Elijah was sustained by a widow's handful of meal. The forerunner of Christ dwelt in the wilderness, had his raiment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle, and fed upon locusts and wild honey. The Saviour Himself was born in a stable and laid in a manger. The ones whom He selected to be His ambassadors were for the most part unlettered fishermen. What striking illustrations are these "that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luk 16:15)! Yet how needful it is to keep this principle before us!

Had Joshua called a council of war and consulted with the heads of the tribes as to what *they* deemed the best policy to adopt, what conflicting advice he had most probably received, what various methods of assault had been advocated. One would have reasoned that the only way to subdue Jericho was by the starving out of its inhabitants through a protracted siege. Another would have counseled the use of ladders to scale its walls by men heavily mailed and armed. A third would have argued that heavy battering-rams would be more effective and less costly in lives to the attackers. While a fourth would have suggested a surprise attack by secretly tunneling under the walls. Each would have leaned unto his own understanding, and deemed his plan the best. But Joshua conferred not with flesh and blood, but received his commission direct from the Lord; and therein he has left an example for all His servants to follow. The minister of the Gospel is responsible to Christ: he is *His* servant, called and commissioned by Him, and from Him alone must he take his orders. He has no authority except what Christ has given him; and he needs no more. Joshua did not refer the instructions he had received from God to the judgment of the priests and elders and ask their opinion on the same, but instead acted promptly upon them, counting upon the divine blessing, however his fellows might regard them.

"When the Lord effects His purposes by such means and instruments as we deem *adequate*, our views are apt to terminate upon *them*, and to overlook *Him* 'who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will' (Eph 1:11). To obviate this propensity, the Lord sometimes deviates from the common track and works by methods or instruments which in themselves appear not at all suited to produce the intended effect; nay, sometimes have no real connection with it (Num 20:6-9; Eze 37:1-10; Joh 9:4-7). But it is our duty to use only those means which the Lord appoints or allows, to submit to His will, and depend upon His blessing; and with patient waiting and self-denying diligence, to expect the event: and we shall thus succeed as far as is conducive to our real good. He takes peculiar pleasure in leading men's attention to His own truths and ordinances, in exercising their faith and patience, in inuring them to submit their understandings implicitly to His teaching and their wills to His authority, and in securing to Himself their praises and thankful acknowledgements. In promoting true religion, especially, He works by means and instruments which the proud, the learned, and the wealthy of this world generally despise. The doctrine of a crucified Saviour, God manifested in the flesh, as the only foundation of a sinner's hope of acceptance, and the only source of sanctifying grace; preached by ministers, frequently of obscure birth and moderate abilities, and destitute of the advantages of eminent learning or eloquence; sometimes even homely in their appearance and address"—Thomas Scott (1747-1821).

Looking more closely now at the instructions which Joshua received from the Lord on this occasion, we see that once more "the ark" was given the place of honour, being made central in the order of the procession. First were to proceed the "men of war," then came the ark with seven priests in front of it with "trumpets of rams' horns," and behind it came all the body of the people. The ark was the recognized symbol of Jehovah's presence, and its being carried before the congregation was to intimate the victory was *from Him*. Very much indeed turns upon our realization of the divine presence—both as a restraint upon the flesh, and a stimulant to the spirit. When assured that the Lord is not only for us but *with us*, fear gives place to holy confidence. Deeply important is it for the servant of Christ not only to adhere strictly to the terms of His commission, but also to rest upon His blessed promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end" (Mat 28:19-20). Equally necessary for the rank and file of God's people to lay hold of that word, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb 13:5). Joshua had received personal assurance of this by the appearing to him of the "captain of the LORD'S host" (Jos 5:13-15), and by the prominence accorded the ark: the whole congregation was given a visible reminder of the same fact. All were to move with their eyes fixed upon the Captain of their salvation, for none could stand before Him.

But the ark was also the repository of the tables of stone, on which were inscribed the Ten Commandments. It therefore denoted that Israel now marched as subject to the divine Law, for only as they acted in obedience to its terms could success be expected. As was pointed out in our articles on the crossing of the Jordan, Israel marched into Canaan *led by the Law*: so here we are shown their conquest of the land depended upon their compliance with its requirements. But more: the presence of the ark here intimated that the Law was the minister of vengeance to the

Canaanites—their cup of iniquity was now full, and they must suffer the due reward of the same. Here the Law was “the minister of death,” as the sequel demonstrated: see Joshua 6:21.

ENJOYING GOD’S BEST

Part 4

Let us now point out that the same principle holds good in connection with the divine government under the new covenant as obtained under the old. “And he did not many mighty works there *because* of their unbelief” (Mat 13:58). What place has such a statement as that in the theology of hyper-Calvinists? None whatever. Yet it should have; otherwise, why has it been placed upon record if it has no analogy today? As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) rightly insisted, “Unbelief is the great obstacle to Christ’s favour...The Gospel is ‘the power of God unto salvation,’ but then it is ‘to every one that believeth’ (Rom 1:16). So that if mighty works be not wrought in us, it is not for want of power or grace in Christ, but want of faith in us.” That was putting the emphasis where it must be placed if human responsibility is to be enforced. It was nothing but hardness of heart which precluded them from sharing the benefits of Christ’s benevolence. When the father whose son was possessed by the demon that the disciples had failed to expel said unto the great Physician, “If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us,” He at once turned the “if” back again upon him, saying, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mar 9:22-23).

That we are the losers by our folly and that we bring trouble down upon ourselves by unbelief is illustrated in the case of the father of John the Baptist. When the angel of the Lord appeared unto him during the discharge of his priestly office in the temple, and announced that his prayer was answered and his wife should bear a son, instead of expressing gratitude at the good news and bursting forth in thanksgiving unto God, Zacharias voiced his doubts, saying, “Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years” (Luk 1:18). Whereupon the angel declared, “Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, *because* thou believest not my words” (Luk 1:20), upon which John Gill (1697-1771) said, “He was stricken with deafness because he hearkened not to the angel’s words, and dumbness because from the unbelief of his heart, he objected to them. We learn from hence, what an evil unbelief is, and how much resented by God, and how much it becomes us to heed that it prevails not in us.” To which he might well have added: and how God manifests His resentment against such conduct by sending adverse providences upon us!

Should it be said that the above incident occurred before the day of Pentecost—a pointless objection—then let us call attention to the fact that at a very early date *after* the establishment of Christianity, God, in an extraordinary manner, visited with temporal judgments those who displeased and provoked Him. A clear case in point is the visible manner in which He dealt with Ananias and Sapphira (Act 5). So, too, when Herod gratefully accepted the idolatrous adulations of the populace, instead of rebuking their sinful flattery, we are told, “And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, *because* he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost” (Act 12:23). God *does* suit His governmental ways according to the conduct of men, be they unbelievers or believers. Not always so plainly or so promptly as in the examples just adduced, yet with sufficient clearness and frequency that all impartial and discerning observers may perceive that nothing happens by chance or mere accident, but is traceable to an antecedent cause or occasion; that His providences are regulated by righteousness.

“For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,...To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1Co 5:3-5). A member of the Corinthian assembly had committed a grave offence, which was known publicly. For the same, he was dealt with drastically: something more than a bare act of ex-communication or being “disfellowshipped” being meant in the above verses. The guilty one was committed unto Satan for him to severely afflict his body—which is evidently meant by “the flesh” being here contrasted with “the spirit.” That Satan has the power of afflicting the body we know from Job 2:7; Luke 13:16, etc. And that the apostles, in the early days of Christianity, were endowed with the authority to deliver erring ones unto Satan to be disciplined by him, is evident from 2 Corinthians 10:8; 13:10; 1 Timothy 1:20. Thus we see how a Christian was here visited with some painful disease because of his sins.

It is sadly possible for Christians to miss God's best through failure in their *home life*. This is evident from 1 Peter 3:7, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; *that* your prayers be *not hindered*." Incidentally, that verse inculcates family worship, the husband and wife praying together. Further, it teaches that their treatment of one another will have at close bearing upon their joint supplications, for if domestic harmony does not obtain, what unity of spirit can there be when they come together before the Throne of Grace? By necessary implication that also shows how essential it is that they be equally "yoked together" for "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2Co 6:14). What joint act of worship is possible between a child of God and a child of the devil, between a regenerate soul and a worldling? Yet even where both the husband and the wife be true Christians, they are required to regulate their individual conduct by the precepts which God has given unto each of them: the wife that she be "in subjection to" her husband and diligent in cultivating "a meek and quiet spirit" (1Pe 3:1-6): the husband that he heeds the injunctions here given; otherwise their petitions will be "hindered," and God's best forfeited.

First, the husband is to act according to his knowledge that his wife is "the weaker vessel," which is not said in disparagement of her sex. As one has pointed out, "It is no insult to the vine to say that it is weaker than the tree to which it clings, or to the rose to say it is weaker than the bush that bears it. The strongest things are not always therefore the best—either the most beautiful or the most useful." Second, as such he is to "give honour her": that is, his superior strength is to be engaged for her defence and welfare, rendering all possible assistance in lightening her burdens. Her very weakness is to serve as a constant appeal for a patient tenderness and forbearance toward her infirmities. Furthermore, he is ever to act in accordance with her spiritual equality, that they are "heirs together of the grace of life" (1Pe 3:7). Not only should the love which he has for her make him diligent in promoting her well-being, but the grace of which he has been made a partaker should operate in seeking the good of her soul and furthering her spiritual interests: discussing together the things of God, reading edifying literature to her when she is relaxing, pouring out together their thanksgivings unto God and making known their requests at the family altar.

Then it is, when those divine requirements are met by both wife and husband, that they may plead that promise, "That if two of you *shall agree* on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Mat 18:19). That agreement is far more than verbal or even mental: it is a spiritual one. The Greek word is *sumphoneo*, and literally signifies "to sound together." It is a musical term, as when two different notes or instruments make a harmonious sound. Thus, there must be oneness of heart, unity of spirit, concord of soul, in order for two Christians to "agree" before the Throne of Grace, for their joint petitions to be harmonious and melodious unto the Lord. It is music in the ear of their Father when the spiritual chords of a Christian husband and a Christian wife vibrate in unison at the family altar. But that can only obtain as they singly and mutually conduct themselves *as* "heirs together of the grace of life" (1Pe 3:7), their home life being ordered by the Word of God; everything in it done for His glory: the wife acting toward her husband as the Church is required to do as the Lamb's Wife; the husband treating her as Christ loves and cherishes His Church.

Contrariwise, if the wife rebels against the position which God has assigned her and refused to own her husband as her head and lord, yielding obedience to him in everything which is not contrary to the divine statutes, then friction and strife will soon obtain, for a godly husband must not yield to the compromising plea of "peace at any price." Equally so, if the husband takes unlawful advantage of his headship and be tyrannical, then, though the wife bear it meekly, her spirit is crushed, and love is chilled. If he treat her more like a servant or slave than a wife, the Spirit will be grieved, and he will be made to smart. If he be selfishly forgetful of her infirmities—especially those involved in childbearing—if he be not increasingly diligent in seeking to lighten her load and brighten her lot as the family grows, if he exercises little concern and care for her health and comfort, then she will feel and grieve over such callousness, and harmony of spirit will be gone. In such a case, their prayers will be "hindered," or, as the Greek word signifies, "cut off"—the very opposite of "agree" in Matthew 18:19! By domestic discord, the heart is discomposed for supplication, and thus, God's best is missed.

From the second and third chapters of the Revelation, we learn that the Lord treats with local churches on the same principles as He does with individuals: that they too enter into or miss His best according to their own wisdom or folly. Thus, to the pastor of the Ephesian assembly, He declared, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; *or else* I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Rev 2:4-5)—how many such a "candlestick" *has* thus been removed! To the careless and compromising ones at Pergamos, who then suffered in their midst those who held doctrine which He hated, the Lord solemnly threatened, "Repent; *or else* I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight *against* them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev 2:14-16)—those churches which are slack in maintaining holy discipline invite divine judgment. While to the boastful

and worldly Laodiceans, the Lord declared, “I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Rev 3:16)—I will no longer own thee as My witness.

Writing on the need of members of a local church having “the same care one for another” (1Co 12:25) and pointing out how that James 2:1-4 supplies an example of a company of saints where the opposite practice obtained, one wrote: “Instead of having the same care, when we make a difference between him ‘with a gold ring, in goodly apparel’ and him or her with ‘vile raiment’ or poor clothing, we are being ‘partial’...Do not be deceived with the thought that God does not behold such partiality: He will not prosper that church, but the members of the whole body will be made to suffer from this lack of ‘the same care one for another.’” And we would point out that this brief quotation is not taken from any Arminian publication, but from a recent issue of a magazine by the most hyper-Calvinist body we know of in the U.S.A. What we would particularly direct attention to in it is that when such a carnal church is “made to suffer” because of the pride and selfishness of some of its officers or members, then it has *missed* God’s best. How many such churches are there in Christendom today!

“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (1Co 11:30). Here is a clear case in point where many Christians missed God’s best, and brought down upon themselves His temporal judgments because of their own misconduct. “For this cause” refers to their having eaten of the Lord’s supper “unworthily” or unbecomingly—see verses 20 and 21. When numerous cases of sickness and death occur in a Christian assembly, they are not to be regarded as a matter of course, but made the subject of a searching examination before God and a humbling inquiring of Him. God was not dealing with these Corinthian saints in mere sovereignty, but in governmental righteousness, disciplining them for a grave offence. He was manifesting His displeasure at them because of their sins, afflicting them with bodily sickness—which in many instances ended fatally—on account of their irreverence and intemperance, as the “For this cause” unmistakably shows. This, too, has been recorded for our instruction—warning us to avoid sin in every form, and signifying that the commission of it will expose us to the divine displeasure, even though we be God’s dear children. Here, too, we are shown that our entering into or missing of God’s best has a real influence upon the health of our bodies!

That same passage goes on to inform us how we *may avert* such disciplinary affliction! “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1Co 11:31). There is a divine judgment to which the saints are amenable, a judgment pertaining to this life, which is exercised by Christ as the Judge of His people (1Pe 4:17). To Him each local church is accountable; unto Him each individual believer is responsible for his thoughts, words, and deeds. As such, He walks “in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks” (Rev 2:1). Nothing escapes His notice, for “his eyes were as a flame of fire” (Rev 19:12), and before Him “all things are naked and opened” (Heb 4:13). Not that He is strict to impute every iniquity, or rigorous to punish, for who then could stand before Him? The Lord is in no haste to correct His redeemed, but is slow to anger and loathe to chasten. Nevertheless, He is holy, and will maintain the honour of His own house; and therefore does He call upon His erring ones to repent under threat of judgment, if they fail to do so. Not that He ever imposes any *penal* inflictions for their sins, for He personally suffered and atoned for *them*; but out of the love He bears them, He makes known how they may avoid His governmental corrections.

“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.” There are some of the Lord’s people who—when they be overtaken in a fault—expect immediate chastisement at His hands; and through fear of it, their knees are feeble and their hands hang down. But that is going to the opposite extreme from careless indifference—both of which are condemned by the above verse. It is a law of Christ’s judgment that “if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.” That is, if we make conscience of having offended, and go directly to the Judge, unsparingly condemning ourselves and contritely confessing the fault to Him, He will pardon and *pass it by*. Though they be far from parallel, yet we may illustrate by the case of Nineveh under the preaching of Jonah. When the prophet announced, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (Jon 3:4), more was intended than was expressed. He was not there proclaiming God’s inexorable fiat, but was sounding an alarm to operate as a means of moral awakening. That “forty days” opened a door of hope for them, and was tantamount to saying, Upon genuine repentance and true reformation of conduct, a reprieve will be granted. That is no mere inference of ours, but a fact clearly attested in the immediate sequel.

“So the people of Nineveh *believed God*, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth” (Jon 3:5); while the king published a decree to his subjects: “Cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?” And we are told, “And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not” (Jon 3:5-10). God’s “repenting” here means that He altered in His *bearing* toward them because their conduct had changed for the better, thereby

averting the judgment with which He had threatened them. Now if God dealt thus with a heathen people upon their repentance and reformation, how much more will Christ turn away the rod of chastisement from His redeemed when they truly repent of their sins and humble themselves before Him! For *them* there is no mere “who can tell if God will turn and repent,” but the definite and blessed assurance that “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jo 1:9).

“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.” O what tenderness and divine longsufferance breathe in those words! That even when we have erred—yea, sinned—grievously, a way is opened for us whereby we may escape the rod. Ah, but what divine wisdom and righteousness are also evinced by them! “If we would *judge* ourselves,” we should escape the disciplinary consequences of our sins. And why so? Because the rod is no longer needed by us. Why not? Because in such a case, the desired effect has been wrought in us without the use of it! What is God’s design *in* chastisement? To bring the refractory one to his senses, to make him realize he has erred and displeased the Lord, to cause him to right what is wrong by repentance, confession, and reformation. When *those* fruits are borne, then we *have* heard “the rod” (Mic 6:9), and it has accomplished its intended work. Very well then, if we truly, unsparingly, and contritely “judge” ourselves before God for our sins, then the rod is not required. Having condemned himself, turned back into the way of holiness, sought and obtained cleansing from all unrighteousness, he is brought to the very point—only more quickly and easily!—to which chastening would bring him!

“For if we *would* judge ourselves”: those very words seem to imply there is both a slowness and a reluctance in the saints so to do—a thought which is confirmed in the next verse. Alas, many of those who have left their first love are in such a backslidden and sickly case spiritually that they are incapable of judging themselves. Their conscience has become so dull through the frequent excusing of what they deemed trifling things, their walk is so careless, that they offend their Judge and are virtually unaware of doing so. “Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs [the mark of decline and decay] are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not” (Hos 7:9). Since, then, they are *not* exercised over their sins, the rod must awaken them; for their holy Lord will not tolerate unconfessed sins in His own. But others, who have not deteriorated to such a sad degree, are conscious of their faults, yet nevertheless do not judge themselves for the same. Why? What causes such reluctance to humble themselves before God? What, but accursed pride! In such case, His mighty hand will bring them down, and hence it follows:

“But when we *are* judged, we are *chastened* of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (1Co 11:32). Such was the case with the Corinthians. They sinned again and again in different ways, and were unexercised. They were “carnal,” and among them were envying and strife—yet they judged not themselves. The Lord gave them space for repentance, but they repented not; until, in the profanation of His holy supper, He was obliged to act, visiting them with bodily sickness and death. Thus, from the words, “when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord,” the conclusion is unescapable: we have failed *to condemn* ourselves. As it is a rule of Christ’s kingdom that when His people own their offences and turn from the same, He spares the rod; so it is equally a rule in His kingdom that when they sin and confess it not, but continue in the same, then He chastens them. And there is infinite mercy in that, for it is *that* they “should not be condemned with the world.” His own wayward children are chastised here in this world, but the ungodly will bear the full punishment of their sins for ever and ever in Hell! Sin *must be* “condemned”: either by us, or by the righteous Judge—here, or hereafter. How much better to judge ourselves, and thereby escape *His* judgment!

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

16. The Holy Bible, Part 8

11. *Its historical parts.* Much of the Bible consists of historical narratives, yet both their contents and the style in which they are written at once distinguish them from all others. They cover a period of no less than four thousand years! The Old Testament contains the oldest records of the world, dating far back of the chronicles of men—yea, of the dimmest traditions of all nations, save the Jewish—and therefore, the Scriptures of the Old Testament are many centuries older than any other historical records. Herodotus, whom litterati have styled “the Father

of history," was born a thousand years after Moses!—the penman employed by God in writing the Pentateuch. They not only impart information which none of the writings of antiquity contains, but are in striking contrast with the legendary fables of early Greece and Rome. The Bible alone supplies us with any knowledge of the affairs of this world during its first fifteen centuries. Antedating all human historians, God Himself has made known to us how the earth came into existence, how the nations originated, and has given a brief but succinct account of the antediluvian era which terminated in the Flood—all of which matters are entirely beyond our ken.

The opening verses of Genesis stand in a class entirely by themselves. Their teaching upon the creation of the universe out of nothing is quite peculiar to Holy Writ. Such an idea is not to be found in the most rational and refined systems of secular writers. Even where an intelligent Architect was conceived of, as in the speculations of Plato and Aristotle, yet he was portrayed as working upon existing material, on eternal matter. While the hypothesis favoured by the earlier Egyptians and Babylonians was that everything, including the stars and this earth, has developed from the inherent power of the sun. For reconditeness of theme and yet simplicity of language, for comprehensiveness of scope and yet brevity of description, for scientific exactitude and yet the absence of technical terms, nothing can be found in all literature which for a moment compares with the opening chapter of the Bible. Its divine revelation stands out in marked separation, not only from the meaningless cosmogonies of the ancients and the senseless mythologies of the heathen, but equally from the laborious jargon of our moderns who essay to write upon the origin of things, and which are out of date almost as soon as published.

Again: the historical portions of the Bible alone supply us with a satisfactory explanation of the present state of the world. As was pointed out in the earlier articles of this series, the earth exhibits numerous marks of intelligence and benignity, yet they are neither of unvaried orderliness nor of unmixed benevolence. If on the one hand we behold the fertile fields and beauties of nature; on the other, there are icy wastes, vast deserts, death-dealing volcanoes. It is apparent that this earth has experienced some fearful convulsion, by which its original structure has been deranged. It is still subject to earthquakes, devastating tornadoes, tidal waves. Man and this earth are manifestly adapted to each other; nevertheless, there are many examples of such discrepancy. Why is this? Certainly not because of any imperfection in the Creator. Then why? The Bible alone accounts for these abnormalities; and it does so in a way without the wisdom and power of the Creator being impeached. It reveals that, as the result of sin, God is now dealing in justice and holiness with His refractory subjects, as well as in goodness and mercy with the creatures of His hand.

The uniqueness of Scripture history appears not only in the disclosures which are made, but also in its *style* and *omissions*. Its method of chronicling events is radically different from all other histories. It only just touches upon, and often entirely ignores, matters which had been of most interest to men of the world, whereas it frequently treats at length of things which they had deemed of no importance. How amazingly brief is the account given of the creating and furnishing of this earth! Man had never restricted *that* to a single chapter, and then have devoted more than ten others to the tabernacle and its erection. No indeed: the wisdom of this world had regarded the grand edifice of the universe as worthy of a much fuller description than that of a religious tent! Nothing is told us of the "seven wonders" of the ancient world. Men of renown are passed by in silence, while the pastoral lives of insignificant individuals are narrated. The great empires of antiquity are scarcely alluded to, and then only as they touch the interests of Israel. A principle of selection obtains such as no secular historians adopt, and the events singled out are set down as a plain record of facts, without any attempt of the writers to mingle their own reflections with them.

The *design* of sacred history is entirely different from that of all others. Its aim is not simply to preserve the memory of certain occurrences, but to teach us the knowledge of God and His salvation, and to show us our deep need of the same. Its purpose is not merely to narrate bare facts, but rather to impart important moral instruction. It does very much more than convey to us a knowledge of events, an account of which is nowhere else obtainable—the agency of *God* in connection with those events is constantly brought out. That which uninspired historians either overlook or deliberately ignore is made prominent, namely, the divine displeasure against sin. The historical portions of Scripture display to us throughout the excellencies of the divine character and set before us His governing of this world. Sacred history is very much more than an authentic record of human affairs: it exhibits the perversity and folly, the instability and unbelief of human nature, and reveals the springs from which our actions proceed. In its narratives the thoughts and secret motives of men are discovered, and that in a manner and to an extent which none but the great Searcher of hearts was capable of doing. The real character of man is unveiled as in no other writings.

"The Bible describes, in action and exhibition, the perfections of Jehovah as fully as the proclamation in which He declares Himself to be longsuffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. It delineates the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart, as forcibly and distinctly as the annunciations of the proph-

ets, when they cry aloud and spare not”—Robert Haldane (1764-1842). It emphasizes the providential interposition of God in human affairs and His ways with men. Therein we are shown what a mad and bitter thing it is for either an individual or a nation to forsake the living God; and, contrariwise, what blessings attend those who walk in subjection to and fellowship with Him. Consequently, its narratives are of great practical value: not only in a general way by showing how God punishes sin and rewards righteousness, but by specific and personal illustrations of the same. Vital ethical and spiritual lessons are thereby inculcated, and from the lives of different individuals, we are taught what examples are worthy of our emulation and what evils and dangers it will be our wisdom and profit to avoid. Thus, those sacred narratives afford us scope for constant meditation. Into the inspired history is most wondrously interweaved all the doctrines and duties promulgated by Christ and His apostles.

But the grand design of the Old Testament was to make manifest the need for, the nature of, and the various preparations made unto the redemptive work of Christ. Everything else was subordinated unto an anticipation of the all-important advent of God’s Son to this earth and the inauguration of the Christian era. As there is one central object in the heavens which far surpasses in glory all other planets, so the person and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ is accorded the place of pre-eminence in the Sacred Volume. *That* was what regulated the principle of selection as to what should or should not be recorded in the Bible. Hence it is that the history of Adam and his posterity during the first two thousand years is condensed into but eleven chapters, and why very little indeed is said about them: special attention being directed only unto those individuals from which the promised Messiah was to spring. For the same reason, from Genesis 12 onwards, we are occupied almost entirely with the history of Abraham and his descendants. The lives of the patriarchs are described in much more detail, that we may perceive the sovereignty and grace of God in His choice of and dealings with them; and that we may obtain a better view of the stock from which Christ, according to His humanity, was to issue.

Most of the Old Testament is a history of the nation of Israel, and it too is written in a manner quite different from all others, for as one has well said, “It is recorded by the unerring hand of Truth.” No effort is made to magnify the virtues of Israel, nor is there the least attempt to hide their vices. Had those records been composed by uninspired Jews, then obviously they had laboured to present the most attractive picture possible of their own people; and therefore, no reference had been made unto their base ingratitude and hard-heartedness. Particularly would a forgery have sought to impress other nations with the might, valour, and military genius of the Jews. But so far from that, their faint-heartedness and defeats are frequently recorded. The capture of Jericho and the conquest of Canaan are not attributed to the brilliance of Joshua and the bravery of his men, but to the Lord’s showing Himself strong in their behalf. Nor did the victories granted them proceed from partiality or caprice, for only while they walked in obedience to God’s law did He crown their efforts with success. It is noteworthy that the sacred history of the Old Testament ends at the point where credible secular history begins, for the occupation of Palestine by the Persians, Greeks, and Romans is recorded by Xenophon and his successors.

12. *Its typical teachings.* Since the incarnation of His Son, with the attendant blessings of redemption, was the grand object contemplated by God from the dawn of human history, He ordered everything in the early ages of the world to pave the way for the same, particularly in the educating of His people concerning it. It pleased God to first preach the Gospel to them by means of parabolical representation, by symbolical instruction and typical occurrences which foreshadowed the person and work of the future Redeemer. Therein lies the key which opens many a chapter of the Old Testament, which to those lacking it appears not only of little interest, but unworthy of a place in a divine revelation. But once their scope and significance be recognized, we perceive in those ancient institutions and religious rites such a wondrous anticipation of and perfect correspondence with what is set forth more openly in the New Testament as no human wisdom could have devised. There is a pre-arranged harmony between type and antitype as no mortal could invent; a prophetic meaning in them which only God could have given. The fitness of the types and the agreement of the antitypes lie not so much in their external resemblances as in the essential oneness of the ideas they embody and express and their relations to each other.

The types are so many outward emblems and visible signs appointed by God to portray spiritual objects. They were so constructed and arranged as to express in symbolical form the great truths and principles which are common alike to all dispensations, such as the holiness of God and its requirements, the sinfulness of sin and its polluting effects, the necessity for a Mediator. Under the Levitical ceremonies, there was set forth a palpable exhibition of sin and salvation, the purification of the heart, and the dedication of the person and life unto God. His method of revelation was first to portray heavenly things by means of earthly, to make known eternal realities through temporal events, to exhibit to the physical senses what was later presented more directly to the mind. Thereby was indicated on a lower plane what was to be accomplished on a far higher one. Visible things were made to image and prepare the way for the disclosure of the more spiritual mysteries of Christ’s kingdom. In that way the earlier dispensations were made the servants for getting ready the stage of things to come. God so modeled the institutions of

Israel's worship as to set before their eyes the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, the one being a stepping-stone to the other. During the immaturity of God's family celestial things were more easily grasped when set forth in a corporate form than by abstract statements about them.

The events recorded in the Old Testament were actual occurrences, yet they also presaged the more excellent things which were promised. Divine providence so moulded human history that in many instances there was made a typical representation of the work of redemption. That was set forth, in its broad outlines, in the days of Noah. The fearful flood which God sent upon the world of the ungodly made known His intense hatred of sin and the punishment which it entails. Yet before that judgment fell, merciful warning was made and space given for repentance; but the wicked repented not. In the ark, we behold the gracious provision which God made for those who feared Him. Noah and his family sought refuge therein, and accordingly, they were preserved from the overflowing scourge. That ark was the *only* place of deliverance. It was therefore a prophetic sign of Christ as the sole Saviour of sinners, and the security of those who sheltered therein shadowed forth the deliverance from the wrath to come of those who flee to Christ. There was room in the ark for all who availed themselves of it, and the Redeemer has promised to receive and cast out none who come to Him. The dove sent forth by Noah was an emblem of the Holy Spirit, and her return to the ark with an olive leaf in her mouth spoke of that assurance which believers have that God is now at peace with them.

The whole history of Israel was a typical one and was made to adumbrate the experience of God's people in the days of their unregeneracy, the provisions made by God for their deliverance, and the complete salvation which He effects for them. The cruel bondage suffered by the Hebrews in Egypt under the merciless oppression of Pharaoh supplies a vivid picture of our natural servitude unto sin and Satan. Their crying in the brick kilns and their groaning under the whips of their taskmasters spoke of those smitings of conscience and sorrows of heart when God convicts us of our rebellion against Him and when He makes sin to become exceedingly burdensome and bitter to our souls. The utter inability of those Israelitish slaves to free themselves from the galling yoke of their masters portrayed the helplessness of the natural man, his complete impotency to deliver himself from the dominion of sin. The sovereign grace of God in raising up a deliverer in the person of Moses pointed forward to the Redeemer emancipating His people. The appointment of the lamb and the efficacy of its sprinkled blood to shelter from the angel of death on the Passover night revealed yet more clearly what is now proclaimed by the Gospel. While the destruction of Pharaoh and his hosts at the Red Sea, and Israel's sight of the "Egyptians dead upon the sea shore" (Exo 14:30), told of the completeness of the Christian's salvation—the putting away of his sins from before the face of God.

The subsequent history of Israel after their miraculous exodus from Egypt while on their way to Canaan foreshadowed in a remarkable and unmistakable manner the experiences of Christians from the time they are born again until their entrance into heaven. Israel's long journey across the wilderness supplies a graphic picture of the believer's passage through this world. Once the heart has been really captivated and won by the loveliness of Christ, the things of time and sense lose their charm, and this world becomes a dreary desert to him. As the wilderness, with its sterile sands and waterless wastes, was a place of trials unto the Hebrews, so this world is made the place of testing unto the graces of the saints. But as God ministered unto Israel of old, so He was made full provision to meet our every need. They had the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night to direct their course; and we have the Word of God as a "lamp unto [our] feet" (Psa 119:105), and the Holy Spirit to interpret it to us. As God furnished them with manna from on high, so He has given us "exceeding great and precious promises" (2Pe 1:4) to feed upon. As He caused water to flow from the smitten rock for Israel, so He now revives the souls of the contrite. As He enabled them to overcome Amalek, so His grace is sufficient for us.

That remarkable feature of the Old Testament Scriptures which we are now dealing with is a very comprehensive one, and a large volume might readily be written thereon. The whole of the Mosaic ritual possessed a typical and spiritual significance. The tabernacle in which they worshipped was an emblematic representation of Christ and His Church; and by ordaining that, more than a dozen chapters should be devoted to an account of its structure, its furniture, and its setting up; while but a single one describes the creating and peopling of this earth, tells us that in the divine estimation, the latter is of infinitely more importance than the former. The world was made for Christ (Col 1:16) and His people (2Co 4:15), as a platform upon which unto the celestial hierarchies "might be known by [or rather 'through'—*dia*] the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph 3:10). The tabernacle was God's dwelling-place in the midst of Israel. Its holy courts, its sacred vessels, the priesthood which ministered there, the sacrifices they offered, were, to their minutest detail, all so many object lessons brought down to our finite capacity, setting forth the grand truths of divine revelation, without which we could not so fully understand what is set forth in the New Testament.

Many of the outstanding characters of the Old Testament adumbrated Christ in the varied relations He sustained. Adam presaged His federal headship (Rom 5:14); Moses, His prophetic office (Deu 18:18); Melchizedek, His priestly (Psa 110:4); David, His kingly (Rev 5:5). The chequered experiences through which Joseph passed foreshadowed Christ both in His humiliation and His exaltation. Joshua typified Him as the Securer of the inheritance. The miraculous birth of Isaac prefigured the supernatural incarnation; the murder of Abel, the death of Christ; the budding of Aaron's rod, His resurrection. Every perfection of Christ's character, each office that He sustained, all the aspects of His redemptive work—Godwards, manwards, and sinward—were indicated by or through one and another of the historical persons of the patriarchal and Mosaic eras. That so very much in the Jewish Scriptures should be adapted to image the person and history of the Saviour cannot be accounted for by any other hypothesis than that God Himself is the Author of them. The spiritual instruction conveyed by the Old Testament narratives, their deeper and hidden meanings, the great number and variety of the types, their anticipations of and perfect accord with what is taught in the New Testament, clearly demonstrate that Judaism and Christianity—so dissimilar in their externals, so opposite in their incidentals, yet uniting in their essentials—both belong to the same Lord.

MAY

DISCOURAGEMENT

We have recently been impressed by the frequency with which God calls upon His people to “be strong and of a good courage” (Deu 31:6-7, 23; Jos 1:6, 9, 18). Time after time, we find the Lord, either actually or substantially, exhorting His people thus. The implications are clear: that they are prone to give way to discouragement, that such a condition is a mark of weakness, and that a dispirited saint is dishonouring to the Lord. In this and the companion article, we propose to examine the character or nature of discouragement, its causes or the roots from which it proceeds, its correctives or how it should be opposed, and its cure or remedy. Much light is thrown upon this subject by a careful pondering of the first passage in holy Writ wherein the term occurs, namely, when we read of the children of Israel in the wilderness that “the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way” (Num 21:4). Alas, how like unto them are many of the saints today!

The Lord had wrought wondrously for Israel in bringing them out of Egypt and by destroying their foes at the Red Sea; and evidently, they expected a much quicker and easier journey into Canaan than what they actually experienced; and because their expectations were not realized, they became despondent. The immediate context informs us that king Arad had opposed their progress and had taken some of them prisoners. Whereupon Israel vowed that if the Lord would deliver that people into their hand, they would utterly destroy their cities. The Lord graciously did so, and they fulfilled their pledge. So far, so good. But then came a further testing: instead of their being led onward to the promised land—which involved their passing through the territory of another hostile people—they were conducted “*from* mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass [i.e. ‘go around’] the land of Edom,” and that greatly disheartened them. It seemed a retrograde course which entailed a return to the desert, where water was scarce, and their reaction thereto was one of dejection.

To become discouraged is natural, yet it is neither glorifying to God, useful to ourselves, nor helpful to our brethren. It was not so in the above instance. The immediate sequel is most solemn, for the very next thing recorded is “*And* [joining together the two statements!] the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread” (Num 21:5). And that, my reader, is written for *our* instruction and warning, for us to take heart and recognize the dangers attending a spirit of discouragement. It is but a very short step from discouragement

to open murmuring against God! That one consideration should be sufficient to convince us that so far from a state of discouragement being an innocent infirmity which we may fairly excuse, it is an insidious sin of which we need to make conscience and against which we should pray earnestly. The Lord at once manifested His displeasure against Israel by sending fiery serpents among the people, so that many of them died.

The character of discouragement is indicated in the word itself: the prefix is a privative—to take away. It is a state of being cast down or dispirited. The Hebrew term in Numbers 21:4 means “to be shortened” or “straitened.” It is not a weakness to be excused, but a fault to be confessed. While it be true on the one hand that circumstances alter cases, and therefore sweeping generalizations and condemnations are to be avoided; yet on the other hand, we must never condone anything which is wrong in the sight of God; and if we be guided by the light of His Word thereon, then it is clear that a state of discouragement is *sinful*. When David was dejected, he did not resort to self-pity or regard it as something which was inevitable, but betook himself to task for the same: “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” (Psa 42:5). Why this faithless fainting, this childish fretfulness? He chided himself for the same, and it is striking to note that twice more (Psa 43:5; 42:5,11) he refused to yield to this spirit of gloom, and inquired into the cause of it. If at first he succeeded not in casting it off, he tried and tried again.

Some are likely to object, “It is *natural* to become discouraged: there are occasions when the strongest cannot prevent their hearts from being cast down. There is much in this world which has a depressing influence upon the Christian. There is not a little in his own experience which depresses him; while the response he meets with from others in return for his best-meant efforts often throws a dampener upon him.” But the very fact that such a spirit is “natural” at once exposes its evil character—it is not *spiritual*! It is a thing of the flesh, and not a product of the workings of grace within us; and therefore, it is to be reprobated and not palliated. However melancholy may be our temperament, low our natural spirits, poor our health, or distressing our circumstances, it is wrong to yield to spirit of defeat, for the soul to become cast down, and unfitted for the cheerful discharge of our duties and the enjoyment of our privileges. Of our sinless Saviour, it was prophesied that, despite all the opposition and trials He would encounter, “He shall not fail nor be discouraged” (Isa 42:4). It is because we *fail* that we become discouraged—a further proof that it is a sin to be mortified and not excused.

What are the more immediate causes of faint-heartedness?

1. *Distrust of God*. Is not that plainly intimated by the words of David when he was chiding himself for his soul being cast down: “Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God” (Psa 42:11). It was because he had allowed the difficulties of the way to take his eyes off the Lord that he had become dispirited. Was it not also the case with Israel in the above incident? When the Lord turned their course from a direct approach unto Canaan and led them back into the borders of the desert, they were “much discouraged.” They doubted God’s goodness unto them and questioned the wisdom of His guidance. And do not the subtle operations of unbelief lie behind *our* discouragements? Are they not due to a lack of faith that the very objects which dismay us are among the “all things” God has promised He will work together for good! If we concentrate our attention on the things seen, rather than the unseen, we soon weaken and pine.

2. *Discontent with God’s provision*. When faith in God’s goodness and wisdom ceases to operate, then dissatisfaction takes possession of the heart. Unbelief breeds fretfulness with our lot and circumstances, and prevents our enjoying the portion God *has* given us. Discouragement, when analysed is being displeased with the place or portion God has assigned us. It was so with Israel. They relished not the fare which He had so graciously given them. “Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water” was the language of peevishness: the real reason for their disaffection was expressed in “our soul loatheth this light bread” (Num 21:5). Sad condition of soul was that! They were “much discouraged because of the way,” because the day and fare of the wilderness ministered not unto their carnal lusts.

3. *Self will*. That is the root both of our distrust of God and our discontent with His provision. Discouragement is nothing less than a rebelling against the sovereign dispensations of God. It was so with Israel. They were chagrined because things were not going as *they* wanted. They desired to press forward in a direct course unto Canaan; and since the Lord determined otherwise, they were cast down—much like spoilt children who are allowed to have their own way, and murmur and sulk if they be denied any thing. And is it not thus, at times, with many of God’s children? Most of our discouragements are due to the dashing of our hopes, disappointments in either things or persons from whom we looked for something better. But disappointment is really a quarrelling with *His* appointment. It is lack of submission unto God. Discouragements issue from our longings remaining unrealized—from our plans being thwarted, our wills being crossed: it is nothing but vexation of spirit and insubordination to the divine will.

4. *Impatience*. That also appears plainly in the above incident. Israel chafed at the delay. They wanted to reach their objective by the short cut, and when a roundabout course was appointed them, their spirits fell, and they gave

way to complaining. Unless we prayerfully heed that exhortation, “let patience have her perfect work” (Jam 1:4), we shall often become faint through discouragement. The work which God has appointed patience to do is to wait *His* time. Patience is a contented endurance of trials which enables a Christian to bear up under them; whereas impatience is an ill-humored resentment against anything which checks the attainment of our desires, and a sinking of spirit which saps our energies when the hindrance persists. Like Israel, only too often we are “discouraged because of *the way*.” But we ought not to be so, for God has not promised us a smooth and easy passage through this world, but has told us that “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22).

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

53. 2 Thessalonians 3:5

The attentive reader will observe that there are recorded more of Paul’s prayers for the Thessalonians than for any other church or company of saints. There is yet another in verse 16 of our present chapter; though in view of our articles on Romans 15:33 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23, we do not propose to give it a separate consideration. It is also to be noted that reference is made more frequently to the coming of Christ in the Thessalonian epistles than in any of his others. We know of no writer who has attempted to give a reason for these conspicuous features. There is no doubt in our mind that they should be linked together, for a single explanation satisfactorily accounts for them both—namely, the extremely trying situation in which these particular saints were placed. As we have more than once pointed out, they were enduring a great fight of afflictions, meeting with sore opposition from unbelievers. Thus, we are here taught two important lessons regarding the Christian’s special duty unto his *afflicted* brethren: the one concerning the rank and file of God’s people, the other pertaining more especially unto ministers of the Gospel.

First, that persecuted believers have a peculiar claim upon the sympathies of the whole household of faith, and should therefore be given a special place in their supplications and intercessions. We are expressly bidden to “weep with them that weep” (Rom 12:15). The cultivation and exercise of love one to another is incumbent upon us at all times, but it is especially so in seasons when fellow saints are in distress. Most reprehensible and un-Christ-like is that callous spirit which says, I have troubles enough of my own, without burdening myself with those of others. Far different was the attitude of Nehemiah, who, though in a palace, “wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven” when he heard of his fellow Jews being “in great affliction and reproach” (Neh 1:1-4). It is required of us that we “remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them” (Heb 13:3): taking them to our hearts, having compassion toward them, seeking grace for them. Whenever we read or hear of an earthquake, famine, flood, etc., we should at once approach the Throne of Grace and beg God to undertake for His own dear people in the stricken district—ponder Matthew 25:36, 43!

Second, that the ministry best suited to and most appropriate for those who are suffering for Christ’s sake is to direct their thoughts away from the present unto the future, setting before them “that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Ti 2:13)—for not until His advent will a period be put to the oppressions of the Church, as it will be then that all shall be richly rewarded who have been steadfast and faithful unto Him. The intensely *practical side* of our “blessed hope” must not be lost sight of amid all the acrimonious and profitless speculations about “the millennium.” This grand truth of our Lord’s return is used by the Spirit as a most powerful motive unto the discharge of Christian duties, as a quickener of our graces, an incentive to piety, and as consolation to the grief-stricken. Our Lord Himself quietened the troubled hearts of the disciples with it (Joh 14:1-2), and His apostles bade bereaved saints comfort one another with the same (1Th 4:13-18). A spiritual hope of our Lord’s appearing produces ministerial fidelity (2Ti 4:1-2; 1Pe 5:3-4), Christian patience (Jam 5), sobriety (1Pe 1:13), and purity (1Jo 3:2-3). They are greatly the losers who are not looking for His appearing.

“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ” (2Th 3:5). Three things in this prayer call for consideration. First, though briefly, its *connection*. Second, and more specifically, its *Addressee*. Third, and at greater length, its important *petitions*. Its opening word requires attention to its setting. It is blessed to note the link between the verses immediately preceding and the prayer which was last before us. In 2 Thessalonians 2:15, the apostle had thus exhorted the saints: “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught [i.e. the oral ministry of the apostles], whether by word, or our epistle.” Then had fol-

lowed the prayer in 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, that they might be comforted and established by an effectual application to them of the glorious contents of the Gospel. Next he had solicited their prayers for himself and fellow ministers (2Th 3:1-2), and then had declared, “But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you” (2Th 3:3-4). Note, the apostle did not say, “We have confidence in you,” but “in the Lord touching you,” assured that having “begun a good work” in them, He would graciously complete the same (Phi 1:6).

Let us now consider the *Addressee* of this prayer. Who is meant by “the Lord” here? We answer, unhesitatingly, the third Person in the blessed Trinity, the One who is designated “Lord” in 1 Corinthians 12:5, and “Spirit of the Lord” in 2 Corinthians 3:18. First, this is clear from the fact that in our present verse, He is definitely distinguished from “God” and “Christ,” so that reference is made here to the Eternal Three. Second, it is borne out by what is here asked of Him: “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ” (2Th 3:5). Now it is the distinguishing work of the Spirit to develop our graces and regulate their exercise. As the love of God is “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Rom 5:5), so it is by Him that love is called forth into action. Third, since the Spirit be co-essential and co-eternal with the Father and the Son, it is His due that we should render homage to Him. Nowhere in Scripture is there the least hint that one Person in the God-head must be excluded from the praises which we make to the Lord. On the contrary, that the Spirit is to be publicly owned and equally honoured with the Father and the Son is clear from Matthew 28:19: to be baptized in His name is an act of worship. It is evident again from the place accorded Him in the Christian benediction (2Co 13:14).

We are expressly bidden to “worship and bow down...before the LORD our maker” (Psa 95:6), and that the third Person is included therein is plain from, “The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life” (Job 33:4, and compare Job 26:13, with Psa 33:6). Let it also be duly noted that this 95th Psalm (verses 7-11) is quoted in Hebrews 3:7-11, and is there prefaced with the words, “Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith...)” Thus, not only *may* we worship the blessed Spirit, but Psalm 95:6 *commands* us to do so! In Ezekiel 37:9, we find that the prophet was ordered to invoke the Holy Spirit: compare verses 9-10 with verse 14, and see John 3:8. So, too, in Song of Solomon 4:16, we find the Spouse of Christ praying to the Spirit for renewal and revival. Again, instruction is given to pray to “the Lord of the harvest” (Mat 9:38). During the days of His earthly ministry, Christ sustained that office, as appears from His choosing the apostles and sending forth the seventy. But since His ascension, the Holy Spirit became such: see Acts 13:2, 4; 20:28! It is the Spirit who now calls and equips the “labourers,” assigns them their work, and blessed the same.

In Revelation 1:4-5, all the three divine Persons are invoked for blessing. Thus we see that all through Scripture, the Holy Spirit is an Object of prayer; and therefore, it should occasion no surprise to find that He is made the Addressee of the one here before us. It hardly requires to be pointed out that His personality is necessarily implied in being so supplicated, and His Deity in being thus designated. “The Lord direct your hearts”: as the title “Lord” is expressive of His dominion, so the action here mentioned indicates His Godhead, for it is one which none but a divine Person can perform. As “the king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will” (Pro 21:1), equally so are all men’s hearts. “Especially, He must be God that can direct the heart into the ‘love of God,’ which is one of ‘the deep things of God’ (1Co 2:10), which the Spirit of God only can search into and reveal unto us...He not only takes of the things of Christ (His person, blood, and righteousness) and shows them to us, and our interest in them; but He takes also of the things of the Father, and particularly His *love*. He sheds it abroad in our hearts, and directs our hearts into it; and in so doing, acts the part of a Comforter unto us”—From a sermon on the text by John Gill (1697-1771).

“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God” may be taken either actively or passively: actively, of the love wherewith we love God; or passively, of the love wherewith we are loved by God. Personally, we are satisfied that the reference is to our love of God, rather than His to us, though since the words may be understood either way, we will consider them in both. The reasons why we regard the words in an active sense are: First, because our apprehension and enjoyment of God’s love to us was fully covered in the preceding prayer (2Th 2:16-17). Second, because the immediate context obviously requires us to do so. In 2 Thessalonians 3:4, the apostle expressed his confidence in the Lord that they did and would do the things His servants *commanded* them, and then he at once prayed that the Lord the Spirit would strengthen and direct them therein; so it is that practical love which issues in obedience that is here in view—though perhaps it is not to be restricted absolutely thereto. Third, because the second petition—“and into the patient waiting for Christ”—is to be understood in an active sense, as pertaining to the discharge of their duty, namely, a steady endurance of persecution and a continuance in well doing unto the end of their earthly course.

“Direct you hearts into the love of God.” This petition is of far too vital and vast importance for us to hurriedly and cursorily dismiss it: rather must we give it our best attention. First, we are to constantly bear in mind that love to God and to our neighbour is the sum and substance of the moral Law. “Hear, O Israel, The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deu 6:4-5). That the Lord Jesus enforced the same appears from His answer to the lawyer’s question, “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” Namely, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment” (Mat 22:35-38). “This is no new commandment of the Gospel: only it is *renewed* under the Gospel dispensation and pressed with stronger motives”—J. Gill. Let Mr. Gill’s admirers note well that statement: so far was he from affirming that Christians are not under the Moral Law, he said, “Christ and Moses agree in this,” and declared it is “renewed”! The apostles also taught the same: Romans 13:8; 1 Corinthians 9:21; and 1 John 2:7-8.

But though all men are required to so love the Lord their God, yet none in his natural condition is able to do so. Not that he lacks the necessary faculties for the same, but because sin is in full possession of every part of his complex being; and therefore, he is “alienated from the life of God” (Eph 4:18). As the result of the Fall, every descendant of Adam is born into this world destitute of the slightest affection for God. To the religious Pharisees, Christ said, “But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you” (Joh 5:42). “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1Jo 2:15); and where is the man or woman who does not love the world until a miracle of grace is wrought within, and the bent and bias of the heart be changed? But not only is the heart of the natural man devoid of any love to God, it has a radical aversion to Him, for “the carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom 8:7). That was unmistakably demonstrated when the Son of God became incarnate, for so far from being welcomed and adored, He declared, “they *hated* me without a cause” (Joh 15:25)—evidenced by their hounding Him to death.

Where there *is* genuine love to God in anyone, that person has been made the subject of a miracle of grace. At regeneration, the blessed Spirit slays our native enmity against God, and sheds abroad His love in the heart. A principle of life, of grace, of holiness, is communicated to the soul. There is “given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true” (1Jo 5:20). There is a personal revelation of God made to the one born again, so that He “hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). The film of prejudice is removed, the mist of error is dispersed, and the soul perceives the majesty, the excellency, the loveliness of the divine character, and exclaims, “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Exo 15:11). Such a discovery and view of God draws out the heart unto Him, so that He is now its supreme delight. “And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (1Ti 1:14): those two graces of “faith and love” always go together, being implanted at one and the same time, by one and the same hand.

Yet it needs to be clearly recognized and constantly borne in mind that the principle of life and grace imparted to us at regeneration—that “new nature” as many term it—is but a *creature*; and therefore, possesses no self-sufficiency, but is entirely dependent for its continuance, development, and health upon its Author. Further, it is to be remembered that the flesh, the world, and the devil are inveterately opposed to that “new creature”; and hence, our urgent need for God to sustain, nourish, establish, and guard it, as well as regulate all its activities. It was these considerations which prompted the apostle here, when he petitioned the Lord the Spirit to “direct [their] hearts into the love of God,” for he knew full well they had not the power to do so. It was the consciousness of his own weakness in this matter which moved David—in view of “Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently”—to exclaim, “O that my ways *were directed* to keep thy statutes!” (Psa 119:4-5). And after praying, “Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight,” added, “*Incline* my heart unto thy testimonies” (Psa 119:35-36).

But let us now consider more closely of *what* our “love to God” consists. Its radical and internal acts are desire after Him and delight in Him. “Love affects union with its beloved, and so love to God implies an earnest seeking after Him, in the highest way of enjoyment that we are capable of in this world”—Thomas Manton (1620-1677), from whose sermon we draw in what follows. “There be many that say, who will show us any good?” They seek satisfaction in the things of time and sense, but their quest is vain. But in contradistinction from them, the regenerate cry, “LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.” *That* is their supreme longing, and as it be granted, they exclaim, “Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that *their* corn and their wine increased” (Psa 4:6-7). Not only is God supremely desired by those who love Him, but He is fervently sought after: “My soul followeth hard after thee” (Psa 63:8). “The whole spiritual life is but a pursuit of the soul towards God; and the more constantly and earnestly we seek Him, to enjoy more of His saving graces and benefits, the more we have of the love of God in us”—T. Manton.

Since God be the supreme object of our desire (Psa 27:4), so too of our *delight*. Since love to God be the complacency of the soul in Him, as apprehended to be the sum of all perfection and our all-sufficient portion, it cannot but follow that we shall find our highest pleasure in Him. “If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up...For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God” (Job 22:23, 26). Fullness of joy is reserved for heaven, yet even in this vale of tears, “we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:11). It cannot be otherwise: as the soul perceives God’s excellency and is admitted to communion with Him, we exult in Him. As the Spouse of Christ testifies, “I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste” (Song 2:3). The saints look upon God reconciled as their best Friend: “My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD” (Psa 104:34). “Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee...My soul shall be satisfied” (Psa 63:3, 5).

The *external effects* of love to God are all summed up in these two things: doing and suffering His will—“when we are contented to do what God will have us do, and be what God will have us be”—T. Manton. If we really love God, then it will necessarily follow that we shall be loath to offend Him and desirous of pleasing Him; and consciousness of failure in either is the acutest grief experienced by the saint. “If a man love me,” said Christ, “he will keep my words” (Joh 14:23). Love to God is the most powerful incentive, motive, and dynamic of all: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1Jo 5:2-3) to His dear children, for they “delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom 7:22). Faith is indeed a wonderful grace, yet only as it “worketh *by love*” (Gal 5:6) does it produce that which is pleasing and glorifying to God. “But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected” (1Jo 2:5): that is, his love to Him has attained its designed end. None can be owned as a sincere lover of God, but he that makes conscience of obeying what He commands.

Love to God is also evidenced by a meek and cheerful *suffering* of His will. “When the apostle prays here that God would direct their hearts to love Him, he means that they should endure anything rather than deny the faith, and confess Christ whatever it costs them. As obedience is virtually contained in love, so also courage and resolution. Solomon represents love as a powerful thing, as an affection that will not be bribed nor quenched. ‘Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned’ (Song 8:7). It is true of love in general, much more of love to God. In divine matters, it is a sovereign antidote against temptations, both on the right hand and on the left. All the riches, pleasures, and honours of the world are contemned: they cannot bribe them over from Christ that really love Him. Nor can all the floods of persecution quench this holy desire. This is the genius and disposition of love, when once the bent of the heart is set toward God and heaven, they are vehemently set against anything that would turn them out of the way and divert them from their purpose”—T. Manton.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

33. Jericho, Part 3 (6:6)

In our last, we considered the instructions which Joshua received from the Lord concerning Jericho; now we are to observe how the same were carried out. “And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of the LORD. And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD” (Jos 6:6-7). It is, therefore, quite evident from these verses that Joshua understood God’s promise, “I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour” (Jos 6:2) as meaning that, if His directions were faithfully and exactly executed—but *only* in that case—would the city be supernaturally overthrown. That promise was to assure Joshua that the Canaanites would be unable to successfully defend their city, and that the Lord would make it manifest that *He* had delivered it up to Israel; nevertheless, they must act in full subjection to His revealed will.

This incident of the capture of Jericho is one which should be carefully pondered and taken to heart by all the people of God today, especially so by His servants, for if it be so, it will supply a grand tonic to faith and effectually counteract that spirit of gloom which now so widely obtains. Alas, the majority of professing Christians are far

more occupied with what are called “the signs of the times” than they are with the One in whose hand all the “times” and “seasons” are (Act 1:7). They are walking by sight, rather than by faith; engaged with the things seen, rather than with those which are unseen. The consequence is that many of them are cast down and dispirited over present conditions; and only too often, the preacher is apt to regard the situation as hopeless. But *that* is to be of the same temper as the unbelieving spies, who said, “We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we” (Num 13:31), magnifying the difficulties which confronted them and yielding to a spirit of defeatism.

If the minister of the Gospel be occupied with the smallness of his congregation, and their unresponsiveness to his preaching; if he dwell unduly upon the lack of interest on the part of the young people, and listens to the prophets of gloom—who ever give the darkest possible interpretation to things—then he may well be dejected. But if his thoughts be formed by and his own soul fed upon the Word of God, then he will discover that there is no cause whatever for dismay. Scripture nowhere teaches that God is seeking to convert the world; rather does it declare that He is visiting the Gentiles “to take out of them a people for his name” (Act 15:14). When giving instructions to His servants, Christ bade them “Take no thought for your life,” for He would have their hearts at rest, trusting in the living God to supply their every need; and also said, “Fear not, *little* flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luk 12:22, 32). He ever sought to strengthen their confidence in the invincibility of God’s purpose, declaring “All that the Father giveth me *shall come* to me” (Joh 6:37).

Instead of perplexing his mind with useless speculations about the ten toes of Daniel’s colossus, the business of the minister of the Gospel is to faithfully carry out the commission which he has received from his Master (Mat 28:19-20). Instead of wasting time upon the newspapers and listening in to the wireless in order to ascertain the latest threats of the Kremlin or menaces of the Vatican, let him give more earnest heed to that injunction, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2Ti 2:15). Instead of being so absorbed with the activities of Satan’s emissaries, let him mix faith with that heartening assurance of the Most High, “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it *shall* accomplish that which *I please*, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isa 55:10-11).

The Word of God is not outdated: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Mat 24:35). Then preach that Word in its purity, in its fullness, with implicit confidence in its sufficiency. The Gospel of Christ is not obsolete, but is still “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom 1:16). Then proclaim it, realizing that the curse of God rests on all who preach any other (Gal 1:8). Do you reply, *I have*, in my poor way, sought to preach the Gospel as faithfully and earnestly as I know how: but so far as I can see, it has been fruitless, and I am thoroughly discouraged. Then take heed, we beg you, to the incident which is here before us. Get down on your knees right now and beg God to bless this article unto you. Fervently implore Him to open your heart to receive the same. Ponder afresh those words, “*By faith* the walls of Jericho fell down, *after* they were compassed about seven days” (Heb 11:30). Surely, then, “all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mar 9:23)!

It requires no forced or fanciful effort of ours to show that Israel’s conquest of Jericho adumbrated the victories won by the Gospel, when it is faithfully preached, and the blessing of God attends the same. As was pointed out in our last, Jericho was one of the leading strongholds of the enemy: “the cities are walled, and very great” (Num 13:28). Probably Jericho was the most powerfully fortified of any of them, and as such, it presented a formidable obstacle unto Joshua and his fellows. Nevertheless, it fell before them in response to the punctual observance of the orders which they had received from the Lord. It was in manifest reference to this that the apostle declared, “(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty *through God* to the pulling down of strong holds” (2Co 10:4). How blessedly and unmistakably was that demonstrated under his own ministry! How gloriously was the same made evident in the days of Luther! How frequently has the same truth been made to appear in various parts of the earth since then. And *you*, my brethren in the ministry, have the same glorious Gospel to preach, and the same mighty God to look unto to bless your labours!

Do you reply, But I am no Joshua, no Paul, no Luther? Then we remind you of the apostle’s self-abasing and God-honouring words to those who were glorying in the flesh. “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase” (1Co 3:5-7). The men whom God has most used throughout the ages were those who rated themselves as *nobodies*! But you say, I feel so weak and ill-equipped—God grant that such is your sincere language, for if the contrary were the case, if you deemed yourself an able and well-qualified man, you are no servant of Christ’s. Listen again to

Paul, who, with all his gifts and graces, contemplated the tasks before him in this spirit and attitude: “And who is sufficient for these things?” (2Co 2:16).

Writing to those same saints and looking back to the days of his evangelistic labours among them, the apostle declared, “I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in *fear*, and in much trembling (1Co 2:1-3). Self-diffidence is no disqualification for Christ’s service. It was not Paul that was “great,” but rather that the weapons he used when engaging the forces of evil were “mighty through God” (2Co 10:4)! And what were those “weapons”? Prayer, “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:17), and faith in the One who had commissioned him. Note that we put *prayer* first. Does not the example of the supreme Preacher (Mar 1:35; Luk 6:12-13) require us to do so? Did not the Twelve declare, “But we will give ourselves continually to [1] prayer, and [2] to the ministry of the word” (Act 6:4)? Then do thou the same. Concerning *faith*, we refer the reader again to Hebrews 11:30. Now fellow preachers, the same three “weapons” are available *to us*; and we need no others for the glorifying of Christ and the execution of His commission.

Note well, ye preachers, our last sentence. We did not say that no other weapons are needed in order for you to be eminently “successful” in your work, or that your use of the same will ensure prompt “visible results.” *That* must not be made your chief concern nor immediate end: and if you make it such, a jealous God is most likely to blow upon rather than bless your efforts. Your paramount care and principal design must be the *glorifying of God* (1Co 10:31): to make known His excellency, to enforce His just claims upon the creatures of His hands, to bid men throw down the weapons of their warfare against Him, and be reconciled to Him. If you be a real servant of God’s, He has sent you forth to *magnify Christ*: the salvation of sinners is but secondary and subordinate thereto. God would have a universal testimony borne unto the matchless worth of the person and work of Christ—the Gospel is a “witness” (Mat 24:14) to His perfections. God would have proclaimed far and wide the amazing fact that His own beloved Son “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi 2:8), being wholly devoted unto the will of His Father.

It is of first importance that we should be quite clear upon the nature of the Gospel: it is “the gospel of God...*Concerning his Son* Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 1:1, 3). In the Gospel is made known the Saviour’s personal dignities: that He is the Lord of glory, the Prince of life, the King of kings, the Creator and Upholder of the universe. In the Gospel is revealed His amazing condescension and humiliation: how that in obedience to the Father’s Word, He voluntarily and gladly took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of sin’s flesh, tabernacling for a season in this scene. In the Gospel is exhibited His holy and unique life: performing the work which the Father had given Him to do. In the Gospel is displayed His official glories: as Prophet, Priest, and Potentate. In it is told forth His grace unto sinners: dying the Just for the unjust. In it is declared how that He magnified the divine Law and made it honourable, superlatively glorifying the Father thereby. In it we are informed how that God rewarded His incarnate Son by raising Him from the dead, and seating Him at His own right hand on high. Our business, fellow preachers, is to proclaim that Gospel in its purity and fullness, that God may be glorified, and His Son magnified.

Our commission is crystal clear. It is no other than this: “Speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear” (Eze 3:11). Our business is to declare “all the counsel of God” and keep back nothing that is profitable unto souls (Act 20:20, 27). Our marching orders are the same as Jonah’s (Jon 3:2) and of Deuteronomy 4:2: “Preach unto it [the city] the preaching that I bid thee.” “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it.” Only by so doing will God be glorified and our souls cleared from the awful charge of infidelity. But if we *do so*—and only by divine grace, earnestly and constantly sought, can we—we may safely *leave* “results” with the Lord of the harvest. Nay more, we may rest in full confidence on the promise, “them that honour me I will honour” (1Sa 2:30). But it must be left *with Him* as to when and how He “honours.” In the Day to come, He will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Mat 25:23). Even now, “we are *unto God* a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, *and* in them that perish” (2Co 2:15)!

But let us now take a more definite look at the instructions given to Israel’s priests in Joshua 6:6. Observe carefully a significant omission therein, which, silently but decidedly, confirms what has been said above. Joshua did not announce to them the promise which he had received from the Lord in verses 2 and 5, but simply gave them their marching orders, without any assurance that success would certainly attend their efforts! In this, as in almost all things, Joshua was a type of Christ who—although receiving promise from His Father (in the everlasting covenant) of the sure success of *His* undertaking (compare Isa 53:10-12)—yet when commissioning His servants, gave

them specific commandments, but said not a word about their labours being fruitful! (See Mat 28:19-20; Mar 16:15-16; Luk 24:46-49; Joh 20:21-23; Act 1:7-8.) So here: the priests were told what to do, and that was all. Unquestioning and unreserved obedience to their orders was what was required from them: nothing more, nothing less. They were, first, to “take up the ark of the covenant”; second, to “bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns”; and third, to go “before the ark of the LORD” (Jos 6:6-7). Let us now point out the typical significance of the same.

The ark of the covenant was the symbol of the Lord’s presence with them, as their “leader and commander” (Isa 55:4). In like manner, Christ has assured his servants, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Mat 28:20). That is to be realized by faith, and not by sense. The minister of the Gospel is to go forward to the fight in the blessed consciousness that he is not alone: he is to act with full assurance that the Captain of his salvation is *with him*. What a difference it will make if he steadily bear the same in mind! Let him act accordingly. Let the known presence of Christ serve both as a bridle upon the flesh, and as a spur to his zeal. The priests “bearing the seven trumpets” (Jos 6:8) at once identifies them as adumbrating ministers of the Gospel sounding forth their imperative message. “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression” (Isa 58:1). “Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet” (Jer 6:17). “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain” (Joe 2:1). The apostle made use of this figure when he said, “For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (1Co 14:8).

The sounding of the trumpets by the priests on this occasion had a two-fold design: to strike terror into the hearts of the Canaanite, and to inspire with courage and confidence the people of God. And that is the twofold work of Christ’s servants. First, to solemnly declare the revealed wrath of God “against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom 1:18): to announce His war against those who continue in sin, and to boldly declare “he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mar 16:16). Thus did the supreme Gospeller: Matthew 11:23-24; John 3:18, 36! Second, to strengthen the hearts of God’s people: “And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the LORD your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies” (Num 10:9). “And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people, And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you” (Deu 20:2-4). Thus is the preacher to encourage the saints in their conflict with the flesh, the world, and the devil.

ENJOYING GOD’S BEST

Part 5

In our last, we considered various cases, both of individuals and corporate companies, who *missed* God’s best, and saw how ill it fared with them. We closed by pointing out how that if we judge ourselves for our sins, we shall *escape* God’s chastening rod. We now turn to the question, Is it possible for a Christian who has missed God’s best to be *recovered* to full communion with Him and restored to His providential smile? Possible, yes; easy, no. Before we show how that possibility may be realized, let us solemnly ponder what brought that poor soul into such a sorry plight—a plight into which both writer and reader will certainly fall, unless we are ever on our prayerful guard. The grand but simple secret of a healthy and prosperous spiritual life is to *continue* as we began (Col 2:6): by daily trusting in the sufficiency of Christ’s blood and yielding ourselves to His lordship, seeking to please and honour Him in all things. As the believer walks with Christ in the path of obedience, following the example which He has left him, peace will possess his soul and joy will fill his heart, and the smile of God will be upon him. But unless he, by grace, fulfil those conditions, such will not be his happy portion.

If the believer slackens in maintaining daily fellowship with Christ and drawing from His fullness, if he fails to feed regularly on the Word and becomes less frequent in his approaches to the Throne of Grace, then the pulse of his spiritual life will beat more feebly and irregularly. Unless he meditates oft on the love of God and keeps fresh before his heart the humiliation and sufferings of Christ on his behalf, his affections will soon cool, his relish for spiritual things will wane, and obedience will neither be so easy nor so pleasant. If such a spiritual decline be ne-

glected or excused, it will not be long ere indwelling sin gains the upper hand over his graces, and his heart will more and more glide imperceptibly into carnality and worldliness. Worldly pleasures, which previously repelled and were perceived to be vanities, will begin to attract. Worldly pursuits, which had been only a means, will become his end—absorbing more and more of his attention and having a higher value in his eyes. Or worldly cares, which he had cast upon the Lord, will now oppress and weigh him down. And unless there be a humbling of himself before God (and His providence hinder), he will soon be found in the ways of open transgression. Backsliding begins in the *heart*!

The case of a backslider is much more serious than that of one who has been “overtaken in a fault” (Gal 6:1). For with him, it is not a matter of a sudden surprisal and a single stumble, but rather of a steady deterioration and definite departure from the Lord. Nor is it, in its early stages, manifested openly; and hence, his brethren may be quite unaware of it. A secret canker of unwatchfulness and coldness has infected him: he has yielded to a spirit of laxity and self-indulgence. When first aware of his decline, instead of being alarmed, he ignored it; instead of weeping over it before God, he went on in his carnality, until his graces became inoperative and all power to resist the devil was gone. With such, the Holy Spirit is grieved; His quickening influences are withdrawn; and His comforts are withheld. There are indeed degrees of backsliding: with some, it is partial; with others, total; yet while one remains in that case, it is impossible for the saint to determine which. Nor is there anything in Scripture which gives a warrantable sense of security unto such a one, or which countenances any man to be easy in his sins; but very much the contrary.

Inexpressibly sad is the case of one who continues for a season in a backslidden state. He has displeased God and dishonoured Christ; and in many instances, he has become a stumbling-block to fellow Christians, especially to younger ones. He has made himself miserable. He has sinned and repented not; departed from God, and confessed it not. Formerly, he walked in happy fellowship with God, the light of His countenance shone upon him, and that peace which passeth all understanding possessed his soul. But now the joy of salvation is no more his portion. He has lost his relish for the Word, and prayer has become a burden. He is out of touch with God, for his iniquities have separated him from Him (Isa 59:2), and he can find no rest unto his soul. He has been spoilt for the world and cannot now find even that measure of satisfaction in carnal things which the ungodly do. Wretched indeed is his plight. “The backslider in heart shall be filled with his *own* ways” (Pro 14:14): it cannot be otherwise, for he no longer has any delight in the ways of God. His own backslidings reprove him, so that he is made to know and see what “an evil thing and bitter,” that he has “forsaken the LORD thy God” (Jer 2:19), and thereby miss His best.

Yet, pitiful though his case be, it is not hopeless, for the call goes forth, “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD” (Jer 3:14). Nevertheless, response thereto is not the simple matter that lookers-on might suppose. It is very much easier to depart from God than to return unto Him. Not that His terms of recovery are rigorous, but because the soul is straitened. It is difficult for the backslider to perceive the nature and seriousness of his condition, for sin has a blinding and hardening effect, and the more he falls under the power of it, the less does he discern the state he is in. Even when his eyes begin to be opened again, there is an absence of real desire for recovery, for sin has a paralyzing influence, so that its victims are “at ease in Zion” (Amo 6:1). Even David was insensible of his awful plight when Nathan first approached him; and it was not until the prophet pointedly declared, “Thou art the man” (2Sa 12:7), that Satan’s spell over him was broken. It is therefore much to be thankful for when such are awakened from their slumber and made to hear that word. “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings” (Jer 3:22).

But even then the soul is reluctant to meet God’s terms. If nothing more were required than a lip acknowledgement of his offences and a return to outward duties, no great difficulty would be experienced; but to really fulfill the divine conditions for restoration is a very different matter. As John Owen (1616-1683) affirmed, “Recovery from backsliding is the hardest task in the Christian religion; one which few make either comfortable or honourable work of.” There has to be an asking, a seeking, a knocking, if the door of deliverance is to be opened to him. As John Brine (1703-1765), whose works were favourably reviewed in the *Gospel Standard*, wrote to God’s people two hundred years ago: “Much labour and diligence are required unto this. It is not complaining of the sickly condition of our souls which will effect this cure: confession of our follies that have brought diseases upon us, though repeated ever so often, will avail nothing toward the removal of them. If we intend the recovery of our former health and vigour, we must *act* as well as complain and groan.” Let us now endeavour to point out how God requires such a one *to* “act.”

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Pro 28:13) epitomizes both sides of the case. Sin is a disease of the soul, and (like a bodily one) by concealing it, we make it increase and become desperate. As the Puritan, Joseph Caryl (1602-1673), pointed out: “Sin increases two

ways in the concealment of it. First, in its *guilt*. The obligation to punishment takes stronger hold upon the soul, and every man is bound the faster with the chains of darkness by how much more he labours to keep his sins in the dark. The longer a sin remains on the conscience unpardoned, the more does the guilt of it increase. Second, in the filth and *contagion* of it. It grows more master, and masterly, and at last raves and rages, commands and carries all before it.” To “cover” our sins is a refusal to bring them out into the light by an honest confession of the same unto God; in the case of our fellows, refusing to acknowledge our offences unto those we have wronged. This is reprehensible hiding of sin-- is an adding of sin unto sin, and is a certain preventative of prosperity; and if persisted in, it will cover the perpetrator with shame and confusion for ever.

To “cover” sin is to hide it within our own bosoms, instead of openly acknowledging it. Thus it was with Achan even when the tribes were solemnly arraigned before Joshua and Eleazar, the high priest: he solemnly maintained silence until his crime was publicly exposed. Some seek to conceal their sins by framing excuses and attempting a self-extenuation: they seek to throw the blame upon their circumstances, their fellows, or Satan—upon anything or anyone except *themselves*! Others proceed to a still worse device, and seek to cloak their sin by a lie, denying their guilt. As did Cain, for when God made inquisition for blood and inquired of him, “Where is Abel thy brother?” he answered, “I know not” (Gen 4:9). So, too, Gehazi blankly denied his wrong when charged by Elisha (2Ki 5:25). In like manner acted Ananias and Sapphira (Act 5:1-11). Three things induce men to make coverings for their sins. First, *pride*. Man has such high thoughts of himself that when guilty of the basest things, he is too self-opinionated to own them. Second, *unbelief*. Those who have not faith to believe that *God* can and will cover confessed sins, vainly attempt to do so themselves. Third, *shame and fear* cause many to hide their sins. Sin is such a hideous monster that they will not own as *theirs*.

“But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” Confession of sin is an indispensable part of repentance; and without repentance, there can be no remission (Act 3:19). “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah” (Psa 32:5)—the pardon was upon his confession. Those who are so convicted of their sins as to be humbled and sorrowed by a sight and sense of the same will not hide them out of sight. Nor will their confession be merely a formal one of the lips, but rather the sobbings of a contrite heart. And instead of generalizing, there will be a particularizing; instead of seeking to excuse or gloss over the offence, it will be painted in its true colours and its aggravations frankly owned. There will be an acknowledgement of the fact and of the fault: an unsparing self-condemnation. The language of David in the opening verses of Psalm 51 will be found most suited to his case. The sin or sins will be confessed sincerely, contritely, fully, with a self-abasement and self-loathing. The cry will be made, “O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is *great*” (Psa 25:11).

“And forsaketh them.” To “forsake” our sins is a voluntary and deliberate act. It signifies to hate and abandon them in our affections, to repudiate them by our wills, to refuse to dwell upon them in our minds and imaginations with any pleasure or satisfaction. It necessarily implies that we renounce them, and are resolved by God’s grace to make the utmost endeavour to avoid any repetition of the same. “We must keep at a distance from those persons and snares which have drawn us into instances of folly, which have occasioned that disorder which is the matter of our complaint. Without this, we may multiply acknowledgements and expressions of concern for our past miscarriages to no purpose at all. It is very great folly to think of regaining our former strength so long as we embrace and dally with those objects through whose evil influence we have fallen into a spiritual decline. It is not our bewailing the pernicious effects of sin that will prevent its baleful influence upon us for time to come, except we are determined to *forsake* that to which is owing our melancholy disease”—J. Brine.

But suppose the saint *does not* promptly thus confess and forsake his sins, then what? Why, in such a case, he will “not prosper”: there will be no further growth in grace, nor will the providential smile of God be upon him. The Holy Spirit is grieved, and will suspend His gracious operations within his soul; and henceforth, his “way” will be made “hard” (Pro 13:15). Such was the experience of David: “When I kept silence, my bones [a figure of the supports of the soul] waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture [or vigour or freshness] is turned into the drought of summer” (Psa 32:3-4). Sin is a pestilential thing which saps our spiritual vitality. Though David was silent as to confession, he was not so as to sorrow. God’s hand smote him so that he was made to groan under His chastening rod. Nor did he obtain any relief until he humbled himself before God by confessing and forsaking his sins. Not that there is anything meritorious in such acts which entitles their performer to mercy, but that this is the holy order which God has established. He will not connive at our sins, but withholds His mercy until we take sides with Him in the hatred of them.

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2Ch

7:14). This passage shows us, first, that God sends temporal judgments upon His people because of their sins. Second, it makes known what they are to do when His rod is upon them. Third, it contains a precious promise for faith to lay hold of. Let us carefully note what was required from them. First, “If my people...shall humble themselves,” which is similar to the “judge ourselves” in 1 Corinthians 11:31—but here, when chastisement is upon them. Leviticus 26:41 casts light upon it: “If...they then *accept* of the punishment of their iniquity,” which is the opposite of asking, what have I done to occasion this? “And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us *less* than our iniquities *deserve*” (Ezr 9:13) illustrates. David “humbled” himself when he owned, “I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me” (Psa 119:75). He took sides with God against himself, and acknowledged his unrighteousness.

Until the stricken one has humbled himself, it is vain to think of proceeding farther, for pride and impenitence bar any approaches unto the Holy One. But “if” we *have* duly “humbled” ourselves; second, “and pray.” Only as we take our place in the dust before Him can we truly do so. And for what will such a one make request? Surely for a deeper sense of God’s holiness and of his own vileness: for a broken and contrite heart. Accompanying his “humbling” and as an expression thereof, there will be the penitent confession; and that will be followed by a begging for faith in God’s mercy and a hope of cleansing and restoration. Third, “and seek my face,” which goes farther than “and pray”: expressing diligence, definiteness, and fervour. The omniscient One cannot be imposed upon by mere lip-service, but requires the heart. There has to be a face-to-face meeting with the One we have displeased: He will not gloss over our sins; nor must we. Hosea 14:2-3 should be made use of, for the Lord has there made known the very words which we may appropriately use on such occasions. Fourth, “and turn from their wicked ways” (which had brought judgment upon them) has the same force as “forsaketh” our sins in Proverbs 28:13.

“Then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” Here is the gracious promise. But mark well its opening, “Then”: only when we have fully met its conditions. We have no warrant to look for its fulfilment until its qualifying terms are observed by us. Note, too, its blessed scope: a hearing from God is obtained, His forgiveness is assured, and His healing is available for faith to claim. Say, Lord I have—by Thy grace, and to the best of my poor ability—humbled myself, sought Thy face, and renounced my wicked ways; now do as Thou hast said: “*heal* my land”—whether it be my body, my loved one, or my estate. Remove Thy rod, and let Thy providential smile come upon me again. Make a believing use of and plead before God the promises of Hosea 14:4-8! “According to your faith be it unto you” (Mat 9:29) is most pertinent at this point. God is pledged to honour faith, and never does He fail those who trust Him fully; no, not when they count upon Him to work a miracle for them, as this writer can humbly but thankfully testify. How many Christians live below their privileges!

“Jehovah-rophi” (“the LORD that healeth thee”: Exo 15:26) is as truly one of the divine titles—as “Jehovah-tsidkneu” (“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”: Jer 23:6)—yet how very few of His own people count upon Him as such; but instead, act like world-lings in such a crisis and put their confidence in human physicians. Is it possible for one who, through long-continued self-indulgence, has missed God’s best and brought down upon himself and family temporal adversity, to be fully recovered and restored to His favour? Who can doubt it in the light of this precious, but little-known, promise: “And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten” (Joe 2:25)! Is not the One with whom we have to do “the God of *all* grace” (1Pe 5:10); then who is justified in placing any limitation thereon! Yet, let it not be overlooked that divine grace ever works “through righteousness” (Rom 5:21), and never at the expense of it, as it would if God were to make light of sin and condone our transgressions. And let it also be carefully borne in mind that the divine promises are addressed *to faith*; and must be personally appropriated by us in childlike confidence, if we are to enjoy the good of them. “All things are possible to him that believeth” (Mar 9:23).

Let the reader turn to the prophet Joel and ponder the whole of chapter 1 and the first eleven verses of 2. Israel had sinned grievously and repeatedly, and the Lord had smitten them severely. But at Joel 2:12-13, we read, “Therefore [in view of these chastisements, particularly the plague of locusts] also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.” Then, because in this instance the whole nation was involved, the Lord gave orders for them to “Sanctify a fast” and to “call a solemn assembly,” bidding “ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach”; assuring them, “*Then* will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people”; promising, “I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith...I will *remove* far off from you the northern army [His scourge]...Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things” (Joe 2:15-21).

Then follow those blessed words, “Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God...And I will *restore* to you the years that the locust hath eaten” (Joe 2:23-25). Upon their compliance with those aforementioned requirements of God, that promise was left for faith to lay hold of and for hope to count upon. And think you, my reader, that that promise was placed on record only for the benefit of those who lived thousands of years ago? Surely, we have good reason to say, as the apostle did in another connection, “Now it was not written for his sake alone...But *for us also*” (Rom 4:23-24). Yes, nevertheless, it avails us nothing unless faith lays hold of and makes it our own. Once more we quote that declaration, “According to *your faith* be it unto you” (Mat 9:29), reverently reminding the Calvinistic reader that those are not the words of James Arminius (1560-1609), but of God the Son. If ever there is one time more than another when we have need to cry, “Lord, Increase our faith” (Luk 17:5), it is when we are pleading 1 John 1:9; and more especially, when looking to God for a full restoration to His best, and counting upon His fulfilling Joel 2:25 unto us.

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

17. The Holy Bible, Part 9

13. *The way of salvation.* The uniqueness of the Bible appears most conspicuously here, as anyone may ascertain for himself by comparing the teaching of the so-called “sacred books” of all human religions. The difference between what is revealed in the Scripture of Truth and the systems of men upon the attainment of holiness and eternal felicity is like unto that between light and darkness. At no other point does the celestial nature of the Bible shine forth more unmistakably than in the plan of redemption which is made known therein. The Good News which it heralds to ruined and lost sinners is such as was undiscoverable by the light of nature, yet is authenticated by its own intrinsic excellency. The Gospel which is published in the Bible attests itself by virtue of its matchless merits. It discovers its divine origin by a proclamation of truth which is self-evident. There is no need for an appeal to be made unto any external testimonies, for a true perception of the Gospel demonstrates its divine nature. That which is affirmed in the Gospel is manifest by its own assertion as something far surpassing all the inventions of the human mind.

The Gospel itself is light, for its central Object is “the light of the world” (Joh 8:12). The advent of Jesus Christ to this earth was predicted as the rising of “the Sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2); and the universal spread of His Gospel is represented under the figure of that grand fountain of natural light diffusing his beams over every part of the earth (Psa 19:1-5, and compare Rom 10:17-18). Now light necessarily *proves itself*, for it is self-evidencing, needing nothing to manifest it. It serves to discover other objects, but requires nothing to discover itself. “Whatsoever doth make manifest *is* light” (Eph 5:13); and the Gospel makes manifest the perfections of God, setting forth an open discovery of them before our minds, beyond any other of His wondrous works. Therefore is this divine revelation, this message of glad tidings unto condemned criminals designated “the glorious gospel of the blessed God” (1Ti 1:11), because His ineffable glories are there so brightly displayed. The consummate wisdom of God is evidenced far more eminently in the work of redemption than in any of His marvels in creation or in providence, so that none but the blind can be unconvinced thereby.

The Gospel evinces its divinity by the solution which it offers to a problem for which the combined wisdom of all mankind can furnish no adequate solution. That problem is succinctly stated thus: “How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?” (Job 25:4). The problem is twofold: legal, and moral, respecting man’s relation to the divine Law, and his fitness for the celestial temple. Man is a transgressor of the divine Law. Every member of the human race is such. Anything short of perfect and perpetual obedience to the divine commandments in thought and word and deed constitutes one a transgressor. Measured by such a standard, each of us must plead guilty, for we come far short of it. The Law condemns us: how, then, can we be acquitted? On what possible ground can the righteous Judge declare us to be entitled to the award of the Law? But more! We are fallen and sinful creatures; and as such, unfit to dwell in the immediate presence of the ineffably holy God. How shall we get rid of our defilement? How obtain that unsullied purity to make us meet for heaven?

Let us briefly amplify the several elements which enter into that problem. 1. The requirements of God’s Law. They are founded upon the perfections of its Framer, and therefore, nothing less than spotless holiness is demanded

of us. Negatively, it proscribes not only wrong deeds and corrupt counsels of the heart, but—as no human legislation ever did—it also prohibits evil desires and propensities, so that all unchaste imaginations are forbidden, as also the spirit of discontent, envy, and revenge; anything which is contrary to the perfections of God Himself is interdicted. Positively, the divine Law demands from us an entire, unreserved, and uninterrupted yielding of soul and body, with all their faculties and powers, unto God and His service. It requires not only that we love Him with all our heart and strength, constantly, but that love to Him must actuate and regulate all our actions unvaryingly. Nor is that unreasonable, for we are all God's creatures, made for His glory, and originally created without sin, in His own image and likeness.

2. The charge preferred against us: “there is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom 3:10). Not a single member of our fallen race measures up to the holy standard which our Maker and Governor has set before us; not one meets the just requirements of His Law. Nor is there one who has made a genuine, wholehearted, and sustained effort to do so. So far from subordinating all his interests to the will of God, the natural man follows the desires and devices of his own heart, giving place to God only so far as that is pleasing to himself. Though he owes his very life to His daily care, yet he has no concern for His glory. He is ungrateful, unruly, ungodly, abusing God's mercies, despising His reproofs, and trampling under foot His commandments. And therefore, “all the world [stands] guilty before God” (Rom 3:19).

3. The sentence of the Law. This is clearly stated in the divine Word: “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal 3:10). Whoever violates a single precept of that Law exposes himself to the displeasure of God, and to His just punishment as the expression of that displeasure. No allowance is made for ignorance, no distinction is made between persons, and no relaxation of its strictness is possible. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Eze 18:4) is its inexorable pronouncement. No exception is made whether the transgressor is young or old, rich or poor, Jew or Gentile: the wages of sin is death, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against *all* ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom 1:18).

4. The Judge Himself is inflexibly just, “that will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo 34:7). In the high court of divine justice, the Lord interprets the Law in its sternest aspect and judges rigidly according to the strictness of its letter. “For he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins” (Jos 24:19). God is inexorably righteous, and will not show any partiality either to the Law or to its violator. “But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things...Who will render to every man according to his deeds” (Rom 2:2, 6). He has determined that His Law shall be faithfully upheld and its sanctions strictly enforced.

5. The sinner is unquestionably guilty. It is not merely that he has infirmities, or that he has done his very best yet failed to attain unto absolute perfection. He has set at naught God's authority, and has proved a proud rebel rather than a loyal subject. He has gone his own way and gratified himself, without any concern for the divine honour. Morally respectable he may be in the sight of his fellows, but a criminal before the divine tribunal. It is impossible for any man to clear himself of the solemn charge: he can neither disprove the accusations which the Law prefers against him, nor vindicate himself for the perpetration of them.

Here, then, is how the case stands. The Law demands flawless and continuous obedience to its precepts in heart and in act, in motive and performance. God charges us with having failed to meet those just requirements, and declares us guilty. The Law then pronounces sentence of condemnation, and demands the infliction of the death penalty. The One before whose tribunal we stand is omniscient, and cannot be imposed upon; He is inflexibly just, and swayed by no sentimental considerations. We are unable to refute the charges of the Law, unable to vindicate our sinful conduct, unable to offer any reparation or atonement for our crimes. Truly our case is desperate to the last degree.

Here, then, is the problem. How can God justify the willful transgressor of His Law without justifying his sins? How can He receive him into His favour without being the Patron of a rebel? How can God deliver him from the penalty of His broken Law without going back upon His Word that He “will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo 34:7)? How can life be granted to the culprit without repealing the sentence, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die”? How can mercy be shown to the sinner without justice being flouted? That is a problem which none of the jurists of this earth could solve, one which must for ever have baffled every finite intelligence. Yet, blessed be His name, God *has*, in His consummate wisdom, devised a way whereby the chief of sinners can be dealt with by Him as though he were entirely innocent; nay more. He pronounces him righteous, up to the required standard of the Law, and entitled to its reward of eternal life. The Gospel provides a plain, satisfactory, and glorious solution to that problem, and therein evidences its *divinity*. To that solution we now direct the reader's attention.

That solution may be summed up in one word, namely *substitution*, though a million words could not express all the stupendous wonders attending the same. God decreed that salvation should be provided for transgressors, and in order that His righteousness might not be compromised, determined that another should take their place; and in their stead, make a full satisfaction to the divine Law, by rendering a flawless obedience to it. But where was to be found one suitable for this task, for, first, he must be a *sinless* being? There was not a single candidate among the sons of men, for the whole human race was guilty. From whence, then, could a substitute be found? Suitable, we say; for not only must he be without sin, but his obedience to the Law must possess such super-abounding *worth* as to pay the debts not of one sinner, but of *all* sinners for whom it was vicariously performed. His obedience must needs possess more merit than their total demerits. That necessarily excluded all the angels, for as creatures of God, they themselves were obligated to render perfect obedience to Him, and in so doing, merely performed their duty; consequently no *merit* attached to the same, and so there was no over plus for others.

Further, none would be suitable, save one who could act in his own absolute right, one who in himself was neither a subject nor a servant; otherwise, he could merit nothing for others: he that has nothing that is absolutely his own cannot pay any price to redeem others. He must be a person possessed of infinite dignity and worthiness, so that he might be capable of meriting infinite blessing. He must be endowed with infinite power and wisdom to qualify him for such a stupendous undertaking. He must be one of unchanging integrity and immutable faithfulness, or he could not be depended upon for such a momentous task. He must be one of matchless mercy and love to willingly serve as the substitute and *die* in the room of fallen and depraved men. It was also requisite that he should be a person infinitely dear unto God the Father, in order to give an infinite value to his transaction in God's esteem. Now where, my reader, was such a one to be found? Had that question been propounded to the ablest of men, yea, to a conclave of angels, it had remained unanswered for ever.

But "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luk 18:27). That problem which was far above the compass of all creatures was solved by Omniscience. The surpassing goodness and infinite wisdom of God selected *His own Son* for the undertaking, for He was in every way fit, possessing in Himself all the requisite qualifications. But here another problem, no less than the former, presented itself. The Son was absolute Sovereign in Himself: how then could He serve? He was infinitely above all law: how then could He perform obedience to law? He was the Lord of glory, worshipped by all the heavenly hosts: how then could He be substituted in the place of worms of the dust? Moreover, as their substitute, He must not only fulfill all the preceptive requirements of the Law, but He must also take upon Him their *sins* and expiate their guilt; He must suffer the Law's condemnation, endure its penalty, and receive the awful wages of sin. But how could One of such infinite dignity enter such depths of humiliation? How could the ineffably Holy One—"who knew no sin"—be judicially "made...to be sin" for them? (2Co 5:21). How could the blessed One be made a curse? How could the Lord of life die?

As another has said, "If God had declared who the person is that should do this work and had gone no further, no creature could have thought which way this person could have performed the work. If God had told them that His own Son must be the Redeemer, and that He alone was a fit person for the work, and that He was a person every way sufficient for it, but had proposed to *them* to contrive a way how this fit and sufficient person should succeed—we must conclude that all created understandings would have been utterly at a loss." Yet the Gospel makes known the wondrous and glorious solution to that problem, a solution which had never entered the mind of man to conceive; and in the revelation made of that salvation, the Gospel bears unmistakably the impress of divine wisdom and carries its own evidence of its divinity.

The manifold wisdom of God determined that His Son should become the Representative and *Surety* of sinners and so be substituted in their place. But who else would have thought of such a thing: that the Son should occupy the place of rebels and become the Object of divine wrath! And in order for the Son to be the sinner's Surety, He must render satisfaction to the Law in man's own nature! What created intelligence had deemed such a thing possible: that a divine Person should become incarnate and be both God and man in one Person! Had God made known such a marvel, what finite intelligence could have devised a way whereby the Son should become flesh *without* partaking of the pollution of fallen human nature! Not only that the Infinite should become finite, the Ancient of days an infant, but that He should be born of a woman without being tainted by the virus of sin! No angel had ever dreamed of the miracle of the virgin birth, whereby an immaculate human nature was produced in Mary's womb by the operation of the Holy Spirit—so that "a holy thing" (Luk 1:35), spotless and impeccable, was born by her! But that was no mystery to divine wisdom. The Son of God became the Son of man.

And so we might continue, paragraph after paragraph, pointing out that the circumstances of Christ's birth, the details of His life, the reception which He met with from the world, the character of His mission, the nature of His death, His triumphant resurrection from the tomb, His ascension into heaven, His there being crowned with honour

and glory, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and now reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords—each and all of which transcend the powers of human imagination. But a word requires to be added upon *the application of Christ's work to His people*. How shall they partake of the benefits of His redemption without robbing Him of His glory? By what means shall their enmity be subdued and their wills be brought into subjection to Him? That was a further problem which no man could have solved. It is by the Spirit's communicating to them a new nature, making them sensible of their wretchedness and need, and causing them to stretch forth the beggar's hand and receive eternal life as a *free gift*. Though indwelling sin be not removed in this life, Christ's love has so won their hearts that it is now their fervent desire and sincere endeavour to live daily so as to please and glorify Him.

Now we submit to the critical reader that the Gospel is stamped with the divine glory that the wisdom of God appears conspicuously in the way of salvation that it exhibits. In its unique contrivances, its accomplished designs, its glorious ends, its blessed fruits, its stupendous wonder in transforming lawless rebels into loving and loyal subjects, we have that which is worthy of Omniscience. Never had it entered into the heart of man to conceive not only of hell-deserving sinners being saved in a way suited to all the divine perfections, but which also provides for their being personally conformed unto the image of God's Son, "made like" Him (Heb 7:3) in holiness and happiness, made "joint-heirs" (Rom 8:17) with Him and eternal sharers of His glory. When impartially examined, it is self-evident that the Gospel is not of human origin. Certainly the Jews did not invent it, for they were its bitterest enemies. Nor the Gentiles, for they knew nothing about it until the apostles preached it to them. Nor did the apostles themselves, for at first they were offended at it (Mat 16:21-22). The Gospel is of God: thanks be unto Him for His unspeakable gift.

In what way shall depraved and guilty creatures be delivered from wickedness and punishment and restored to holiness and happiness is the most difficult, as well as important, question which can engage the mind. Such an inquiry is of no interest to a pleasure-loving trifler, but is of vast moment to the sin-convicted soul. He knows that God is justly displeased with him, but how He shall become reconciled and receive him into His favour passes his comprehension. A sense of guilt makes him afraid of God: how shall the cause of that fear be removed? Those are difficulties which human religions do not resolve, and before which reason is silent. No amount of present repentance and reformation can cleanse the blotted pages of the past. When brought face to face with the dread realities of death, judgment, and eternity, the soul is appalled. A vague hope in the general mercy of God suffices not, for that leaves His justice unsatisfied. The Gospel alone provides a satisfactory solution to these problems, and peace for the burdened conscience.

Neither sorrowing, nor amendment of conduct, can right the wrongs of which the sinner is guilty before God; nor can he by any self-effort change himself for the better, still less fit himself for heaven. A debauchee may be filled with bitter remorse for his vicious excesses, but tears will not heal his diseased body, or deliver him from an early grave. The gambler will condemn himself for his folly, but no self-recriminations will recover his lost estate, or save him from spending his remaining years in penury. Thus it is evident that when it comes to the blotting out of his iniquities before God and the obtaining of a new nature which renders him fit for the divine presence, man must look outside himself. But where is he to look for deliverance *from himself*, for sin has made fallen man averse to fellowship with the Holy One? How then shall he desire, seek after, and delight in that which is repellent to him? He is bidden to look unto One who is "mighty to save" (Isa 63:1). The Gospel presents a divine Physician who can heal the moral leper, yea, give eternal life to one who is spiritually dead. The Lord Jesus is "able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him" (Heb 7:25). His salvation is an all-sufficient and everlasting one, freely offered "without money and without price" (Isa 55:1). Such a Saviour, such a salvation, is of no human invention; therefore, the Book which makes them known must be divine.

It may be asked, If the Gospel be self-evident, why do not all men believe it? The answer is, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (Joh 3:19). The great majority deliberately close their eyes and steel their hears against its appeal, because that appeal clashes with their corruptions and worldly interests. Not until men solemnly contemplate the character of God, their relation to Him as the subjects of His government, and their utter unpreparedness for His awful tribunal, will they seriously consider the claims of His Gospel. As food is relished most by the famished, as health is valued highest by those who have suffered a painful and protracted illness, so the Gospel is only welcomed by those who realize they are under the curse of a sin-hating God, stricken with a moral malady which no human remedy can relieve, and hastening to a hopeless eternity. Nevertheless, he who believeth it not shall be damned (Mar 16:16).

JUNE

DISCOURAGEMENT

We turn now to consider its *correctives*; and obviously, these must be a diligent and resolute opposition to those evils which work in us faint-heartedness. As we have previously intimated, most of our discouragements result from disappointments; and they, in turn, issue from unrealized expectations—the dashing of our hopes. Whether it be persons or things, when they yield not that which we look for, our souls are cast down; and the stronger our expectation, the keener our disappointment when it be not fulfilled. 1. Learn then, dear reader, to *hold all temporal things with a light hand*. Discipline thyself to do so. Set your affections upon things above and “*not on things on the earth*” (Col 3:2). There is nothing whatever under the sun which can satisfy the heart; and if we seek our gratification therein, then “vexation of spirit” (Ecc 1:14) will be our certain portion. God is a jealous God and will brook no rival; and if we make an idol of any object, He will break it to pieces or give us to discover it is made of clay. Be careful then not to make too much of the creature. The less we expect from others, even from fellow saints, the less shall we be disappointed and discouraged.

2. *Cultivate a life of faith*. A being unduly occupied with the creature is an evidence that faith is not in operation, for faith is ever engaged with things unseen. Israel’s despondency in the wilderness was due to their eyes being removed from the Lord. When the disciples became so faint-hearted and affrighted in face of their storm-tossed boat, Christ put His finger upon the seat of their trouble by saying, “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” (Mat 8:26). And how is a life of faith to be cultivated? By daily meditating on God’s Word, for *that* is its appointed food: “Nourished up in the words of faith” (1Ti 4:6). If that spiritual food be neglected, then faith will weaken and languish—more specifically, by laying hold of and making your own the divine promises. If you rest upon the promises of men, they will prove but a broken reed; but if we count upon God’s fulfilling His covenant engagements, we shall not be disappointed, for “faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1Th 5:24). “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isa 26:3).

3. *Cultivate a spirit of contentment*. That was where Israel failed: their discouragement sprang from dissatisfaction with the provision God made for them—lusting after the fleshpots of Egypt, they wearied of the manna. There can be no peace of mind or rest of soul while we are displeased with the portion God has allotted us. But how is our proneness unto such sinful dissatisfaction to be overcome? By diligently and daily seeking grace to heed that precept, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have” (Heb 13:5). It is the spirit of covetousness which makes real contentment impossible. They who are greedy cannot enjoy what God has already given them. O how we punish ourselves by our inordinate desires! It is not the possession of things which brings satisfaction, but the use we make of them and the pleasure we get out of them. Be thankful for God’s present mercies, and trustfully leave the morrow with Him. Count your many blessings and develop the habit of gratitude.

4. Let your *surrender to God’s sovereignty* be more complete and constant. Israel were peeved and dejected because they could not have their own way, and much of our discouragement springs from the same evil root. The corrective lies in yielding ourselves to the good pleasure of God. He apportions His favours as He pleases; and it is not for us to murmur at the same, but rather to say from the heart, “the will of the Lord be done” (Act 21:14). Shall the creature quarrel with the Creator, because He has bestowed this and that upon his fellows and withheld the same from him? To do so is horrible arrogance and presumption. But how am I to learn the holy art of meekly acquiescing unto divine providence? By living under an habitual sense of your own unworthiness in the sight of God; realizing daily that “It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed” (Lam 3:22). Nothing will so much render us submissive to God’s dispensations than the remembrance that He is dealing far better with us than we deserve.

5. “In *your patience* possess ye your souls” (Luk 21:19). Israel’s discouragement sprang from their failure at this very point. They became disheartened at the prospect of a circuitous course rather than a direct approach unto Canaan. Much of our discouragement is really a chafing over delays. What is the corrective? Self-discipline, the

mortification of the spirit of restlessness and fretfulness. Cultivate “a meek and quiet spirit” (1Pe 3:4). But how is *that* to be achieved? By faith’s recognition that God has charge of our affairs, for that enables us to calmly endure whatever He appoints. “He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa 28:16). Israel failed, as we often do, because “they *waited not* for his counsel” (Psa 106:13). Daily beg the Lord to place his cooling hand upon your fevered flesh. Only by waiting on God and for Him shall we maintain peace of mind, cheerfulness of heart, and steadfastness in the performance of duty.

Its cure. “And David was greatly distressed...but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God” (1Sa 30:6). The context is very solemn, showing that the best of men are but men at the best. Seeking help from the ungodly, David had placed himself under obligation to the king of Gath. He had pretended to be a friend of the Philistines and the enemy of his own people. Accordingly, Achish determined to make use of David and his men in the attack he had planned upon Israel. But the Lord turned against David the hearts of the other “lords of the Philistines” (1Sa 29:2-7), and Achish was obliged to dispense with their service, so that they were suffered to depart. Unconscious of the sad disappointment awaiting them, David and his men made for Ziklag, where he had left his wives and children. Arriving there on the third day, “behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep” (1Sa 30:3-4).

That was an experience calculated to overwhelm the stoutest soul. Arriving at the place where he had left his family and possessions, the city was a mass of smoking ruins, and those whom he loved were not there to welcome him. Broken-hearted over this calamity, further trouble now came upon David, for his men murmured and mutinied—“for the people spake of stoning him” (1Sa 30:6). They blamed their leader for having journeyed to Achish and leaving Ziklag defenceless, and for provoking the Amalekites (1Sa 27:8-9), who had thus avenged themselves. To add to his grief, David knew that his own folly had brought down upon him this sore chastisement of the Lord. “And David was greatly distressed.” He had cause to be so: never before had he been called upon to drink so bitter a cup. What, then, was his reaction? Did he yield to his sorrow and sink into abject despair? No, he “encouraged himself in the LORD his God.” *That* was where he found relief: that is the grand remedy for faint-heartedness!

David had sinned grievously, but conviction and contrition were now wrought in him. First, then, he took heart from the *mercy* of the Lord. God had promised His people that “if they shall confess their iniquity” and “be humbled” and “accept of the punishment of their iniquity,” He would “remember” His covenant with their fathers (Lev 26:40-42). It was on *that* ground he now acted: “David encouraged himself in the LORD *his* God”—i.e. his covenant God. “I acknowledge my sin unto thee...I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Psa 32:5). However low the saint may fall, if he humbles himself before God, and confesses his sins, he may encourage himself in the divine mercy, for “the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting” (Psa 103:17). Second, he encouraged himself in God’s *righteousness*: “I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me” (Psa 119:75)—and that took the sting out of it.

Third, David encouraged himself in God’s *goodness*. He reviewed God’s favours to him in the past, and recalled how often He had delivered him from trying situations. Fourth, he encouraged himself in God’s *omnipotency*, realizing that nothing is too hard for Him, no situation hopeless unto His almighty power, assured that He was able to overrule evil unto good, and to bring a clean thing out of an unclean. Fifth, he encouraged himself in God’s *promises*: he “*hoped*” in God (Psa 119:74), counting upon Him to undertake for him. When we are at our wit’s end, we should not be at faith’s end, but trust in God’s sufficiency. David had sadly departed from God, but now he turned unto Him in penitence and faith. Nor did the Lord fail him: read the sequel (1Sa 30:7-8) and behold how God enabled him to overtake the Amalekites and recover “all” (1Sa 30:18-19)! When discouraged, encourage thyself in the Lord your God.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

54. 2 Thessalonians 3:5, Part 2

A brief word upon the *properties* of this love. “It is not a speculative but practical love, not consisting in lofty airy strains of devotion too high for the common rate of us poor mortals. No; it is put upon a surer and infallible test—our obedience to God. Again, it consists not in a bold familiarity, but in a humble subjection and compliance with God’s will: ‘He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me’ (Joh 14:21). God’s love is a love of bounty, but ours is a love of duty; therefore, we are properly said to love God when we are careful to please Him and fearful to offend Him—‘ye that love the LORD, hate evil’ (Psa 97:10). When we are fearful of committing or omitting anything which may be a violation of His Law, a grief to His Spirit, or a dishonour to His name, then we are said to love God. Whatever lofty strains of devotion we may otherwise please ourselves with, here will our trial rest”—Thomas Manton (1620-1677). Nothing but an honest endeavour to walk before the Lord “unto all pleasing” (Col 1:10) must be made the touchstone or proof of the genuineness of our love.

True lovers of God are not those who speak of their “*dear* Father, “ nor those who talk about their intimate communion with Him, nor those who can discourse most accurately of His attributes; but rather, they who are most conscientious and diligent in performing unto Him the duties which He has assigned them. Again, real love to God is a transcendent and pre-eminent one: He is loved above all others. “My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways” (Pro 23:26) is His peremptory demand. He requires the chief place in our affections and in our lives, so that the glorifying of Him is our supreme aim: otherwise we have no real love to Him. If His interests are subordinated unto ours, then God is not loved as God. “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me” (Mat 10:37). By this, too, we must test our alleged love to God. “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psa 73:25). Unless that really be the language of our hearts, we are deceived if we imagine ourselves to be lovers of God.

But love to God, however sincere and transcendent, is not all there is in the Christian’s heart: there are also powerful corruptions which lust after most ungodly things, and compete for his affections. Hence his urgent need of crying, “*Unite* my heart to fear thy name” (Psa 86:11). Yet the very fact that he *is* constrained to so cry, that he is acutely conscious of the fickleness as well as the feebleness of his love, is sure evidence of his regeneration—for the natural man is a total stranger to any such painful exercises of soul. It is the same with the Christian’s love as it is with his faith. Not until a divinely begotten faith be born within are we in the least conscious of the presence and workings of unbelief: only as we become aware of the latter do we say, “*with tears*, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24). So too “the love of God” has to be “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” (Rom 5:5) before we can realize how disloyal to Him our affections really are. And as faith is dependent upon its Author for its continuance and growth, so love is dependent upon its Giver for its health and activities.

That brings us to consider more closely this petition: “The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God” (2Th 3:5). The reference is not unto the furnishing of counsels for our guidance, but to the bending and setting straight of what is crooked and awry. “After grace *is* received, our hearts are apt to wander and return to their old bent and bias again; therefore, the apostle prays that God would form and set their hearts straight, that they may be more indeclinably fixed toward God”—T. Manton. Alas, how many of God’s dear children have reason to mourn the abating of this love! Though the grace itself can never be lost, yet the freshness and fervour of it may. It is our sin and misery that we so often set our affections upon wrong objects. Not only will an immoderate pursuit of the things of this world chill our love, but undue familiarity, and fellowship with unbelievers and empty professors will do so. Unto how many of His people has Christ reason to complain today, “I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left [not ‘lost’] thy first love” (Rev 2:4)—that affection for Me which marked thee in the early days of thy Christian life: “The love of thine espousals” (Jer 2:2)!

There are many things which seek to draw our hearts another way. Since the devil hates God, it is one of his chief employs to draw off from Him the hearts of His people, both by aspersing his character and by means of counteractions. He gained the ear of Eve by causing her to doubt God’s goodness, and when His providences cross our wills and painful trials become our portion, he seeks to make us question His lovingkindness. Or, he endeavours to seduce the soul by material things, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. Therefore are we bidden, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith” (1Pe 5:8-9) and not tamely yield to him. Our own lusts tempt, seek to draw away from God, and entice us (Jam 1:14); and therefore are we bidden to “Mortify therefore [our] members which are

upon the earth” (Col 3:5). The world offers many baits to the same end and purpose; and therefore are we commanded, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1Jo 2:15). An undue attachment unto any of the things of time and sense chill our affections for God—how many of the saints have proved this to their sorrow!

There is, then, a real and pressing need that we should earnestly supplicate the Lord the Spirit *to* “direct [our] hearts into the love of God.” That He would strengthen us with His might in the inner man, and thereby enable us to sternly resist every temptation to become attached to any earthly idol. That He will more and more enlighten our understandings to perceive the utter vanity of all earthly enjoyments and wean our fickle hearts from them. That He will graciously occupy us daily with the ineffable perfections of God and grant us such soul-ravishing views of Him as will deaden us to the empty baubles of this world. That He will engage our minds more frequently and effectually with the wondrous love of God unto us and thereby excite ours to Him. That He will so enthrall us with His electing grace, His having singled us out to be the objects of His favour, the ones upon whom He set His heart from all eternity, that we shall be constrained to love Him with all our souls, minds, and strength. That He will so melt us by giving His dear Son for us and to us that we shall be wholly devoted to Him, delight ourselves in Him, seek to please and glorify Him in all things.

If we had a clearer concept of what love to God consists in, we should be far more conscious of the defects of our love. It is a powerful inclination and earnest bent of the heart toward God as our chief good and last end: that is, He is realized to be One who is infinitely worthy and desirable, so that all our efforts are directed to the enjoyment of and the pleasing of Him. If that really be the dominant passion in our souls, then by it, we shall decide what is to be avoided and what is to be employed as fit means to the realization thereof. Contrariwise, we shall be conscious that not only are all sins contrary to the making of God’s glory our supreme end or design, but that all foolish and trifling actions are inconsistent therewith. Measuring our lives by such a standard, how much do we live unto self, and how little unto God! How many of our desires, schemes, words, and actions have no real respect unto God at all! It is not sufficient that we surrendered our hearts at conversion: we need to beg Him daily to reclaim them from their vain wanderings and bind them afresh to Himself; that He will maintain and increase our love to Him.

Not only are there innumerable objects in this scene to draw away our unstable hearts from God, but the cares of this life, and the slavish fears to which we so often give place, hinder our delight in Him. Such cares oppress and such fears prevent comfortable communion with God in the means of grace. When we are worried over our present lot or harassed about supplies for the future, the heart is straitened and the spirit of praise is chilled. When we are occupied more with our sins than we are with Christ, more with our corruptions than with His blood, more with our failures than God’s covenant faithfulness, doubts will assail, assurance will be lost, and rejoicing in God becomes a thing of the past. In such a case, the means of grace may still be used and duties performed, but there is no joy in the one or thankful gratitude behind the other: it is more the service of a slave than of a son. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment” (1Jo 4:18). But if our hearts be directed into the love of God, then our obedience to Him will be a delight, and we shall serve Him by inclination and not compulsion.

When the means of grace become irksome and tedious to us and the works of obedience distasteful and burdensome, it is a sure sign that our love to God has grievously declined. “All goes on easily, freely, acceptably, when love is at the bottom. Seven years to Jacob seemed as a few days for the love he had to Rachel (Gen 29:20); and so love sweetens obedience”—T. Manton. Thus it was with Christ Himself: love to His Father, love to His people, constrained all that He did. “The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup,” and there did He add, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places.” “I have set the LORD always before me...Therefore my heart is glad” (Psa 16:5-9). But when we yield to the promptings of self-love or to our carnal lusts, the light of God’s countenance becomes eclipsed, our affections gradually cool off, and His ways are no longer our delight. The profits and pleasures of this world attract us, and we have disinclination to the performance of spiritual duties. If we take our fill of carnal delights, the Spirit is grieved, and He ceases to take of the things of Christ and of the Father and show them unto us.

“There needs much to be done about our love *after* it is planted in the soul: we need to get it rooted, to get it increased, to get it continually excited and kept in act and exercise” (T. Manton)—and all of that is our bounden duty and Christian responsibility. We are as equally obligated to care for our spiritual life as for our natural, yea, far more so, as the latter exceeds in value and importance the former; to look after the health and well-being of our souls as of our bodies. God has commanded us to “Keep thy heart with all diligence” (Pro 4:23); and still more expressly, “Keep yourselves in the love of God” (Jude 21), which means preserve in a healthy state your love to God—that principle of love which has been shed abroad in our hearts. If it be asked, Why is *that* termed “the love of God”?—the answer is, Because God is its Author, because He is its Object, because He is its Perfecter. To keep

himself in the love of God is the great work committed to the Christian, for if that be properly attended unto, everything else will be well with him. It must be his daily care to see to it that that precious but tender plant be nourished, increased, and made manifest by its fruits.

Once more, we must remind ourselves of the clear implication in all the petitions of the apostles' prayers: namely, that the things asked for, it is our responsibility to produce, yet that we can only do so properly by divine enablement. Asking God to direct our hearts into His love does not release us from our obligations in connection therewith, but is a begging Him to quicken us in the discharge of the same. As T. Manton pointed out, our first concern must be to see to it that our love to God be firmly established—"rooted and grounded in love" (Eph 3:17). We must not be contented with occasional good moods and ecstatic feelings, nor with meltings under a sermon, but diligently seek after and pray for solid, steady, and durable affection for God. And how is that to be accomplished? By getting the heart fixed in *His* love to you, for the firmer be your assurance of that, the more will your love to Him be inflamed; as the more we walk in the genial rays of the sun, the warmer become our bodies. Again, daily observe God's blessings—both spiritual and temporal—for a renewed realization of His goodness, will renew your gratitude unto Him.

It is at this point we take in or combine the *passive* sense of these words, "the love of God," for sure it is that unless we bask often in the sunshine of God's love to us, ours to Him will be neither fervent nor fruitful. Certainly nothing is so invigorating to our love and more calculated to make us sensible of how infinitely worthy God is of our love than the contemplation of His to us. As Paul prayed for the Ephesians that they might be "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph 3:17)—their love firmly fixed and indeclinably settled upon God, so he requested for the Philippian saints that their "love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment" (Phi 1:9), which could only be through a fuller and more affecting apprehension of God's love unto them. For this it is alike our duty and privilege to strive and pray: that we may increasingly cleave unto God as our absolute good, and rest in Him as our supreme delight. Love will not remain static: if it does not grow and increase, it will inevitably weaken and diminish. Nothing is more conducive to the decline and decay of our love than to be content with and rest satisfied in the present measure or degree of it.

If our affections unto God are to be preserved fresh and warm, then we must make conscience of everything which has a tendency to chill the same and take the heart off from Him. The allowance of any known sin, conformity to the spirit and ways of the world, making too much of the creature, giving way to unbelief, and slackness in using the appointed means of grace are some of the evils which must be avoided if God is to have His proper place in our hearts. Every day that passes, the Christian should be more and more out of love with sin, with self, with the world, and more in love with God. Again, we need to watch closely against any abatement in our love: that is obviously one part of the duty inculcated in "Keep thy heart with all diligence" (Pro 4:23). If we fail to do so, if we become careless and indifferent to the measure and strength of our love, then it will rapidly deteriorate. Backsliding and the open dishonouring of the Lord is only prevented by observing closely the first decline of our love: the longer that be unattended to—like the neglect of a bodily ailment—the more serious our case becomes. Love *has* certainly cooled when we are less diligent in seeking to please God and are less careful in striving against sin.

Not only do we need to get our love firmly rooted and steadily increased, but "It also needs to be continually excited and kept in act and exercise. All religion is in effect but love. Faith is a thankful acceptance of Christ, and thankfulness is an expression of love. Repentance is but mourning love: as she wept much to whom much was forgiven (Luk 7:47). Diligence in the holy life is but seeking love; by obedience is pleasing love; self-denial is the mortification of inordinate self-love; sobriety is a retrenching of our carnal love. If love be not acted and kept at work, carnal love will prevail. The soul of man cannot be idle, especially our affections cannot: either they are carried out to God, or they leak out to worldly things. When our love ceaseth, yet concupiscence ceaseth not, and the love of the world will soon grow superior in the soul; for the neglected principle languisheth, while the other principle gets strength...The constraining influence of love is that which keeps us from living to ourselves, and this makes us diligent. Labour and love are often coupled in the Scripture: 'your work of faith, and labour of love' (1Th 1:3), and 'God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name' (Heb 6:10)"—T. Manton.

Then how earnestly we should pray for the succouring, strengthening, and stimulating of our love! "The Spirit is given us for this end: to stir up love to God. 'The water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life' (Joh 4:14). It is not in the heart a dead pool, but a living spring. The same is intimated in 'He that believeth on me...out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit...)' (Joh 7:38-39). The Word is appointed to this end: to represent God amiable to us both for the goodness in Him and the goodness proceeding from Him, especially in our redemp-

tion by Christ; and also for those rich preparations of grace He hath made for us in another world, to blow up this holy fire. All the dainties that are set before us in the Lord's Supper do all taste and savour of love. Our meat is seasoned with love, and our drink flows out of the winepress of love. All the providences of God tend to this end: that we may love God—all His mercies are as new fuel to keep in this fire. 'I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications' (Psa 116:1). All the sharp corrections God sends are to recover our love to Him"—T. Manton.

Let us remember that earnest prayer to God for the strengthening of love does not absolve us from a diligent use of means. *Daily meditation upon* the nature and evidences of God's love to us is the most effectual way of feeding and increasing ours to Him. Ponder, Christian reader, the freeness and sovereignty of His love. That He set not His heart on you because of any loveliness of thine, for it antedated your existence, and therefore proceeded from naught but His good will. Consider its discrimination: that it passed by multitudes of your fellows, and fixed itself on thee: "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom 9:13). Think of its immutability: it is as invariable as His nature: "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (Joh 13:1). That love proceeds from One "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jam 1:17). God's love to thee is everlasting and therefore nothing can or shall ever separate thee from it. Revel in its unparalleled degree: "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph 2:4-5). Matchless, amazing love! "God is love," and therefore His love is infinite, incomprehensible, adorable. Feed on it now, as it shall be thine endless delight in heaven.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

34. Jericho, Part 4 (6:7-9)

"And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD. And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD" (Jos 6:6-7). Lack of space prevented the completion of our remarks upon these two verses in our last. There we dwelt at length upon the former one, and sought to show that Israel's priests, on this occasion, shadowed forth the ministers of the Gospel, and how that the appointed (spiritual) weapons of their warfare are made "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2Co 10:4). Care needs to be taken against carnalizing that expression and interpreting it in a manner unwarranted by the Analogy of Faith. It is not the Gospel converting people *en masse* (in a body)—"Glasgow for Christ" or "Chicago for Christ," as Arminian slogans express it—but the delivering of *individual* souls from that powerful "refuge of lies" in which the natural man is entrenched. The meaning of 2 Corinthians 10:4 is explained in the next verse:

"Casting down imaginations [or 'reasonsings'], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2Co 10:5). The heart of the natural man is stoutly opposed to God, being filled with enmity against Him. It is fortified by the love of sin against every appeal unto holiness. The unregenerate are so inured and hardened by habit and practice that the Holy Spirit declares, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jer 13:23). Their wills are enslaved, so that they "will not come to [Christ]" (Joh 5:40). They are steeled against both the terrors of the Law and the attractions of the Gospel. Furthermore, they are the captives of the devil (Luk 11:21; 2Ti 2:26), and are unable to emancipate themselves. Naught but a miracle of grace can free them; and the means used by the Spirit in accomplishing that miracle is the preached Word, effectually applied to the heart by His power. Then is the proud rebel humbled into the dust before God, delivered from the dominion of sin and Satan, transformed into a loving and loyal subject of Christ.

In the seventh verse of Joshua 6, instructions were given to the people. On this occasion, they were to accompany the priests! When crossing the Jordan, the priests went "before the people" (Jos 3:6), and stood alone "in the midst of Jordan" until all "the people hasted and passed over" (Jos 4:10). *There* they foreshadowed our great High Priest, who "by himself" opened a way through death for His people (see July 1947 article). But *here* the priests typified the servants of Christ, as engaged on their evangelistic labours. Consequently, the hosts of Israel must now

accompany them. What a word is that for the rank and file of the people of God today! Only too often has the minister of the Gospel to go forth alone. He does not receive that moral and spiritual support to which he is entitled, and which he so much needs. No wonder so many faithful preachers are discouraged when the prayer-meetings are so thinly attended, and when so few are holding up their hands at the Throne of Grace! O that it may please God to use this paragraph in stirring up professing Christians to be more definite and fervent in praying for all godly ministers. Only a preacher knows what difference it makes to have the assurance that the hearts of his people are *with* him!

“And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams’ horns passed on before the LORD, and blew with the trumpets: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them” (Jos 6:8). Observe, first, how precise is the *time-mark* here of the priests’ action: they did not move forward until the people had taken their allotted position according to the instructions they had received from their leader. There was to be *conjoint* action: the priests accompanied by the people—exemplifying what we have said in the above paragraph. Second, since there is nothing meaningless or superfluous in Holy Writ, note how the Spirit has again emphasized the rude nature of the priests’ “trumpets.” No less than five times in this chapter are we told that those employed on this occasion were made of “rams’ horns”—a cruder or meaner material could scarcely be imagined. They were in designed and striking contrast with the “trumpets of silver” which were normally used in the camp of Israel (Num 10:1-10). It was God pouring contempt on *the means used*—those which were despicable in the eyes of men—that Israel’s pride might be stained and Himself glorified, for His strength is ever made perfect through weakness (2Co 12:9).

Bearing in mind that Israel’s priests here foreshadowed the true servants of Christ, their using trumpets of rams’ horns is deeply significant, albeit, very distasteful to that pride of heart which glorifies in the flesh. It not only emphasized the feebleness of the means used by God in accomplishing His purpose of grace—namely, that it hath pleased Him “by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1Co 1:21)—but also indicated the *type of men* God deigns to employ as His mouthpieces. When our Lord chose the men who were to be His apostles and ambassadors, He selected not those who occupied eminent stations in the world, nor those who had passed through the schools of learning, but unlettered fishermen and a despised tax-gatherer—that was the antitype of “the rams’ horns” in contrast with “the trumpets of silver”—men of lowly origin, despised by those who are great and wise in their own eyes! To effect the mightiest of all works, God employs what is to the mind of the natural man the most inadequate means, in order that *His* wisdom and power may be the more apparent. The Gospel does not depend for its success on human wisdom—a fact lost sight of by the churches today.

That same flesh-withering truth is clearly expressed in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, though few have perceived it. The immediate design of the apostle in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2 was to show that the great and grand change wrought in the hearts of believers is not to be ascribed to any wisdom or power possessed by the preacher (who is but a channel thorough which God condescends to work), but is to be attributed wholly to the divine grace in making his message effectual. The Corinthians were glorying in *human instruments*, setting up one against another (see 1Co 1:12); and the apostle shows how utterly baseless and foolish was such glorying. He pointed out that it was not the learning of Paul, nor the eloquence of Apollos which could convert a soul, but that *God* must, from beginning to end, accomplish the same. This he demonstrates by describing the *type of instruments* which He makes to be vehicles of blessing unto sinners. “For ye see your calling, brethren [i.e. ye perceive from your own calling out of darkness into God’s marvellous light], how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble” (1Co 1:26)—“are employed” (by God) is a far better and more pertinent supplement than “are called.”

“But God hath chosen [for His servants] the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not [non-entities, nobodies], to bring to nought things that are.” Thus, 1 Corinthians 1:26-28 are to be connected with the whole context, and not simply with verses 24-25. In them, we behold again the “trumpets of rams’ horns”—God employing instruments which appear utterly inadequate to carnal reason. *That interpretation* is clearly confirmed by “that no flesh should glory in his presence” (1Co 1:29), for the Corinthians were not glorying in themselves, but in their *ministers* (1Co 1:12; 3:4)! It is clinched by the next words: “But of *him* [and not by Paul, or Apollos, or any worm of the earth] are ye in Christ Jesus” (1Co 1:30). Thus, Paul was showing that it was not through learned philosophers nor highly trained rabbins that the Corinthians had heard the Gospel of their salvation, but rather through those whom both the one and the other regarded with contempt. If further corroboration be needed, verse 31 supplies it!

God is jealous of His honour and will not share it with another. It pleases Him, as a general rule, to select for His instruments those who have no glittering accomplishments: rather, plain, simple, homely men. It is not silver-

tongued orators through whom He most shows forth His praises, but by those who have nothing more, naturally, to commend them unto their hearers than that which resembles the “rams’ horns”! His most eminent servants have not been those of royal blood, noble birth, or high station, but taken from the lower walks of life. Martin Luther (1483-1546), the principal agent used by God in the mighty Reformation, was the son of a miner. John Bunyan (1620-1677) was but a tinker, yet his book *Pilgrim’s Progress* has been translated into more languages, had a much wider circulation, and been used in blessing to a far greater number of souls than all the writings put together of the learned John Owen (1616-1683) and Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680)! Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) had neither university nor college training, nor was he a graduate of any seminary! However, after God’s call to the ministry, each of them studied hard and long to improve himself! In proportion as the churches have made an idol of education and theological learning in their ministers has their spirituality waned: that is a *fact*, however unpalatable it may be.

There is a third thing in Joshua 6:8 which claims our notice, namely, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams’ horns “passed on before the LORD.” This is generally understood to mean that they preceded the ark, but that can scarcely be its significance, unless we are ready to conclude there is needless tautology here, for the same verse ends by declaring, “and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them.” What then is imported by they “passed on before the LORD”? It is very much more than a bare historical detail, which has no relation unto us today—alas, that so few search for the present application *to themselves* of all in the Bible. There is that here which the servants of Christ need to observe and take to heart: something of vital importance and blessedness. That brief statement reveals to us the inward condition of the priests. It expressed their attitude unto Jehovah, and the Spirit of Truth delighted to record the same. “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1Sa 16:7); and the hearts of Israel’s priests were engaged with Him, and they comported themselves accordingly. By carefully comparing Scripture with Scripture, we may ascertain the meaning of this clause.

In Genesis 5:24, we are told that “Enoch walked *with* God.” In 1 Samuel 2:21, that “the child Samuel grew *before* the LORD.” In Deuteronomy 13:4, that Israel were bidden to “walk *after* the LORD [their] God.” While in Colossians 2:6, Christians are exhorted, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye *in* him.” In those four prepositions, we have an outline of the whole privilege and duty of the saint in his relation to God. To “walk with God” is only possible unto one who has been reconciled to Him, for “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” (Amo 3:3). Thus, it is expressive of holy *communion* with God. To go or walk “before the LORD” is to conduct ourselves in the realization that all our actions are being scrutinized by Him: “For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings” (Pro 5:21). Thus it is expressive of holy *fear*. To walk “after the LORD” is to live in complete subjection to His revealed will: “And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul” (2Ch 34:31). There it is expressive of unreserved *obedience*. To “walk in Christ” is expressive of *union*, like a branch in the vine, and signifies to live by His enablement, strengthened by Him, “rooted and built up in him” as Colossians 2:7 explains it.

But the one passage which more expressly explains these words of the priests passing on “*before* the LORD” is Genesis 17:1, when He said unto Abraham, “I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.” That was said, first, by way of *rebuke*, right after his impatient and carnal conduct with Hagar. Second, that was said for his instruction and encouragement: to show him that there was no occasion for taking matters into his own hands. The Lord now made known Himself to Abraham as “the Almighty”—*El Shaddai*—the fully competent One, able to supply all his need, without the patriarch resorting to any fleshly devices. In view of which Abraham was bidden to “walk before me, and be thou perfect”: that is, count upon My infinite resources. Thus, when it is said that Israel’s priests “passed on before the LORD,” the meaning is that they acted in complete *dependence* upon God’s all-sufficiency, confidently counting upon His undertaking for them. In the light of Proverbs 5:21, it signifies, too, that they moved forward in God’s *fear*, conscious that his eye was upon them, and therefore, they dared not depart from the orders which he had given them.

Let every preacher who reads this article endeavour to recognize that *this*, too, has been recorded for *his* learning, his guidance, his encouragement. Let him seek to realize, first, that he is beneath the all-seeing eye of his Master: that his actions are “before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings” (Pro 5:21). Let him bear that in mind while he is out of the pulpit: that the One to whom he must yet render an account of his stewardship takes stock whether he is an idler and slacker, or one who faithfully devotes his time to prayer and *study*, and not only to “sermon preparation.” And, second, let him view by faith the all-sufficiency of the One before whom he walks, refusing to depart from His instructions, confidently counting upon Him fulfilling His purpose by and through him. Let him constantly call to mind that He is none other than “the Almighty,” the self-sufficient Jehovah. No other provider, no other protector is needed. It was because Abraham forgot *that* that he stooped to fleshly devices; and

when *we* forget it, we are very apt to depart from His rule and resort to carnal methods. It is distrust of God which lies behind the fleshly and worldly devices now so commonly employed in the churches.

“And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rereward came after the ark, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets” (Jos 6:9). Here, our attention is directed away from the priests unto the remainder of the children of Israel, and they are divided into two companies: those who went before, and those who followed behind the ark of the covenant. The ones taking the lead consisted of the fighting force, who were to advance when the walls of Jericho fell down and slay those within the city. This arrangement originated not in the mind of Joshua, for at no point was he required to lean unto his own understanding. The Lord had previously given orders through Moses that the fighting men of the tribes of Reuben and Gad should ‘go armed before the LORD to war...until he hath driven out his enemies from before him’ (Nu 32:20-21). It was in obedience thereto that Joshua here acted. As the margin more correctly renders, it was the “gathering host” of Israel who made up the rearward. In that twofold division, we may find a hint that only a few of the Lord’s people are possessed of a courageous spirit and prepared to show a bold front to the enemy.

ENJOYING GOD’S BEST

Part 6

Many other passages might be quoted, both from Old and New Testaments, which illustrate the principle and fact which we have demonstrated in these articles, wherein we have shown that if we conduct ourselves contrary to the revealed will of God, we shall certainly suffer for it both in soul and in body; that if we follow a course of self-pleasing, we shall deprive ourselves of those spiritual and temporal blessings which the Word of God promises to those whose lives are ordered by its precepts. The teaching of Holy Writ is too clear to admit of any doubts, that it makes a very real and marked difference whether a Christian’s ways please or displease the righteous Ruler of this world: the difference of whether God be for him or against him—not in the absolute sense, but in His governmental and providential dealings. Sufficient should have been adduced to convince any candid mind that God acts towards His saints today on precisely the same basis as He did with them under the old economy, that His ways with them are regulated by the same principles now as then. This supplies a solution to many a problem and explains not a little in God’s dealings with us—as it furnishes the key to Jacob’s chequered life, and shows why the chastening rod of God fell so heavily upon David and his family.

Nevertheless, much of what has been represented in the previous articles is no doubt new and strange to many, if not to most of our readers. Alas, that it should be so, for what can be of greater practical importance than for the Christian to be instructed in how to please God and have his providential smile upon his life? What is more needed today than to warn him against the contrary, specifying what will forfeit the same; and to make known the way of recovery to one who *has* missed God’s best? How very much better for preachers to devote themselves unto *such* subjects, rather than culling sensational items from the newspapers or the radio to “illustrate” their vain speculations upon Prophecy. So, too, how much more profitable than for them to deliver abstract disquisitions upon what are termed “the doctrines of grace,” or uttering contentious declamations against those who repudiate the same. The *practical* side of the truth is sadly neglected today; and in consequence, not only are many of God’s dear children living far below their privileges, but they have never been taught what those privileges are, nor what is required in order for them to enjoy the same in this life.

Since the ground we have been covering is so unfamiliar to many, we felt it would not be satisfactory for us to close where we left off in our last article: that though what we have advanced is so clearly and fully based upon and confirmed by the teaching of God’s Word, yet probably various questions have arisen in the minds of different readers to which they would welcome an answer, difficulties raised in their thoughts which they would like to have removed. It is only right that we should squarely face the principal objections which are likely to be made against what we have said. Yet, let it be pointed out, first, that no objection brought against anything which is clearly established from the Word can possibly invalidate it, for Scripture never contradicts itself. And second, that our inability to furnish a satisfactory solution is no proof that our teaching is erroneous—a child can ask questions which no adult can answer. In all the ways and works of God there is, to us, an element of *mystery*: necessarily so, for the

finite cannot comprehend the infinite. The wisest among God's saints and servants now "see through a glass, darkly" and know but "in part" (1Co 13:12); and therefore, it is their wisdom to pray daily, "that which I see not teach thou me" (Job 34:32).

Yet, while acknowledging that there *is* an element of mystery, profound and impenetrable, that is far from saying that God has left His people in darkness; or that they have neither the capacity nor the means of knowing scarcely anything about the principles which regulate the Most High in His dealings with the children of men. If, on the one hand, it be true that His judgments "are a great deep" (Psa 36:6), that "thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known" (Psa 77:19) to carnal reason; on the other hand, we are told, "he discovereth deep things out of darkness" (Job 12:22) and "he *revealeth* the deep and secret things" (Dan 2:22). While it be true that God's judgments are unsearchable and His ways "past finding out!" (Rom 11:33) by human wisdom; yet it is also true, blessedly true, that "in thy light shall we see light" (Psa 36:9) that "he *made known* his ways unto Moses" (Psa 103:7). In His Word, the Lord has been pleased to make known unto us not a little, and it is our privilege and duty to thankfully receive *all* the light which God has therein vouchsafed us; to attempt to go beyond it, to enter into speculation, is not only useless, but impious.

1. How is it possible for any person to "*miss* God's best," since He has foreordained everything that comes to pass (Rom 11:36), and therefore, has eternally appointed the precise lot and portion of each individual? That, we think, is a fair and frank way of stating the principal objection which Calvinists are likely to make. Our first reply is, Such an objection is quite beside the point, for in these articles, we are not discussing any aspect of God's sovereignty, but rather are treating of that which concerns human responsibility. If the rejoinder be made, But human responsibility must not be allowed to crowd out the essential and basic fact of God's sovereignty, that is readily granted; nor, on the other hand, must our adherence to God's sovereignty be suffered to neutralize or render nugatory the important truth of man's responsibility. One part of the truth must never be used to nullify another part of it: both Romans 11:36 and Galatians 6:7 must be given their due places. When we attempt to *philosophize* about God's sovereignty and human accountability, we are out of our depth. They are to be received by faith, and not reasoned about. Each of them is plainly taught and enforced in the Scriptures, and both must be held fast by us, whether or no we perceive their "consistency."

Nothing is easier than to raise difficulties and objections. If some of the "hypers" prefer reasoning to the actings of faith, let us meet them on their own ground for a moment and give them some questions to exercise their minds upon. "Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?" (1Sa 23:12). It is unmistakably evident from the sequel that God had ordained that David should escape; yet He answered, "They *will* deliver thee up." Query: How could they, since God had decreed otherwise! "And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers; and they buried him in Samaria: and Joash his son reigned in his stead. "Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; *then* hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice" (2Ki 13:9,19). Query: what possible difference to the issue could be made by the number of times the king smote upon the ground? If God had predestinated that Syria should be "consumed," could any failure in the faith of Joash prevent or even modify it? On the other hand, do not those words of Elisha plainly signify that the extent to which Israel would vanquish Syria turned upon the measure of the king's appropriation of the promise, "for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them" (2Ki 13:17)? Which horn of the dilemma does the reasoner prefer?

Again, when the wicked Haman induced Ahasueras to seal the decree written in his name, that all the Jews scattered abroad throughout his kingdom should be slain on a certain day, Mordecai was grief-stricken by the terrible news. Esther sent one of the royal chamberlains to ascertain the cause of his sorrow. Whereupon her uncle handed the messenger a copy of the decree to show unto Esther, with the charge that "she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him" (Est 4:8). Esther sent back the messenger to Mordecai to say, "Whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days" (Est 4:11). To which Mordecai replied, "If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed" (Est 4:14). Query: if God had eternally purposed that the Jews should be delivered through the intervention of Esther, how could it possibly come "from *another* place" and she and her family be destroyed!

If our minds be dominated by and our outlook upon life narrowed down to a consideration of the inexorable-ness of the divine determinations, then a spirit of irresponsibility will necessarily ensue. It is with the revealed and not with the secret will of God we need to be concerned. "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but

those things which are revealed [in His Word] belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may *do* all the words of this law” (Deu 29:29). It is the divine precepts and promises which are to engage our attention. “According to your faith be it unto you” (Mat 9:29) said Christ, *not* “according unto the divine decrees.” Are we intimating that faith can set aside the divine decrees or obtain something superior to them? Certainly not: instead, we are pointing out *where* the great Teacher placed *His* emphasis. We must not resolve all of God’s dealings with us into bare sovereignty: to do so is to lose sight of His righteousness. The unbalanced teaching of hyper-Calvinism has produced a most dangerous lethargy—unperceived by them, but apparent to “lookers on.” Those who dwell unduly upon the divine decrees are in peril of lapsing into the paralysis of fatalism. There were times when even Mr. J. C. Philpot (1802-1869) felt that, as the following quotations from his writings will show:

“However sovereign the dispensations of God are, no one who fears His great name should so shelter himself under divine sovereignty as to remove all blame from himself. When the Lord asks, ‘Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?’ (Jer 2:17) the soul must needs reply, Yea, Lord, I surely have. This is a narrow line, but one which everyone’s experience, where the conscience is tender, will surely ratify. Though we can do nothing to comfort our own souls, to speak peace to our own conscience, to bring the love of God into our hearts, to apply the balm of Gil-ead to bleeding wounds, and summon the great Physician to our bedside, we *may* do many things to *repel* this moment what we should seem to invite the next...We cannot make ourselves fruitful in every good word and work, but we may by disobedience and self-indulgence bring leanness into our souls, barrenness into our frames, deadness into our hearts, and in the end, much guilt upon our consciences” (Sermon on Jer 8:22). The same writer when exposing the error of non-chastisement said, “It nullifies the eternal distinction between good and evil, and makes it a matter of little real moment whether a believer walk in obedience or disobedience.” Then let those who have succeeded him devote more of the endeavours into pressing God’s precepts upon His people, and stressing the necessity, importance, and value of an obedient walk; and in faithfully showing the serious losses incurred by disobedience.

2. To affirm that our having God’s blessing upon us is the consequence of the Christian’s pleasing of Him, may appear unto some as derogatory unto Christ, as militating against His merits. They will ask, Does not the believer owe every blessing to the *alone* worthiness of his Surety? Answer: that is to confound things which differ. We must distinguish between God’s sovereign will as the originating cause, the work of Christ as the meritorious cause, the operation and application of the Spirit as the efficient cause, and the repentance, faith, and obedience of the Christian as the instrumental cause. Keep each of those in its order and place, and there will be no confusion. If that be too abstruse, let us put it this way. Is not Christ most glorified by them when His redeemed follow the example which He has left them and walk as He also walked (1Jo 2:6)? If so, will not the governmental smile of God be upon such? Conversely, would God be honouring His beloved Son if His providences were favourable unto those who act in self-will, rather than in subjection to their Master? Further, if God’s *present* rewarding of our obedience impugn the merits of Christ, then equally so will the *future* rewarding He has promised, for neither time nor place can make any difference in the essential nature of things.

It is so easy for us to mar the fair proportions of truth and destroy its perfect symmetry. In our zeal, there is ever the tendency to take on aspect of truth and press it so far as to cancel out another. Not only so in causing God’s sovereignty to oust human responsibility, but to make the merits of Christ bar God from exercising His perfections in the present government of this world. Some have gone so far as to blankly deny that God ever uses the rod upon His children, arguing that Christ bore and took away all their sins, and therefore, God could not chasten them for their transgressions without sullying the sufficiency of His Son’s atonement, thereby repudiating Psalm 89:30-32 and Hebrews 12:5-11. Here too we must distinguish between things that differ. It is important for us to see that while the penal and eternal consequences of the believer’s sins have been remitted by God, because atoned for by Christ, yet the disciplinary and temporal effects thereof are not cancelled—otherwise, he would never be sick or die. God never chastens His people penally or vindictively, but in love, in righteousness, in mercy, according to the principles of His government: rewarding them for their obedience, chastening for their disobedience, and thereby and therein Christ is honoured and not dishonoured.

3. Since all God’s actings unto His people proceed from His uncaused, amazing, and super-abounding *grace*, how can it be maintained that He regulates His dealings with them according to *their conduct*? Easily, for there is nothing incompatible between the two things: they are complementary and not contradictory. As all the perfections of God are not to be swallowed up in His sovereignty, neither are they all to be merged into His grace. God is holy as well as benignant, and His favours are never bestowed in disregard of His purity, divine grace never sets aside the requirements of divine righteousness. When one has been truly saved by grace, he is taught to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; and if he fails to do so, then the rod of God falls upon him. David was as truly saved by grace through faith, apart from any good works, as was the apostle Paul; but he was also required to be “holy in all man-

ner of conversation” (1Pe 1:15) as are the New Testament saints; and when he failed to be so, severe chastening was his portion. And it was *grace*, though holy and righteous grace, which dealt thus with him, that he “should not be condemned with the world” (1Co 11:32).

The Christian needs to be viewed not only as one of God’s elect, one of His high favourites; and not only as a member of the Father’s family, and as such, amenable to His paternal discipline, but also as a human being, a moral agent, a subject of God’s government; and therefore, he is dealt with accordingly by the Ruler of this world. As such, God has appointed an inseparable connection between conduct and the consequences it entails; and therefore, He is pleased to manifest, by His providences, His approbation or His disapprobation of our conduct. It is not that the one who walks in the paths of righteousness thereby brings God into his debt, but that He condescends to act toward us according to the principle of gracious reciprocity. No creature can possibly merit aught good at the hands of God, for if he rendered perfect and perpetual obedience, he has merely performed his duty, and hath profited God—essentially considered—nothing whatever. Moreover, the recompense itself is a free gift, an act of pure grace, for God is under no compulsion or obligation to bestow it.

4. When pointing out in connection with “he did not many mighty works there *because* of their unbelief” (Mat 13:58), that “Unbelief is the great obstacle to Christ’s favours”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714), and that *they* closed the door upon His deeds of mercy, it may be thought by some that we are approving the horrible impiety that the creature has the power to thwart the Creator. And when we emphatically deny any such idea, objectors are likely to ask, But how can you escape such a consequence? Easily: faith is God’s own prescribed ordinance, and therefore, He is in no wise checkmated when He refuses to act contrary to His own appointed way. Obviously, He is by no means obliged to set a premium on unbelief or countenance contempt of His means. Mark 6 expresses it more strongly: “He *could* there do no mighty work,” etc. (Mar 6:5). When it is said God “cannot lie” (Ti 1:2) and “cannot be tempted with evil” (Jam 1:13), so far from signifying any limitation of His power, the perfection of His holiness is intimated. So with Christ. Among a people who were “offended in him” because they regarded Him as “the carpenter” (Mat 13:55, 57), no *moral end* had been furthered by His dazzling their eyes with prodigies of His might, and therefore, He cast not His pearls before swine.

5. Another class of readers, viz.³ those who have imbibed the poison of “Dispensationalism,” will complain that our teaching in these articles is legalistic, confounding the old and new covenants, that God’s dealings with Jacob, David, and the nation of Israel furnish no parallel with His conduct toward us in this era. But that is a serious mistake. There is far more of essential oneness between the administration of those two economies than there was incidental divergencies, as John Calvin (1509-1564) long ago demonstrated in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*—see his chapters upon “The Similarity of the Old and New Testaments” and “The Difference of the Two Testaments.” The principal difference between the Mosaic and Christian dispensations was neither in “the way of salvation” (Act 16:17), the spiritual portion of God’s children, nor the principles of His government; but rather that spiritual things were presented to their view largely under types and shadows, whereas we have the substance itself openly set before us. Beneath all the trivial contrasts, there is a fundamental unity between them, and it betrays a very superficial mind which delights in magnifying those contrasts, while ignoring or denying their basic oneness. But, as we have shown, the New Testament teaching on our present subject is identical with that of the Old, “knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he *receive* of the Lord” (Eph 6:8) is both an echo and summary of the Law and the Prophets.

The underlying unity of the two Testaments is plainly intimated in that divine declaration, “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom 15:4). But what could *we* “learn” from God’s dealings with His people of old if He be now acting according to radically different principles? Nothing at all. Nay, in such a case, it would follow that the less we read the Old Testament, the better for us, for we should only be confused. The fact is that the principles of God’s government are like Himself—immutable, the same in every age. “Righteousness and judgment” (Psa 97:2) are just as truly the “habitation of his throne” today as when He cast out of heaven the apostate angels, and as when He destroyed the antediluvians—which was long before Moses! That God now deals with Christians on precisely the same basis as He did with the children of Israel, is unequivocally established by 1 Corinthians 10:6, where, after describing the privileges they had enjoyed and God’s overthrowing them in the wilderness because of their unbelief, we are told, “Now these things were *our* examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted”: that is, they are real and solemn warnings for us to take to heart, specimens of those judgments which will befall *us* if we emulate their sinful conduct.

Nay, Scripture requires us to go yet farther. So far from the higher blessings of this Christian era lessening our responsibility, they much increase the same. The greater our privileges, the greater our obligations. “For unto

³ viz. – Latin *videlicet*: namely; that is to say; as follows.

whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luk 12:48), as the one who received five talents was required to yield more than those who received but one or two. “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much *sorer* punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?”! (Heb 10:28-29). The principle of that verse clearly signifies that the more light we have been favoured with, the deeper are our obligations, and the greater the guilt incurred when those obligations are not met. “But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared” (Psa 130:4). Yes, “feared” and not trifled with, by giving free rein to our lusts. A true apprehension of divine mercy will not embolden unto sin, but will deepen our hatred of it, and make us more diligent in striving against it. Those who “[know] the grace of God in truth” (Col 1:6)—in contrast with the ones who have merely a theoretical knowledge of it—so far from being careless of their ways and indifferent to the consequences, will be most diligent in endeavouring to please and glorify Him who has been so good to them.

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

18. The Holy Bible, Part 10

14. *Its fulfilled prophecies.* If the Bible be a human invention, it ought not to require very much perspicuity to discover and demonstrate its imposture. The Scriptures claim to be of divine inspiration, but if that claim be an empty and unfounded one, then it should be no hard matter to prove it is so. The Bible not only treats considerably of history and moral instruction, but it contains not a little prophecy, and that not in dark and dubious language, like that of the pretended Sybilline Oracle, such as that ambiguous answer made to the inquiry of Croesus when he was about to engage the Persians in war: “Croesus, having passed the river Hilys, shall overturn a great empire”—which would be verified whether his own kingdom *or* that of the Persians was subverted. Radically different are the predictions of Holy Writ. They are clear and definite, enter into specific and minute details, and in many instances, are too plain to be misunderstood. Thus, the dispute between the Christian and the infidel may be reduced to a short and simple issue: if Scripture prophecy be divinely inspired, then it will be accomplished; if it be spurious, it will not be.

Since the words, “prophecy” and “prediction” are frequently used in a loose and general sense in present-day parlance, it is requisite that we should carefully define our term. By a “prophecy,” we mean the annunciation of some future event which could not have been foreknown by natural means or arrived at by logical deduction from present data. Such are scores of predictions recorded in the Bible hundreds of years ago, and which have been accurately verified by history. They are entirely different from weather forecasts, which are more often wrong than right, and merely announce climatic conditions a few days ahead. To bear any resemblance of the prophecies of Scripture, they would have to prognosticate the specific temperature, the direction of the wind, the precise rainfall upon a certain city or country on a given day, five hundred years hence! The reader will readily perceive that all of the scientists and astronomers in the world possess no such prevision as that. Yet the Bible abounds with forecasts far more wonderful.

It requires no prophetic spirit to declare that, life permitting, a certain male infant will develop into a child, and that into a man; but it *would* to announce from his cradle whether he will be a fool or a wise man, a failure or success; and still more so, to predict the exact span of his life, and where and how he will die. A well-informed politician may foretell how soon there will be a general election, and which party will win the same, but he is quite incapable of foreseeing the political, social, economic, and religious condition of his country one hundred years from now, while it would be completely beyond his powers to give the name and describe the character of its ruler in that day. An experienced statesman may indeed discern the speedy breakup of his state, and from the temper of its subjects deduce that it is likely to collapse under a fearful revolution, but he could not predict and describe the successive changes of empires centuries in advance—changes which depend upon countless unknown incidents. Yet the Bible does that very thing!

Sagacious conjecture is very different from Scripture prediction. Prophecy is, as one has well defined it, “the eyes of the omniscient God reading the predestinated future, and revealing the secret to His servants, the prophets.” It is demonstrated to be such by the actual accomplishment of the same as testified to by the records of history. And

it is highly significant that sacred history ends where profane history—that part of it, at least, which is commonly regarded as reliable—begins, so that the great changes in world affairs which the divine seers foretold are confirmed by *secular* recorders of events, thereby effectually closing the mouths of sceptics. Thus, the remarkable predictions of Daniel concerning the rise, the career, and the character of the great Gentile powers which occupied the stage during the last six centuries before the advent of Christ may be fully checked from the chronicles of heathen historians, who entirely unacquainted with the Old Testament (which then existed only in the Hebrew language), were quite unaware that they were narrating the fulfilment of the same.

The book of Daniel contains prophetic visions which describe one momentous event after another that has come before the observance of the whole world: events so unlikely, so startling, and so far-reaching, that no human wisdom could possibly have foreseen the same—least of all, so far in advance. It was therein revealed that four successive world kingdoms should arise, to be followed by a spiritual and everlasting kingdom set up by God Himself. Those four empires are viewed under the figure of wild beasts, to denote their strength, ferocity, and agility. It was therein foretold that they should come forth from “the great sea” (Dan 7:2-3), which, in Scripture, always has reference to the *Mediterranean*, thereby defining the centre of their territorial origin. By that limitation of *four*, God made it known that after the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires, there should never again be another kingdom commensurate with those. King Charlemagne (742-814), Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), the Kaiser, and Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), in their insatiable greed, coveted and strove to form one, but in vain. Equally so will prove the ambitions of Moscow.

It is an incontrovertible fact that no infidel has ever dared to meet the great body of Scripture prophecy, nor seriously attempted a reply to the many books written thereon, calling attention to their accomplishment. Either they are silently ignored, or dismissed with some such scurrilous remark that the Scripture prophecies are “a book of falsehoods,” as Thomas Paine’s (1737-1809) in his blasphemous *Age of Reason* (Part 2, pages 44, 47). Let the reader judge for himself from the following. Almost one hundred years before the event, the Lord announced through Isaiah that Babylon should be destroyed by the Medes and Persians: “Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them...And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah...Go up, O Elam [the ancient name of Persia]: besiege, O Media...Babylon is fallen” (Isa 13:17-19; 21:2-9). Utterly unlikely as such a catastrophe then appeared, nevertheless, Herodotus and Xenophon record its literal fulfilment!

Again, Daniel, more than two hundred years before the event, foretold the overthrow of the Medo-Persian empire by the arms of Greece, under the direction of Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), depicting the government of the latter under the symbol of a he-goat with a notable horn between his eyes. That prophecy, in figurative language, is found in Daniel 8:3-7, and then its meaning is explained in plain terms: “The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king” (Dan 8:19-21). Ask the historians of those times, Diodorus and Plutarch, if that was a falsehood! In his *Antiquities* (Jdg 11:8), Josephus tells of Alexander’s journey to Jerusalem for the purpose of dealing severely with the Jews; and how that when he was shown by the high priest a copy of the prophecy of Daniel announcing that a *Grecian* monarch should overthrow Persia, was so deeply impressed that, contrary to his invariable course, he showed remarkable favour to the Jews.

The same Daniel went on to announce that upon the death of Alexander, his vast empire should be divided between four of his principal generals—each of whom should have an extensive dominion (Dan 8:8, 22), which, as profane historians record, is precisely what took place. But more: he also predicted that out of one of those four branches of the Grecian empire would arise one who, at first, weak and obscure, should become “exceeding great,” blatant, and impious, and that he would meet with no ordinary end (Dan 8:9, 12, 23-25). Therein was accurately described the infamous career of Antiochus Epiphanes, the king of Syria (215-164 BC). In that remarkable prophecy, it was plainly intimated that that monster should, by means of flattery and treachery, accomplish his evil designs; and because of the degeneracy of the Jews, would be permitted for a time to ravish their country, profane their temple, and put many of them to death; yet, that in the heyday of his career, he should be cut off by a sudden visitation from heaven. All of which was fulfilled to the letter!

Daniel also went on to herald the rise of yet a fourth kingdom. As he foretold that the Babylonian should be succeeded by the Medo-Persian and it by the Grecian, so in turn would this be vanquished by another yet more powerful. It is described as being “strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all” (Dan 2:40); and as “diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful” and which “shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces” (Dan 7:19, 23). Therein was given, more than five hundred years beforehand, a delineation of the Roman empire, as differing from the others in its democratic form of government, in the irre-

sistible might of its military power, and in its world-wide dominion (compare Luk 2:1). Finally, Daniel announced that “in the days of these kings” should “the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed” (Dan 2:44; 7:13-14). And it *was* in the days of the Caesars that the Son of God became incarnate and established His spiritual kingdom, which, despite all the efforts of Satan and his emissaries to overthrow it, continues to this very hour. What proofs of divine inspiration are those!

But let us now come to a phenomenon which falls more immediately before our own observation, namely, *the Jews*. To the man of affairs, the Jews present an interesting yet perplexing problem, for they are the greatest paradox of the ages. No other nation was so highly favoured by God, yet none has ever been so severely chastised by Him. They are the only people to whom God ever gave a land, yet the only one which for so many centuries have been without one. They are the only nation to whom God ever immediately gave a king, yet for two thousand years, they have been without a ruler or head. They are the outstanding miracle of history. Scattered throughout the earth, they are yet a unit; dispersed among the Gentiles, yet unassimilated by them. They are not wanted anywhere; yet because of their financial strength, needed everywhere. Taxed and plundered as no others have ever been, yet the wealthiest of all people. Persecuted and slaughtered as no other nation, yet miraculously preserved from annihilation.

The Bible alone supplies the key to their history. Not only so; the Bible described, in numerous particulars, their history long in advance. We can now single out but a few from the many scores. Two thousand years before the event, their conquest by the Romans and the terrors of the siege of Jerusalem were graphically depicted: see Deuteronomy 28:49-57—the passage is too lengthy to quote here, but let the reader be sure to consult it. The worldwide dispersion of the Jews was foretold centuries in advance: “And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other” (Deu 28:64). The restless migrating of the Jews was made known ages before their actual dispersion: “And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind” (Deu 28:65). So literally has that been fulfilled that “the *wandering Jew*” has become a proverbial expression adopted by all modern nations!

The taunts universally passed upon them were prophetically declared: “Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee” (Deu 28:37). Who has not heard the expression “as greedy as a Jew”? When one man gets the better of another by means of tricky dealings, it has become the custom throughout the English-speaking world to say “he Jew’d me.” Literally has he become a “proverb and a byword.” Their survival, despite all the efforts of men to exterminate them, was made known: “When they be in the land of their enemies, I will not...destroy them utterly” (Lev 26:44). The preservation of their national distinctness was expressly predicted: “Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations” (Num 23:9). Though scattered throughout the whole earth, they still subsist—un-assimilated by the Gentiles—as a distinct people! And so we might go on. Let the reader carefully bear in mind that all of those fore-announcements were made upwards of three thousand years ago! Such forecasts manifestly render imposture out of the question: they must have been God-breathed.

We now call attention to that which is central in prophecy, namely, the amazing description supplied of the Messiah many centuries before He came to this earth. A full portrait of Him was drawn in advance: one inspired artist after another adding fresh details, until the picture was complete. The prophets, with one consent, gave witness to the Lord Jesus Christ, so that nothing remarkable befell Him and nothing great was done by Him which they did not foretell. Those prophecies were in the hands of the Jews, and they translated into the Greek, generations before His birth, and were so well known that the apostle Paul could say to king Agrippa that he taught none other things “than those which the prophets and Moses did say *should come*: “That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead” (Act 26:22-23). Thus did the fulfilment exactly correspond to the predictions made long before, for it pleased God to supply such an exact description of the Messiah that His identity should be indubitably established when He appeared among men: and thus the Jews were condemned by their prophets for rejecting Him.

The supernatural character of our Lord’s humanity was declared when it was said that He should be the *woman’s* “seed” (Gen 3:15), unbegotten by a man: conceived and born of a “virgin” (Isa 7:14). In Genesis 9:25-28, it was made known through which of the three sons of Noah the Messiah should issue, namely, Shem: for God would “dwell” in *his* “tents.” Later, it was revealed that Christ, according to the flesh, should be of the Abrahamic stock (Gen 22:18, and compare Mat 1:1). Still further was the compass narrowed, for of the twelve sons of Abraham’s grandson, Judah was chosen (Gen 49:10). Out of all the families of Judah, He would spring from the house of Jesse (Isa 11:1). The place of His birth was specified (Mic 5:2). The very time of His advent was mentioned (Dan 9:24-

26). So definite were the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ that the hope of Israel became the Messianic hope: all their expectations centred in His appearing. It is therefore the more remarkable that their sacred Scriptures contained another set of prophecies, telling of His being despised by His own nation and put to a shameful death.

Though Christ would preach good tidings to the meek, bind up the brokenhearted, and proclaim liberty to the captives of sin and Satan (Isa 61:1), and though He should open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, and make the lame leap as a hart (Isa 35:5-6), yet utterly incredible as it appeared, He would be “despised and rejected of men” (Isa 53:3). His back would be smitten, the hair plucked out of His cheeks, and His face covered with the vile spittal of those who hated Him (Isa 50:6). He would be sold for “thirty pieces of silver” (Zec 11:13), brought as a lamb to the slaughter, taken from prison and judgment, “cut off out of the land of the living” (Isa 53:8). His death by *crucifixion* was revealed a thousand years beforehand (Psa 22:16). So too His being crucified with malefactors (Isa 53:12), His being derided upon the cross (Psa 22:7-8), His being offered vinegar to drink (Psa 69:21), as well as the soldiers gambling for His garments (Psa 22:18), were all described. It was also foretold that He should rise from the dead (Psa 16:10), and ascend into heaven (Psa 68:18).

But perhaps the most remarkable feature about the prophecies concerning Christ is their paradoxical character. He was to be the seed of David, which should proceed out of his bowels (2Sa 7:12), and at the same time, be David’s “Lord” (Psa 110:1). He was to be both “the Son of man” (Dan 7:13) and “the mighty God” (Isa 9:6); “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa 53:3), yet “anointed thee with the oil of gladness above [his] fellows” (Psa 45:7). He was to be One in whom Jehovah’s “soul delighted” (Isa 42:1), yet “smitten of God, and afflicted” (Isa 53:4). In one passage, it was fore-announced, “thou art fairer than the children of men” (Psa 45:2); in another, “his visage was so marred more than any man” (Isa 52:14). It was said that “Messiah shall be cut off, and shall have nothing” (Dan 9:26, margin), yet “of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end” (Isa 9:7). He would “[make] his grave with the wicked” (Isa 53:9), yet would be made “higher than the kings of the earth” (Psa 89:27). The fulfilment in New Testament times of those apparently glaring contradictions evinced there was perfect harmony between them; yet is it not evident that no such seeming inconsistencies as those had ever been inserted in an imposture!

Now we submit to the skeptical reader that the fulfilment of all those prophecies demonstrated the divine origin of the Book which contains them. They were given not in the form of a vague generalization, but with a precision and minuteness which no human sagacity could possibly have supplied. Again and again have men attempted to foretell the future, but only to meet with failure; the anticipations of the most far-seeing are repeatedly mocked by the irony of events. Man stands before such an impenetrable veil that he knows not what a day may bring forth. How then shall we explain the hundreds of detailed prophecies recorded in the Scriptures which were fulfilled to the letter centuries after they were given? Only one explanation is rational, adequate, and satisfactory: they were revealed by God Himself. It is the prerogative of God alone to declare the end from the beginning, and the numerous, varied, and detailed predictions recorded in the Bible demonstrate beyond a peradventure that that book is His own inspired and infallible Word. The prophecies of Scripture are supernatural: nothing in the remotest degree resembling or even claiming to do so is to be found in any of the religions of the world. Prophecy is as truly the product of Omniscience as miracles of Omnipotence.

JULY

EVANGELISM

Most of the so-called evangelism of our day is a grief to genuine Christians, for they feel that it lacks any Scriptural warrant, that it is dishonouring unto God, and that it is filling the churches with empty professors. They are shocked that so much frothy superficiality, fleshly excitement, and worldly allurements should be associated with the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They deplore the cheapening of the Gospel, the beguiling of unwary souls, and the carnalizing and commercializing of what is to them ineffably sacred. It requires little spiritual discernment to perceive that the evangelistic activities of Christendom during the last century have steadily deteriorated from bad to worse, yet few appear to realize the root from which this evil has sprung. It will now be our endeavour to expose the same. Its *aim* was wrong, and therefore, its fruits faulty.

The grand design of God, from which He never has and never will swerve, is to *glorify Himself*: to make manifest before His creatures what an infinitely glorious Being He is. *That* is the great aim and end He has in all that He does and says. For *that* He suffered sin to enter the world. For that He willed His beloved Son to become incarnate, render perfect obedience to the divine Law, suffer, and die. For that He is now taking out of the world a people for Himself, a people which shall eternally show forth His praises. For that everything is ordered by His providential dealings, unto that everything on earth is now being directed, and shall actually effect the same. Nothing other than that is what regulates God in all His actings: “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom 11:36).

That grand and basic truth is written right across the Scriptures with the plainness of a sunbeam, and he who sees it not is blind. All things are appointed by God to that one end. His saving of sinners is not an end in itself, for God would have been no loser had every one of them eternally perished. No, His saving of sinners is but a means unto an end: “To the praise of the glory of *his* grace” (Eph 1:6). Now from that fundamental fact, it necessarily follows that *we* should make the same *our* aim and end—that God may be magnified by us, “Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1Co 10:31). In like manner, it also follows that such must be the *preacher’s* aim; and that everything must be subordinated thereto, for everything else is of secondary importance and value. But is it so? Take the latest slogan of the religious world, “Youth for Christ.” Well, what is wrong with that? Its emphasis! Why not, “Christ for youth”?

If the evangelist fails to make the glory of God his paramount and constant aim, he is certain to go wrong, and all his efforts will be more or less a beating of the air. When he makes an end of anything less than that, he is sure to fall into error, for he no longer gives God His proper place. Once we fix on *ends* of our own, we are ready to adopt *means* of our own. It was at this very point evangelism failed two or three generations ago; and from that point, it has farther and farther departed. Evangelism made “the winning of souls” its goal, its *summum bonum*, and everything else was made to serve and pay tribute to the same. Though the glory of God was not actually denied, yet it *was* lost sight of, crowded out, made secondary. Further, let it be remembered that God is honoured in exact proportion as the preacher cleaves to His Word, and faithfully proclaims “all His counsel,” and not merely those portions which appeal to him.

To say nothing here about those cheap-jack evangelists, who aim no higher than rushing people into the making of a formal profession of faith in order that the membership of the churches may be swelled—take those who are inspired by a genuine compassion and deep concern for the perishing, who earnestly long and zealously endeavour to deliver souls from the wrath to come, yet unless *they* be much on their guard, they too will inevitably err. Unless they steadily view conversion in the way that God does—as the way in which He is to be glorified—they will quickly begin to compromise in the means they employ. The feverish urge of modern evangelism is not how to promote the glory of the triune Jehovah, but how to multiply conversions. The whole current of evangelical activity during the past fifty years has taken that direction. Losing sight of God’s end, the churches have devised means of their own.

Bent on attaining a certain desired object, the energy of the flesh has been given free reign; and supposing that the object was right, evangelists have concluded that nothing could be wrong which contributed unto the securing of that end; and since their efforts appear to be eminently “successful,” only too many churches silently acquiesced, telling themselves, “the end justified the means.” Instead of examining the plans proposed and the methods adopted by the light of Scripture, they were tacitly accepted on the ground of expediency. The evangelist was esteemed not for the soundness of his message, but by the visible “results” he secured. He was valued not according to how far his preaching honoured God, but by how many souls were supposedly converted under it.

Once a man makes the conversion of sinners his prime design and all-consuming end, he is exceedingly apt to adopt a wrong course. Instead of striving to preach the truth in its purity, he will tone it down so as to make it more palatable to the unregenerate. Impelled by a single force, moving in one fixed direction, his object is to make conversion easy, and therefore, favourite passages (like Joh 3:16) are dwelt upon incessantly, while others are ignored

or pared away. It inevitably reacts upon his own theology, and various verses in the Word are shunned, if not repudiated. What place will he give in his thoughts to such declarations as “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” (Jer 13:23), “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Joh 6:44), “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” (Joh 15:16)? He will be sorely tempted to modify the truth of God’s sovereign election, of Christ’s particular redemption, of the imperative necessity for the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit.

In twentieth-century evangelism, there has been a woeful ignoring of the solemn truth of the *total depravity* of man. There has been a complete underrating of the desperate case and condition of the sinner. Very few indeed have faced the unpalatable fact that every man is thoroughly corrupt by nature, that he is completely unaware of his own wretchedness, blind and helpless, dead in trespasses and sins. Because such is his case, because his heart is filled with enmity against God, it follows that no man can be saved without the special and immediate intervention of God. According to our view *here*, so will it be elsewhere: to qualify and modify the truth of man’s total depravity will inevitably lead to the diluting of collateral truths. The teaching of Holy Writ on this point is unmistakable: man’s plight is such that his salvation is impossible unless God puts forth His almighty power. No stirring of the emotions by anecdotes, no regaling of the senses by music, no oratory of the preacher, no persuasive appeals, are of the slightest avail.

In connection with the old creation, God did all without any assistance. But in the far more stupendous work of the new creation, it is intimated by the Arminian evangelism of our day that He needs the sinner’s co-operation. Really, it comes to this: God is represented as helping man to save himself—the sinner must begin the work by becoming willing, and then God will complete the business. Whereas, none but the Spirit can make him willing in the day of His power (Psa 110:3). He alone can produce godly sorrow for sin, and saving faith in the Gospel. He alone can make us out of love with ourselves, and bring us into subjection to the Lordship of Christ. Instead of seeking the aid of outside evangelists, let the churches get on their faces before God, confess their sins, seek *His* glory, and cry for His miracle-working operations. “Not by might [of the preacher], nor by power [of the sinner’s will], but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zec 4:6).

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

55. 2 Thessalonians 3:5, Part 3

“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.” The Greek verb here rendered “direct” occurs elsewhere in the New Testament but twice: in 1 Thessalonians 3:11, and in Luke 1:79, where it is translated “to guide our feet into the way of peace.” Literally, the word signifies “to make thoroughly straight” what has gone awry, to turn or bend back to the upright what has become crooked. The Christian’s heart is apt to return to its old bias and become warped: this is a prayer for the rectification of that fault. We are prone to allow our affections to wander from God and make an idol of some creature; and therefore, we constantly need to beg Him to bind them unto Himself, that our love may be indeclinably fixed upon its true and only worthy object. We are also prone to grow slack in the performance of duty, to become weary in well doing, especially when we meet with opposition and affliction; and therefore, we need earnestly to supplicate God for the grace of endurance, that our knees become not feeble nor our hands hang down, but rather that we should “hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (Heb 3:6).

There is not a little said about the grace and duty of “patient waiting” in the Scriptures. Though it is to be feared, there is comparatively little thereof in the lives of most Christians, which is not only to the displeasing and dishonouring of God, but greatly to their own spiritual loss. Few of them have any clear Scriptural conception of what it actually consists of, for there has been scarcely any really definite and practical teaching thereon; and consequently, the thoughts of few rise any higher than those of the natural man’s. It is with the desire to provide some real help at this point that we deem it well to devote further space unto a consideration of this subject, for it is one of considerable importance and value. When commenting upon Colossians 1:11, we threw out some general hints thereon in the May 1947 article, and at the beginning of the next, expressed the hope of supplementing the same when we reached our present verse. We shall therefore now endeavour to set before the reader something of what

God's Word teaches on this most necessary fruit of divine grace—conscious that no one more needs to take the same to heart than does the present writer.

The Saviour Himself has exhorted us, "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luk 21:19), and His apostle declares, "Ye have need of patience" (Heb 10:36). "It is a most necessary grace for a Christian. Not only as all other graces are necessary to make him such, for so we have need of them all, at least in the root and habit, and in the proper seasons for the exercise of them. But the apostle speaks it *signanter* and by way of special remark 'ye have need of patience': need of the constant exercise, strengthening and perfecting of this grace"—Bishop John Henry Hopkins (1792-1868). That requires little proof, for the experience of every believer confirms it. Some difficulty accompanies every duty and the putting forth of every grace, not only because the commandments of God run counter to our corruptions, but also because they run counter to the spirit and course of this world; and, therefore, patience is required in order to perform our duties constantly, and to continue in the exercise of that grace. To swim against the tide of popular sentiment, willingness to be deemed singular, plodding along the narrow way—which is an *uphill* course throughout—and especially not to faint near the end, call for much fortitude and endurance.

Thomas Manton (1620-1677) defines this patient waiting for Christ as "the grace of hope fortifying our resolutions for God and the world to come, that we may continue in our duty till our work be finished and our warfare ended." There is a threefold patience spoken of in Scripture. First, a *labouring* patience, which consists in our "doing the will of God" in self-denying obedience, however irksome it proves to the flesh. The same Greek word rendered "patiently waiting" in our text is translated "patient continuance in well doing" in Romans 2:7, which is in contrast with those whose "goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away" (Hos 6:4). Christ defined the stony-ground hearers as those "which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away"; the thorny-ground hearers as they who "are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection." But the good-ground hearers He declared are they who "having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit *with patience*" (Luk 8:13-15). "Many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (Joh 6:66), but of the apostles He said, "Ye are they which have *continued* with me" (Luk 22:28).

Second, a *suffering* patience, which meekly bears affliction and rebels not against whatever God has appointed for us. Where that grace is thus exercised, the soul faints not in the time of adversity nor turns back in the day of battle. When the dispensations of divine providence are most trying unto flesh and blood, and we are tempted to revile the same, then are we enabled to say "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). Piety does not exempt any from trouble and sorrow, but it does enable to make manifest the sufficiency of divine grace in all conditions and circumstances. As God is honoured by the exercise of our love and zeal in performing His precepts, so He is greatly glorified by our quietness and submission when He calls upon us to experience suffering. Our fidelity unto Him must be tested by enduring evil, as well as in doing good, and the exercise of patience is as much needed for an unrepining and unflagging bearing of the one, as it is for the joyous and unremitting performance of the other. Yet in order thereto, we need to "consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Heb 12:3).

Third, a *waiting* patience, which consists of tarrying upon God's leisure after we have both done the preceptive and suffered the providential will of God. This some (the writer included) find more difficult to exercise than either of the former, yet it is required of us. "Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb 6:12). "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Heb 10:36). God has anticipatory mercies, which come without our tarrying for them; and He has also rewarding mercies which must be waited for, for He is pleased to test our patience, and as often there is no reward for doing His will unless we do so wait. Though God is never behind *His* time, He seldom comes at *ours*. "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even *the selfsame day* it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out" (Exo 12:41-42). That great promise of deliverance was performed punctually: not only to the day, but to the very hour. Those four hundred and thirty years expired during the hours of darkness, and God waited not till the morning light!

We read of the "shortening" of evil times (Mat 24:22), but not of their lengthening! God never keeps His people waiting for good any longer than He has purposed or promised. But though He keeps *His* time exactly and works just at the moment He has ordained and made known, yet we are apt to antedate the divine promise and set a time before His. As one of the Puritans quaintly expressed it, "We are both short-sighted and short-breathed." That which is but a moment in the calendar of heaven seems an age to us, and therefore have we need of patience in referring all to God's pleasure. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab 2:3). There appears to be a verbal

contradiction there: “Though it tarry” and “it will not tarry,” yet the meaning is simple: though what be promised tarry beyond our time, it shall not beyond the hour God has prefixed. There is no remedy or relief for us but in patiently waiting: calmly but confidently expecting the divine performance.

This patient waiting for God’s time to appear on our behalf is as much the saint’s duty as is a steady persistence in rendering obedience to God’s commandments and in meekly bearing His afflictive dispensations. It is the prerogative of God to *date* all events, as well as to do all things for us: our “times,” as well as ourselves and all our affairs, are in His hand (Psa 31:15). The Lord is not only the Disposer of all things in regard of means and instruments, but also of their seasons: “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Ecc 3:1). And God requires us to acquiesce in His timetable and defer to His good pleasure: to bow to His sovereignty and confide in His wisdom, and not fret and fume because He is slower than we desire in undertaking for us. It is not sufficient that we make known our requests; we must also “rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him” (Psa 37:7): realize that our welfare is in safer hands than our own, and comport ourselves accordingly—composing our spirit, stifling the perturbations of our hearts, and resisting all the workings of unbelief. “I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry” (Psa 40:1).

It is extremely sinful *not* to wait patiently, for it evinces an unwillingness to tarry God’s leisure, and is therefore a spirit of insubordination. Fretful impatience is a taking issue with God’s authority and a calling into question His goodness. Solemn indeed are the sins of this nature recorded in the Word. “And when the people saw that Moses *delayed* to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him” (Exo 32:1). And Aaron yielded to their evil demand. When the servant of God bade Saul tarry seven days at Gilgal until he should come and offer sacrifices and show the king what he should do (1Sa 10:8), because the prophet appeared not when he expected, Saul impatiently and impiously took matters into his own hand, and in consequence, lost his kingdom (1Sa 13:8-14). Fearful indeed was also the wickedness of that king who said, “What should I wait for the LORD any longer?” (2 Ki 6:33)—he grew weary of tarrying for the Lord and opposed his own will against Him.

Let the reader perceive from the above examples what an evil thing it is not to quietly wait the Lord’s time. Once we give way to a spirit of impatience, we open the door to many dangers. Those who tarry not God’s leisure take things into their own hands, which is not only highly dishonouring unto the Lord, but attended with disastrous consequences unto themselves. Thus Abraham found it. At the outset, the Lord declared, “And I will make of thee a great nation” and “Unto thy seed will I give this land” (Gen 12:2, 7). Years later, when the patriarch told the Lord, “I go childless,” He assured him, “he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir” (Gen 15:2, 4). Nevertheless, because Sarah remained barren, he yielded to her suggestion of obtaining a son by Hagar. Though that carnal plan resulted in the birth of Ishmael, Abraham’s impatience was a source of domestic trouble for years to come. Impatience leads to the setting aside of God’s means and employing our own: “And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices” (Jer 18:12). Alas, how many of the “churches” are, with their worldly methods, doing so today.

On the other hand, it is highly beneficial unto us to exercise this grace: “And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you...*blessed* are all they that wait for him” (Isa 30:18). “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is” (Jer 17:7). “The LORD is good unto them that wait for him...It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation [deliverance] of the LORD” (Lam 3:25-26). Waiting is not only a duty but a benefit. This waiting patience is termed by Christ a possessing of our souls (Luk 21:19). Whatever *title* we have to our souls, we have no *possession* of them without patience. As faith puts us in the possession of Christ, so patience gives us possession of our souls. The soul of an impatient person is dispossessed, for he no longer acts as a rational creature. The exercise of patience enables us to preserve a holy serenity of mind, keeping under the tumults of passion, so that neither terror nor grief prevent the dominion of reason. By resigning ourselves to God’s will and confidently awaiting the fulfilment of His promises, we are kept calm and cheerful, and have a comfortable enjoyment of His mercies amid trouble and tribulation.

It is impossible but that the affections and passions will be stirring in a season of trial and affliction, but patience takes off their excess and fierceness, calming the storm within. It subdues the violence of emotion which rends the soul and distracts reason, enabling its possessor to “ruleth his [own] spirit” (Pro 16:32), instead of roaring “as a wild bull in a net” (Isa 51:20). It checks angry murmurings and brings us to an acquiescing silence before God: “I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it” (Psa 39:9). Since impatience proceeds from self-love and is a species of self-will, patience works the soul to a self-denying frame or temper. When providences cross our designs or impede our expectations, we are provoked and restless; but when the trying of faith works patience, the heart is

more weaned from the creature and brought to rest in God. Thus it produces a spirit of quietness and submission, causing us to realize that it is of my Father it is thus and thus with me, and that when He deems best, He will deliver me from this trouble or supply that which will be most for His glory and my highest welfare, saying, “It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.” (1Sa 3:18).

But, says the reader, such a thing is beyond my powers, out of the reach of attainment, something contrary to flesh and blood. True, yet it is not beyond the power of God to bestow or the sufficiency of His grace to effect. That is why we find the apostle here making supplication for these sorely tried saints that the Lord the Spirit would “direct [their] hearts...into the patient waiting for Christ” (2Th 3:5). Our feet have to be guided “into the way of peace” (Luk 1:79), for it is a track completely hidden from the natural man, even from the wisest of this world—“the way of peace have they not known” (Rom 3:17). Equally so, none but God can rectify our evil proclivity to impatience. The plainest and most earnest sermons preached cannot, of themselves, effect it. This article will not do so unless God be pleased to apply and bless the same unto the reader, by convicting him of his sinful failures, moving him to confess the same and cry unto Him for His quickening power: “That he may incline our hearts unto him” (1Ki 8:58), that He will “prepare their heart unto [Him]” (1Ch 29:18), that He will graciously stay our minds upon Himself (Isa 26:3).

It also needs to be added that while our sense of weakness and inability should ever drive us to our knees for divine enablement, yet prayer is not to be substituted for diligence in other directions. It is our responsibility to avoid everything which hinders the exercise of patience, and to make due use of those means which promote the same. It should also be remembered that in the answering of such prayers, God will not cease treating with us as moral agents. God indeed “draws” us, but it is “with cords of a man, with bands of love” (Hos 11:4), working upon us as rational beings. As the “guide our feet into the way of peace” is preceded by “to give light to them that sit in darkness” (Luk 1:79), so Christ explained the “draw him” by adding “they shall all be taught of God” (Joh 6:44-45). We are not forced but directed. God’s “drawing” is by *teaching*, without offering violence to the liberty of man: He convinces the judgment that it is meet and proper that we submit to and wait for Him, the will accepts the verdict of the understanding, and then the affections are brought under the authority of the Word.

“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.” There is both a general and a particular “directing.” In His Word, God has declared His mind unto us through His statutes: “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic 6:8). Yet, so intractable are we by nature, something more is necessary before any of us render unto God His due—namely, the inward operations of the Holy Spirit, who teaches us how to apply the rule to the details of our lives and in the orderly exercise of our graces. God can direct our hearts, incline our minds, move our wills, without any violence done to our free agency. He *will* do so in answer to fervent prayer, yea, He *has* already begun to do so if our prayers be sincere. Those prayers are but the breathings of holy desires which He has wrought in us by the efficacy of His grace, by making attractive and desirable unto us the duties unto which He calls us.

There is a very close connection, yea, an inseparable one, between the two things Paul here prayed for. Not only is patience an effect of love, but in proportion to our love unto God will be our patient waiting for Him. Love to God produces patience, or rather faith working by love does so. “The trying of your faith worketh patience” (Jam 1:3), yet whenever a spiritual faith operates, it “worketh *by love*” (Gal 5:6). Love to God makes the soul cleave to Him, and to bear up under all the dispensations of His providence. “Blessed is the man that endureth [patiently bears] temptation [or “trials”]: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that *love* him” (Jam 1:12)—that identifying-mark is mentioned because it is love which enables one to meekly submit unto the most painful trials. “What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Act 21:13). It was love to Christ which fired Paul, as it was love to Him which caused John Bunyan (1620-1677) and a host of others not only to endure lengthy imprisonment with an unrepining patience, but with triumphant joy. Love makes the will of God and the glorifying of Him in Christ dearer to us than all other objects.

How essential is it, then, that we should use our utmost endeavours after the quickening, strengthening, and increasing of our love to God; for if that cardinal task be neglected, certain it is that our patience will weaken and flag—whether it be in a steady continuance in performing God’s preceptive will, meekly bowing to His providential will, or quietly waiting the fulfilment of His promises and answers to our prayers. We would therefore urge the reader to give a second perusal of our Prayer article in the June issue, that he may be more deeply impressed with what is required of him in order to keep his love fresh and fervent.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

35. Jericho, Part 5 (6:10-15)

“And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout” (Jos 6:10). Here is the third item in the instructions which Joshua gave to “the people.” First, they had been bidden to “compass the city”; and second, the armed men among them to “pass on before the ark of the LORD” (Jos 6:7); now they are enjoined to maintain strict silence as the long procession wended its way around Jericho. Very precisely and emphatically was this order worded: its threefold prohibition reminding us of the repeated interdiction of Proverbs 4:14-15, “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.” There is no excuse for ignorance of the divine will: the things which God forbids us doing are as plainly stated in His Word as those which He requires of us.

No explanation was given the people, but simply the bare command: sufficient for them that so God required. Pondering it in the light of Scripture, several reasons for it and significations of it may be suggested. First and more generally, this injunction for the people to preserve complete silence constituted a test of their obedience—made the more real by their not being told why such an imposition was necessary. For the mouths of such a vast multitude to be sealed during the entire march around the city was no small test of their subjection unto the revealed will of Jehovah. Second and more specifically, such decorous silence well became them on this occasion. Why so? Because God was in their midst, and *He* is “greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him” (Psa 89:7)—a verse which many preachers today need to press upon their congregations, among whom much irreverence obtains in the house of prayer. If the seraphim veil their faces before the Lord, how reverent should be *our* worship!

The “ark of the covenant” was the symbol of the Lord’s presence, and its being in Israel’s midst on this occasion required that they conduct themselves with the utmost propriety. God was about to speak loudly to the Canaanites in judgment, and it was therefore fitting that every human voice should be stilled. There is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Ecc 3:7). When Pharaoh and his hosts were pursuing the children of Israel, and they were confronted by the Red Sea, they were told, “The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace” (Exo 14:14). The case was a parallel one here: Jehovah was about to lay bare His mighty arm and show Himself strong on behalf of His people; and it was meet that they should be still before Him, in reverent expectation of the event. It was a case of “hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD [when He acts in an extraordinary manner] is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests” (Zep 1:7); “Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation” (Zec 2:13). The profound silence observed by Israel’s hosts added impressively to the gravity and solemnity of their procession.

Again; Israel’s being forbidden to open their mouths on this occasion supplied another illustration and exemplification of the difference which marks the ways of God from man’s. We are aware that some are likely to regard that statement as a trite platitude, yet *they* are probably the very ones who most need to be reminded of it here, for they are the least affected and influenced by it. God’s work is to be done *in His appointed way*: but instead of that, much of what now pretends to be “His work” is being done in the *world’s* way. God works silently, whether it be in creation, providence, or grace. Vegetation makes no noise in the process of its growth. God’s government, both of individuals and nations, is wrought secretly. The miracle of regeneration is not perceptible to our senses, though it affects and fruits soon become apparent. So it is in His dealings with our souls: the Lord is not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the “still small voice” (1Ki 19:11-12). We too should go about our appointed tasks in the same calmness: “a meek and quiet spirit” is “of great price” in His sight (1Pe 3:4).

Third, the silence required of “the people” on this occasion supplied another important line in the typical picture furnished by this incident—though one which certainly will not appeal to many in present-day Christendom. Israel’s capture of Jericho unmistakably pre-figured the victories achieved, under God, by the Gospel. The priests blowing with the trumpets of rams’ horns pictured the servants of God preaching His Word. The forbidding of “the people” to open their mouths signified that the rank and file of Christians are to have no part in the oral proclamation of the truth—they are neither qualified for nor called to the ministration of the Word. Nowhere in the Epistles is there a single exhortation for the saints as such to engage in *public* evangelism, nor even to do “personal work” and seek to be “soul winners.” Rather are they required to “witness for Christ” by their *daily conduct* in business and in the home. They are to “show forth” God’s praises, rather than tell them forth. They are to let their light

shine. The testimony of the life is far more effectual than glib utterances of the lips. Actions speak louder than words.

How vastly different was the typical scene presented here in Joshua 6 from that which is now beheld in the so-called “evangelism” of our day! Here everything was orderly, decorous, and reverent. “The people” in the rear: “the ark of the covenant”—symbol of the Lord’s presence—in the midst; the “seven priests” blowing with their trumpets; the “armed men” in front. The absolute silence of all the hosts of Israel—so utterly different from the war cries to which they were accustomed—must have deeply impressed the citizens of Jericho. But not only is there the marked absence of that dignified silence, gravity, solemnity, and reverence, which befits all gatherings that are professedly engaged in divine worship, but modern “evangelism” is characterized by that which is noisy, vulgar, and carnally exciting. How different the self-advertised “evangelists” of this decadent age from the supreme Evangelist, who “suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him” and who said to the cleansed leper, “See thou say nothing to any man” (Mar 1:34, 44)!

“So the ark of the LORD compassed the city, going about it once” (Jos 6:11). And what follows? Therefore its walls at once fell down? No; “and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp.” Then they had all their trouble for nothing! No indeed. But nothing happened: they were no forwarder, but just where they were previously! That is estimating things *by sight*, and is an erroneous conclusion. Much had happened. That which is of supreme importance had been accomplished. God had been honoured and glorified! How so? By the implicit obedience of Joshua, of the priests, of the congregation of Israel. O that both ministers and laymen were more thoroughly convinced that nothing honours God so much as our *obedience*. “To obey is better than sacrifice” (1Sa 15:22)—the most lavish offering is unacceptable to God unless it be made by one whose will is subject to His. Attending meetings, contributing generously to His cause, busying ourselves in what is wrongly termed “Christian service,” is worthless—yea, a species of hypocrisy—if we be not walking in the path of the divine precepts.

Unless what has just been said be laid to heart by both the public servants of God and private Christians, the most important lessons of this incident will be missed. As was pointed out in our last, the preacher who most honours Christ is not the one who produces the largest “visible results,” but he who sticks the closest to His commission and preaches the Word most faithfully. So with the saints. The Christian housewife who discharges her God-given duties in the home and the domestic in the kitchen who conscientiously performs her menial tasks are as pleasing and glorifying to Christ as the most self-denying missionary in the foreign field. What is the one outstanding excellence in the Saviour’s life and work which the Holy Spirit has emphasized more than any other? Is it not that His meat and drink was to do the will of Him that sent Him (Joh 4:34)! That there was no limit in His subjection to the Father’s authority, that He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi 2:8)! Say not that nothing was accomplished by Israel here, but admire their God-honouring obedience, and seek to emulate them.

“And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD” (Jos 6:12). Nothing escapes the all-seeing eye of the One with whom we have to do. In human estimation, this may appear a very trivial detail; nevertheless, it is one which the Holy Spirit delighted to notice and place upon imperishable record. Why so? Because it marked the diligence, fidelity, and zeal of those servants of the Lord. Why so? Because they also inculcated yet another lesson which ministers of the Gospel need to heed. They are expressly bidden to study and show themselves “approved unto God, [workmen] that needeth not to be ashamed” (2Ti 2:15). Slackness and slothfulness ill become those who claim to be the ambassadors of Him who rose up “a great while before day” (Mar 1:35) and “early in the morning he came again into the temple” to teach the people (Joh 8:2). That searching question of His, “What do ye more than others?” (Mat 5:47), is capable of many legitimate applications—not least to *the preacher*. Does he spend fewer of more hours per day in his study than do those who work for their daily bread!

“And seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually, and blew with the trumpets: and the armed men went before them; but the rereward came after the ark of the LORD, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets” (Jos 6:13). The Hebrew word for “trumpet” (*shophar*) has its first occurrence in Exodus 19:16, 19, where its loud blast was used to awe the nation at Sinai: highly significant is the fact that it is mentioned just fourteen times here in Joshua 6: 7 x 2, or the number of perfect witness. The word for “rams’ horns” (*yobel*) is the one used throughout Leviticus 25, where twenty times it is rendered “jubilee,” so that as an alternative to “trumpets of rams’ horns,” it would be equally permissible to say “trumpets of jubilee.” In the year of jubilee, all slaves were released and given their freedom, and all alienated estates were restored to their original owners. In view of the oft-repeated “ye shall return every man unto his possession” (Lev 25:10-11, 13, 27-28) and “the land of your possession (Lev 25:24), we perceive the significance and appropriateness of the sounding of “trumpets of jubilee” as Israel now began to possess their inheritance.

In that *double* meaning and purpose of the priests' "trumpets of ram's horns," we have clearly intimated the nature of that twofold work to which God has appointed His servants. Those trumpets had a mission and a ministry both unto the Canaanites and to Israel: the one were to be awed and affrighted, the other to be cheered and comforted. By faithfully preaching the holiness of God, the demands of His Law, the sinfulness of sin, and the reality of its awful wages, the minister of the Gospel is to strike terror into the hearts of the ungodly (2Co 5:10), urging them to "flee from the wrath to come." Unto those who give evidence that they have forsaken their wicked ways and believed the Gospel, it is his privilege and duty to strengthen their faith and gladden their hearts by announcing to them the liberty which they have in Christ and the nature of that glorious inheritance which He purchased for them. In other words, to proclaim the grand jubilee tidings, so that assurance and joy may be the present portion of the redeemed. It is in the Epistles that the blessed contents of the Gospel are most fully unfolded to the saints.

"And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp" (Jos 6:14). A careful reading of the context shows that while divine assurance had been made unto Joshua himself that the Lord had given Jericho into his hand, yet he made no mention of this when giving orders to either the priests, the people, or the armed men: all were to act in what the world terms "blind obedience"—without any promise of reward. It is also to be duly noted that while Joshua had been informed by God how many days and times the enemy's stronghold must be encircled before its walls should supernaturally collapse (verses 3-5), he kept this knowledge to himself, leaving all under him in ignorance of *how long* this strange method of procedure was to be continued. The absence of such information made an additional demand upon the faith and obedience of Israel on this occasion. After making one complete circuit of the city, the holy ark of Jehovah being carried aloft in their midst, and all the host had returned to their camp *without* any tangible result, it is much to their credit that they repeated the whole performance a second time. Yet still there was not the slightest sign of God's appearing on their behalf!

How striking then are the closing words of verse 14: "So they did six days"! After a second and third encompassing of Jericho, without any apparent success, little wonder had the people complained and said, What is the use of prolonging this business? Admire then their persistency. How different was this generation from their forefathers in the wilderness, who so quickly became discouraged and murmured against their leader!—and never possessed their heritage! In contrast, their sons vowed unto Joshua, "All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go" (Jos 1:16), and faithfully did they keep their word. This too has been recorded for our instruction and for our encouragement. Was there not a time, fellow minister, when Christ made Himself known and you asked, "Lord, what wouldest Thou have me do?" Did He not in His condescending grace answer, "Son, go work today in My vineyard"? When you receive His call to devote the whole of your time and talents to His service, did you not promise to spend and be spent in the same? Then be not weary in well doing: for in *due season* ye shall reap, if ye faint not (Gal 6:9).

However impetuous be our spirit, the Lord is never in a hurry, and we are required to wait *His* leisure. Every dispensation of God has its prefixed period: as the mercy itself, equally so the timing of the mercy, is wholly in God's hand. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab 2:3). It is not at our beck and call: we can neither hasten nor retard the Almighty. "He that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa 28:16), but continue steadfast in the performance of duty. We must neither fail through discouragement, nor adopt means of our own in order to speed the issue. Two things are required of us: adhering strictly to the directions which God has given us, trustfully and hopefully waiting His blessing on the same. Patience must have her perfect work. Thus it was with Israel here. They fainted not because the walls of Jericho fell not the first or second, nor even the fifth or sixth day; nor did they take matters into their own hands and resort to another method. Rather did they "Wait on the LORD, and keep his way" (Psa 37:34).

"Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him" (Psa 37:7) was the grand lesson inculcated by this incident. Confide in the Lord's goodness, count upon His power, submit fully to His authority, or there will be no waiting *for* Him. Israel must have implicit trust in the One who had given them their instructions through Joshua. And so must *we*. We are to wait in obedience as servants, and in expectation as believers. A desirous expectation concerning the future must be subordinated to a meek submission to God's will in the present. "Wait on the LORD, and *keep his way*, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land" (Psa 37:34). It is failure to "wait on the LORD"—through giving way to the feverish flesh—which causes us to depart from "his way"! Those who are in too great a hurry to acquire things take "short cuts" which God has not appointed; but such who act in unholy haste are sure to repent at leisure. But if we patiently tarry for God's time, then we shall confine ourselves to those means which He has assigned. Let preacher and layman alike lay hold of that promise, "they shall not be ashamed [or 'confounded'] that *wait for me*" (Isa 49:23).

“And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times” (Jos 6:15). What a demand upon their faith, obedience, and patience was this! After their apparently fruitless effort of marching around Jericho once a day for no less than six days, now they were required not only to do the same on the seventh day, but to then repeat the performance no less than seven times more! And note well those words “after the same manner.” There was to be no change of procedure: seeming failure did not warrant them in adopting *other* measures: they must adhere strictly to the divine directions unto the end. What a needful lesson is there pointed for us! Not only was their testing protracted, but it became increasingly severe. Once a day for six days had been unavailing; and six times more on the seventh day passed without any divine intervention; yet still they persevered! What cause for shame that *we* become discouraged so easily and faint so quickly!

A brief word needs to be said about the repeated occurrence of the number *seven* here: the seven priests, the seven trumpets, the seven days, and the seven encirclements of Jericho on the seventh day cannot be without some design and significance. The best comment we have seen thereon is John Owen’s (1616-1683): “The compassing of the city once every day for six days, and the entrance into it on the seventh, had respect unto the work of the creation. For God was now entering into His *rest* with respect unto His *worship*, in a new way of settlement and solemnity, such as He had not erected or made use of from the beginning of the world. Hence He frequently calls it ‘his rest’ (Psa 95:11; 132:8, 14; Heb 3:11; 4:3, 11). And it was a type of the new creation, with the rest of Christ thereon, and of believers in Him. Therefore would God give here a resemblance of the first work of the labour of the six days, and the reward they received on the seventh.”

ENJOYING GOD’S BEST

Part 7

[We continue our examination and refutation of those objections which different readers may make against what was advanced in the previous articles].

6. Some are likely to complain that our teaching is too idealistic and impractical, that we have presented an unattainable standard, arguing that in our present condition, it is impossible to enjoy God’s best if that be dependent upon our daily life being well-pleasing unto Him. We shall be reminded that only one Perfect Man has trod this earth, and that while the flesh indwells the Christian, failures and falls are inevitable. Nor should we be surprised at fault being found with that which rebukes the low level of Christian experience in this decadent age: those that are at ease in Zion do not welcome anything which searches the conscience and is calculated to arouse them from their deplorable apathy. But the One with whom each of us has to do declares, “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1Pe 1:16), and therefore does He bid us, “Awake to righteousness, and sin not” (1Co 15:34), “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom 13:14), “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1Jo 2:6).

But we have not said that our enjoyment of God’s smile *is* dependent upon our actually measuring up to that standard, though nothing short of it must be our constant aim and earnest endeavour. There is a great difference between a relative falling short of that standard and a life of defeat, between daily trespasses and being the slave of some dominant lust. Had we said that one must lead a *sinless* life in order to enter into God’s best, the above complaint had been pertinent. But we have not. If the heart be true to God, if it be our sincere desire and diligent effort to please the Lord in all things, then His approbation and blessing will certainly be upon us. And if such really be our intention and striving, then it will necessarily follow that we shall mourn over our conscious failures in missing that mark and will promptly and contritely confess the same—it is by *that* we may test and prove the genuineness of our sincerity. It is not the sins of a Christian, but his *unconfessed* sins, which choke the channel of blessing and cause so many to miss God’s best.

What has just been stated is clearly established by “he that covereth his sins shall not prosper” (Pro 28:13). It is always an inexcusable and grievous thing for a saint to commit any sin, yet it is far worse to refuse to acknowledge the same: that is to “add sin to sin” (Isa 30:1); yea, it evinces a spirit of defiance. So far from such an one prosper-

ing, he closes the door against God's favours (Jer 5:25). As the hiding of a disease prevents any cure, so to stifle convictions, seek to banish them from the mind, and then try and persuade ourselves that all is well, only makes bad matters worse. None but the penitent confessor can be pardoned (Psa 32:5; 1Jo 1:9). In the great majority of cases, the chief reason why believers miss God's best is because they fail to keep short accounts with Him. They do not make conscience of what the world regards as innocent blemishes and which empty professors excuse as "trifling faults." And the result is that the conscience becomes comatose, laxity is encouraged, the Holy Spirit is grieved, Satan gains increasing power over him, and his unrepented sins hide God's face from him (Isa 59:2).

7. It may be inquired, How do you harmonize your teaching that God's frown is upon His people while they follow a course of self-will and self-gratification, when it is written, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (Psa 103:10)? Answer: There is nothing *to* harmonize, for the two things in no wise conflict. That Scripture is not speaking of God's present governmental dealings, but of what took place at conversion, when the penal consequences of all our sins were remitted. That is clear from what immediately follows, for after extolling the exalted character of God's mercy, the Psalmist declared, "As far as the east is from the west, so far *hath* he removed our transgressions from us" (Psa 103:11-12). God hath not dealt with the one who savingly believes the Gospel "after [his] sins," because He laid them upon his Surety and dealt with Him accordingly; and being infinitely just, the divine Judge will not exact payment twice. Therefore, instead of rewarding him according to his iniquities, he recompenses him according to the merits of his Redeemer.

If that were *not* the meaning of Psalm 103:10, we should make the Scriptures contradict themselves—an evil against which we need ever to be upon our guard. Psalm 89:30-32 shows that God *does* deal with His disobedient children according to their sins—in a disciplinary way, in this life—expressly declaring that "Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes" (Psa 89:32). And yet there is a very real and blessed sense in which the principle of the former passage applies here too. For, first, God is not severe and rigorous in marking every offence: if our love be warm and the general course of our conduct pleases Him, He passes by our non-wilful sins. And, second, God does not chasten immediately when we offend Him, but graciously grants us space for repentance, that the rod may be withheld. Third, He does not chasten us fully, according to our deserts, but tempers His righteousness with mercy. Even when plying the rod upon us "his compassions fail not," and therefore, "we are not consumed" (Lam 3:22). God dealt so with His people under the *old* economy: Ezra 9:13; Psalm 130:3!

8. Notwithstanding what has just been pointed out, the objection is likely to be made, Such teaching as yours is calculated to afford very "cold consolation" to some of God's afflicted people; you are acting only as a "Job's comforter" to them. Nor is such a demur to be wondered at in a day when the clamant cry of an apostate Christendom is "speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isa 30:10). Though that be the language of the unregenerate, yet when Christians are in more or less of a backslidden condition, only too often that becomes the desire of their hearts also; and when the rod of God be upon them, they crave pity and sympathy rather than love's faithfulness. What such souls most need is *help*—real help and not maudlin sentimentality. To give soothing syrup to one needing a bitter purgative is not an act of kindness. The chastened one requires to be reminded that God "doth not afflict willingly," then urged to "search and try [His] ways, and turn again to the LORD" (Lam 3:33, 40), and assured that upon true confession, he will be forgiven.

9. But it may be objected, Did not David deeply repent of, contritely confess, and sincerely forsake his sins in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah, yet God's rod was not removed from him and his family! That is admittedly, a more difficult question to answer. Nor should we look to the absolute sovereignty of God for its solution, for rather would that be cutting the knot instead of endeavouring to untie it. It should be evident to all that David's was no ordinary case, and that his sins were such as the Mosaic Law called for capital punishment. Moreover, his iniquities were greatly aggravated by virtue of the position which he occupied: as a prophet, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, their king. Crimes committed by those in high civic or ministerial office are far more heinous and involve graver consequences than do those same crimes when committed by private persons. Therefore, though the Lord "forgavest the iniquity of [his] sin" (Psa 32:5), yet He declared "the sword shall never depart from thine house" (2Sa 12:10). The guilt and penal effects were remitted, but the governmental consequences remained.

"Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die" (2Sa 12:14). And though he "besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth," it was in vain; the sin of the father was visited upon the son, to show that God was "no respecter of persons"—even where a monarch, and one beloved by Himself, was involved. And "the sword" never did depart from his house, for one after another of his sons met with a violent end. Such transgressions of Israel's king received no ordinary chastisements from God, to show that He would not coun-

tenance such actions, but vindicate His honour by manifesting His abhorrence of them. Thus, the governmental consequences of David's sins not being remitted upon his repentant confession is to be accounted for on the ground of his public character. Another example or illustration of the same principle is found in the case of Moses and Aaron, who because of their unbelief at Meribah, being Israel's leaders, were debarred from entering Canaan (Num 20:12, 24).

10. As our readers have pondered the foregoing articles, it is probable that not a few have reverted in their minds to the experiences of *Job*, and wondered how it is possible to square with *them* the substance of what we have been writing. Obviously, it is quite outside our present scope to enter upon anything like a full discussion of the book which describes the severe trials of that holy patriarch. Four brief statements must here suffice. First, that book presents to our notice something which is extraordinary and quite unique, as well as profoundly mysterious, namely, the position which Satan there occupies and his challenge of the Lord (Job 1:6-12). Second, it is therefore unwarrantable for us to appeal to the experiences of Job in *this* connection, for his case was entirely unprecedented. That which was there involved was not any controversy which God had with Job, but rather His contest with *Satan* in evidencing him to be a liar, disproving his charge that Job served God only for the benefit which he derived from Him for the same.

Satan's attack was not upon the patriarch, but was aimed at the Lord Himself, being tantamount to saying, Thou art incapable of winning the confidence and love of man by what Thou art in Thyself: deal roughly and adversely with him, and Thou wilt find that so far from him delighting in Thee and remaining loyal to Thee, he "will curse thee to thy face" (Job 1:11, 2:5). Thus the excellency of the divine character was thereby impugned and His honour challenged. The Lord condescended to accept Satan's challenge; and in the sequel, demonstrate the emptiness of it by delivering His servant Job into His enemy's hand and permitting him to afflict him severely in his estate, his family, and in his own person. The central theme and purpose of the book of Job is not only missed, but utterly perverted, if we regard its contents as a description of God's chastening of Job for his sins (or "self-righteousness"), rather than a vindicating of His own honour and giving the lie to Satan's accusation by the making of Job's love and faith evident. So far from his cursing God, Job said, "Blessed be the name of the LORD," and after Satan had done his worst, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 1:21, 13:15).

Third, before Satan was allowed to lay a finger on him, the Lord expressly declared of Job, "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect [sincere] and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil" (Job 1:8). Thus, at the outset, all ground for uncertainty of Job's moral condition is removed. The very fact that the first verse of the book contains such an affirmation renders it quite excuseless for anyone to conclude that in what follows, we see the Lord dealing with Job on the ground that he had done something which displeased Him. Instead, no other saint in all the Scriptures is more highly commended by the Holy Spirit. Fourth, it should be carefully borne in mind that the book closes by informing us that "the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before," that "the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning" (Job 42:10, 12, 16). Thus so far from conflicting with or contradicting our thesis that the righteous prosper, that the providential smile of God rests upon those whose ways please Him, the case of Job is a striking proof of the same!

11. The sufferings of our blessed Lord prior to the cross may present a difficulty unto a few in this connection. *There* was One who "have set the LORD always before me" (Psa 16:8) and who could aver "I do always those things that please him" (Joh 8:29). How then are we to account for the fact that He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa 53:3) that from the hour of His birth into this world unto His death, trial and tribulation, suffering and adversity, was His portion? Surely that should not occasion a problem or call for much elucidation. *All* of Christ's sufferings were due *to sin*: not His own, but his Church's. God would not allow an innocent person to suffer, much less His beloved Son to be unrighteously afflicted at the hands of the wicked. We never view aright the ill-treatment and indignities Christ experienced—both before and throughout His ministerial life—until we recognize that from Bethlehem to Calvary, He was the vicarious Victim of His people, bearing their sins and suffering the due reward of their iniquities. He was "made under the law" (Gal 4:4), and as the Surety of transgressors was therefore born under its curse. At the moment of His birth, the sword of divine justice was unsheathed and returned not to its scabbard until bathed in the blood of our Saviour.

12. Others may ask, What about the severe and protracted sufferings of the apostle Paul (2Co 11:23-27). They were neither extraordinary, like Job's, nor vicarious like Christ's! True, and that leads us to make this important observation: let none conclude from these articles that *all* suffering is to be regarded as *retributive*. That would be just as real a mistake as the one made by those who go to another extreme and suppose that all the suffering of saints is remedial, designed for purification and the development of their graces—which has provided a welcome sop for many an uneasy conscience! The subject of suffering is a much wider one than what has been dealt with in

these articles, wherein but a single phase—the retributive—has been dealt with. It would take us too far afield to enter upon a systematic discussion of the whole problem of human sufferings, yet it is necessary for us to point out several important distinctions. Some suffering is to be attributed to the sovereignty of God (Joh 9:2-3), yet we believe such cases are few in number.

Some suffering is due to heredity (Exo 20:5): the whole of Achan's family were stoned to death for their father's sin (Jos 7:24-25), and the leprosy of Naaman was judicially inflicted upon Gehazi and his children (2Ki 5:27). Much suffering is retributive, a personal reaping of what we have sown. Some is remedial or educative (2Co 4:16-17; Jam 1:2-3), fitting for closer communion with God and increased fruitfulness. Other suffering is for righteousness' sake, for the Gospel's sake, for Christ's sake (Mat 5:10-11), which was what the apostle experienced, and which the whole "noble army of martyrs" endured at the hands of pagan Rome, when Christians were cast to the lions, and equally at the hands of Papal Rome, when countless thousands were vilely tortured and burned at the stake, and which would be repeated today if the pope and his cardinals had the power, for "*semper idem*" (always the same) is one of their proud boasts. We must distinguish sharply then between "tribulation" or persecution (Joh 16:33; 2Ti 3:12) for righteousness' sake, and divine chastisement because of our sins.

There is no valid reason for why the Christian should be confused in his mind by the above distinctions: nor will he be if he notes carefully the Scripture references given to them. Our purpose in drawing them was not only for the sake of giving completeness to these articles, and to supply preachers with a rough outline on the wider subject of "suffering," but chiefly in order to *point a warning*. It is entirely unwarrantable for us to conclude from the sight of an afflicted saint that he or she has missed God's best and is being chastised for his or her offences, though very often such is undoubtedly the case. But in our own personal experience, when God's providential smile be no longer upon us, and especially if the comforts of His Spirit be withdrawn from us, then it is always the wisest policy to assume that God is manifesting His displeasure at something in our lives, and therefore should we definitely, humbly, and earnestly beg Him to convict us of wherein we have offended, and grant us grace to contritely confess and resolutely forsake the same.

The two forms of suffering most commonly experienced by the great majority of Christians are retributive—for their faults; and honorary—for the truth's sake: though where there is much of the one, there is rarely much of the other. Nor should there be any difficulty in identifying each of them, except that we must not mistake as the latter that coldness and estrangement of friends which is due to our own boorishness, for not a few pride themselves they are suffering for their faithfulness when in reality, they are being rebuked and ostracised for their uncharitableness, or "as a busybody in other men's matters" (1Pe 4:15). Close and humble walking with God, an uncompromising cleaving to the path of His commandments, is sure to stir up the enmity and evoke the opposition of the unregenerate, especially of empty professors, whose worldliness and carnality are condemned thereby. But whatever persecution and tribulation be encountered for *that* cause is a privilege and honour, for it is a having fellowship with Christ's sufferings (1Pe 4:13), and such should be "rejoicing that they [are] counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Act 5:41). It is the *absence* of this type of suffering which evinces we are hiding our colours in order to avoid being unpopular.

To sum up. Surely it is self-evident that the attitude of a holy God will be very different toward "a vessel wherein is no pleasure" (Hos 8:8) and one who is "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and *meet* for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2Ti 2:21). As we pointed out in an earlier article, an enjoyment of God's best will *not* exempt from the common trials and vicissitudes of life, but it *will* ensure having them sanctified and blest to him, as it will also deliver from those troubles and afflictions in which the follies of many Christians involve them. "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be *well* with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings" (Isa 3:10), on which the Puritan, Joseph Caryl (1602-1673), said, "They shall have good for the good they have done, or according to the good which they have done. If any object, But may it not be ill with men that do good and are good? Doth the Lord always reward to man according to his righteousness? I answer, first, It is well at present with most that do well. Look over the sons of men, and generally ye shall find that usually the better they are, the better they live. Second, I answer, It shall be well with all that do well in the issue, and for ever" (Vol. 10, p. 439).

Finally, we again urge upon young Christians to form the habit of keeping short accounts with God, to promptly confess every known sin unto Him, even though it be the same sin over and over again. There is no verse in all the Bible which this writer has made more use of and pleaded so frequently as 1 John 1:9. Failure at this point is a certain forerunner of trouble. Only too often Christians, particularly in seasons of temporal prosperity, will not take the time and trouble to search their hearts and lives for those things which displease the Holy One. Hence, it is that God so often has occasion to take His refractory children apart from the world, laying them upon beds of sickness, or bringing them into situations where they *will* "consider [their] ways" (Hag 1:5). If they then refuse to do so, they

shall “suffer loss” (1Co 3:15) eternally. It is greatly to be feared that not a few who will, by grace, enter the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ shall, through their own follies, fail to have an *abundant* entrance therein (2Pe 1:11). O that neither writer nor reader may be among those saints who will be “*ashamed* before him at his coming” (1Jo 2:28). We shall not, if we put everything right between our souls and Him in the present!

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

19. The Holy Bible, Part 11

15. *Its doctrine* is unique. Probably that heading would be more intelligible unto most of our readers had we employed the plural number. As a matter of fact, it is at this very point that its uniqueness first appears. Error is diverse and multiform, but truth is harmonious and one. Scripture speaks of “the doctrines of devils” (1Ti 4:1) and the “doctrines of men” (Col 2:22), which are “divers and strange doctrines” (Heb 13:9), but whenever it refers to that which is divine, the singular number is always used. Thus “the doctrine” (Joh 7:17; 1Ti 4:16), “the apostles’ doctrine” (Act 2:42), “sound doctrine” (2Ti 4:3), “good doctrine” (1Ti 4:6), “the name of God and his doctrine” (1Ti 6:1). Yet, like a single diamond with its many facets or the rainbow combining all the colours, the doctrine of God has numerous and distinct aspects, which to our finite minds are best apprehended singly. Nevertheless, they are not like so many separate pearls on a string, but rather resemble branches growing out of a single tree. What we term “the doctrines of grace” are only so many parts or phases of the revealed favour of God unto His people.

The more time one devotes to a prayerful and diligent perusal of “the doctrine of Christ” (2Jo 9), the more will he perceive not only the spiritual excellence of each of its parts, but also their perfect harmony, their intimate relation to one another, and the mutual furtherance of all unto the same end. It is ignorance of the whole which lies behind the supposition that any one part conflicts with another. It is designated “the doctrine which is according to godliness” (1Ti 6:3), for when truly believed, it produces and promotes piety. It is a mould into which the mind is cast and from which it receives its impress (Rom 6:17, margin). An observing eye will easily perceive that a distinct spirit attends different religions and different systems of the same religion, which, over and above natural temperament, stamps their respective adherents. Thus it was at the beginning: those who received “another gospel” received with it “another spirit” (2Co 11:4); and hence we read of “the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1Jo 4:6). Scripture doctrine produces holiness of character and conduct, because it proceeds from the Holy One.

It would require a whole volume to do justice to this argument and illustrate it at length. The doctrine of *the Godhead* is unique. That God must be one is an axiom of sound reason, for there could not be a plurality of supreme beings. But that God should be one in His essence or nature, yet three in His Persons, is something which mere reason could never have discovered. That God is Triune, a trinity in unity, transcends infinite intelligence, and therefore never originated therefrom. That it is clearly set forth in the Bible evinces its verity. The doctrine of *federal headship* is peculiar to divine revelation. That one should legally represent the many, that the many should be dealt with judicially according to the conduct of the one, is a truth which has no place at all in any human religion. Yet the Bible teaches explicitly that the guilt of Adam’s transgression is reckoned to the account of all his natural descendants, so that because of it they stand condemned before God—a thing far too unpalatable for human invention. While the merits of the obedience of the last Adam is reckoned to the account of all His spiritual seed, so that they are all accounted righteous before God—something far too wonderful to be of human contrivance.

The doctrine of divine *grace* is equally unique. It is a truth peculiar to divine revelation, a concept to which the unaided powers of man’s mind could never have risen. Proof of this is seen in the fact that where the Bible has not gone, grace is quite unknown. But the slightest trace of it is to be found in any of the religions of heathendom; and when missionaries undertake to translate the Scriptures into the natives’ tongues, they can find no word which in any wise corresponds to the Bible word “grace.” Grace is something to which none has any rightful claim, something which is due unto none; being mere charity, a sovereign favour, a free gift. Divine grace is the favour of God bestowing inconceivable blessings upon those who have no merits and from whom no compensation is demanded. Nay more: grace is exercised unto those who are full of positive demerits. How completely grace sets aside all thought of desert or worth in its subject appears from that declaration “being justified freely by his grace” (Rom

3:24); that word “freely” signifies “without a cause,” and is so rendered in John 15:25—justified gratuitously, for nothing!

Grace is a divine provision for those who are so corrupt that they cannot better their evil natures, so averse to God they will not turn unto Him, so blind they perceive not His excellency, so deaf they hear Him not speaking unto them, so dead spiritually that He must open their graves and bring them forth on to resurrection ground if ever they are to be saved. Grace implies that its object's condition is desperate to the last degree: that God might justly leave him to perish; yea, that it is a wonder of wonders He has not already cast him into hell. That grace is told out in the Gospel, which is not a message of good advice, but of good news. It is a proclamation of mercy, sent not to the good, but to the bad. It offers a free, perfect, and everlasting salvation “without money and without price” (Isa 55:1) and that to the chief of sinners. To the convicted conscience, salvation by grace alone seems too good to be true. Grace is God acting irrespective of the sinner's character and deserts, not as a Demander, but as a Giver—and that to the ill-deserving and hell-deserving, who have done nothing to procure His favour, but everything to provoke His wrath.

There are other portions of doctrine taught in the Scriptures which by virtue of their very transcendency indicate their divine source, as, for example, that of the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. It is a dictate of sound reason that if God be God—God in fact as well as in name—then He must have full control of all His creatures and regulate their every action in subservience to His own glory. It is equally self-evident that if man be created a moral agent, he must be endowed with the power of choice, and as such, be answerable unto God for all his volitions. So teaches the Bible: on the one hand, that God is working all things after the counsel of His own will, not only in heaven but also “among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand” (Dan 4:35); and on the other that “every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom 14:12). Yet no human intellect is able to explain *how* that responsibility of man consists with the fact that God has eternally predestinated his every action and infallibly directs the same without the least violence to his will.

The same seeming paradox appears in the doctrine of man's spiritual impotence and accountability: that the fallen creature is in such complete bondage to sin that he is incapable of performing a spiritual act, yea, of originating a spiritual desire or thought, and yet is justly held blameworthy for all his moral perversity and impiety; that none can come to Christ except they be drawn (Joh 6:44), yet are condemned for not coming to Him (Joh 3:18). So too the doctrine of particular redemption: that Christ acted as the Surety of and made atonement for the sins of God's elect only; yet that the Gospel makes a free and bona fide offer of salvation unto all who hear it. In like manner, the complementary doctrines of the saints' preservation by God and the imperative necessity of their own perseverance in faith and holiness: that no child of God can perish eternally, yet that he is in real danger of so doing as long as he is left in this world. Such things appear to be utterly inconsistent to human reason, which is sure evidence that no imposters would have placed so much in the Bible as is foolishness to the natural man.

Another unmistakable hallmark of the genuineness of the several branches of the doctrine of Holy Writ is the manner in which they are set forth therein. They are not presented as so many expressly defined articles of faith or items of a creed. There is no formal statement of the doctrine of regeneration or of sanctification: rather are there many brief references to each scattered throughout the whole of the sacred writings. They are introduced more incidentally than systematically. Instead of being drawn up as so many propositions, they are illustrated and exemplified in the practical history of individuals. So different from man's method, yet characteristic of the ways of God! Man reduces botany to a system, but the Creator has not set out the flowers and trees in separate beds and fields according to their species, but has distributed them over the earth in beautiful variety. In like manner, He has not gathered into one chapter the whole of any one truth, but requires us to search and collate the numerous references to it, which are mingled with exhortations, warnings, and promises. God's Word is addressed not only to our understanding, but to our conscience; and no doctrinal statement is made without some practical end being answered.

Another striking feature of Biblical doctrine is its orderly presentation. As in the processes of nature, so there is a gradual unfolding of each particular doctrine. The diligent student will find that every vital truth made known in Scripture is seen first in the blade, then in the ear, and then in the full corn in the ear. Thus, for example, with the Messianic prophecies: the germinal announcement in Genesis 3:15, the fuller revelation in Isaiah 53, the complete fulfilment in the New Testament. So with God's justifying of a sinner: briefly hinted at in Genesis 15:6, more plainly disclosed in Psalm 32:1-2, fully expounded in Romans 4. The Bible is more than a book: it is a living organism, growth marking all its parts.

All through Scripture, there is seen a systematic advance in the communication of truth. In Genesis, the basic doctrine repeatedly exemplified is that of election; in Exodus, redemption by blood and power; in Leviticus, the chosen and redeemed are brought nigh to God as worshippers. Then the complementary side of things is set before

us: in Numbers, our passage through this wilderness-world; in Deuteronomy, the enforcing of responsibility. While in Joshua, we behold the people of God entering into and enjoying their heritage. What unmistakable progress is there! The same feature marks the New Testament. In the Gospels, Christ accomplishing the work of salvation; in Acts, the proclamation thereof; in the Epistles, salvation experienced by the members of His mystical Body; in Revelation, the saved in glory around the Lamb. Such progress demonstrates both the unity of Scripture and continuity of its inspiration. Behind all the varied penmen is one Author working according to a definite plan.

16. *Its precepts.* This is another aspect of our many-sided subject which deserves as many separate articles as space requires us to condense into paragraphs. At no other point does the heavenly origin of the Bible appear more plainly than the exalted standard it sets forth and the conduct it requires from us. Therein, it is in marked contrast with the writings of all who oppose the Bible. Infidels and atheists have no ethical standard, yea, *their* code is utterly subversive of all morality. So too it differs radically from the teaching of the best of the ancient moralists and philosophers. They far surpass the most celebrated maxims of the sages and religionists, and immeasurably transcend the best statutes of all human legislation. The divine precepts embrace every relation and duty, and not only prohibit all evil, but promote all virtue. They reprehend practices which all other systems approve or tolerate, and inculcate duties they omit. The laws of man reach no farther than human action, but those of God the fountain from which all actions proceed. If the laws of God were universally obeyed, this earth would be a scene of universal peace and good will.

The world approves of ambition, the eager pursuit of wealth, fondness of pleasure, and in many instances applauds pride, ostentation, contempt of others, and even the spirit of revenge; whereas the precepts of Scripture condemn all of those in every form and degree. They require us to renounce the world as a source of happiness and to set our affection upon things above (Col 3:2). They repress the spirit of greed: "having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1Ti 6:8); "labour not to be rich" (Pro 23:4); "lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth" (Mat 6:19); and warn us that "the love of money is the root of all evil" (1Ti 6:10). They bid us "lean not unto thine own understanding...be not wise in thine own eyes" (Pro 3:5, 7), and prohibit all self-confidence: "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Pro 28:26). Not only do they reprehend the spirit of revenge (Rom 12:19; 1Pe 3:9), but they enjoin upon us to "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Mat 5:44). Such precepts as those never originated in any human mind, my reader.

In these precepts, morality and duty are advanced to their highest pitch. "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Mat 7:12). Many of them are entirely against the bent of nature, such as: "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth" (Pro 24:17); "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat" (Pro 25:21); "in honour preferring one another" (Rom 12:10); and "let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phi 2:3). None others so "holy, and just, and good" (Rom 7:12). Such statements as the following were never devised by man: "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret" (Mat 6:3-4); "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1Co 10:31); "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another" (Eph 4:31-32); "Giving thanks always for all things unto God" (Eph 5:20); "Rejoice evermore" (1Th 5:16).

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Mat 5:48). The only objection which an infidel could bring against the precepts of Scripture is that such an exalted standard of conduct as they inculcate is manifestly unattainable by imperfect creatures. That is readily admitted, yet so far from making against them, it only serves to exhibit the more clearly the design and wisdom of their divine Author. In requiring from fallen creatures that which they cannot perform in their own strength, God does but maintain His own rights, for our having lost our original power does not release us from rendering to God that realty and honour which is His due. Moreover, they are admirably designed to humble us, for our unsuccessful attempts to meet their demands make us the more conscious of our infirmities, and thereby pride is abased. They are intended to awaken within us a personal sense of dependency upon divine aid. Where there is a genuine desire and endeavour to obey those statutes, they will be turned into earnest prayer for help, nor will assistance be denied the seeking soul. Thus, the seeming foolishness of God is seen to surpass the feigned wisdom of man.

One other remarkable feature about the precepts of the Bible calls for a brief notice, namely, *the motives* by which they are enforced. No appeal is made to vanity, selfishness, or any of the corrupt propensities of our nature. Obedience to them is urged by no consideration of what our fellows will think or say of us, nor how we shall further our own temporal interests. Rather are the animating motives drawn from respect to God's will, hope of His

approbation, concern for His glory, gratitude for His mercies, the example that Christ has left us, and the claims which His sacrifice has upon us. Christians are bidden to forgive one another because God has for Christ's sake forgiven them (Eph 4:32). Wives are called upon to submit themselves unto their own husband as the Church is subject unto Christ, and husbands to love their wives "even as Christ also loved the church" (Eph 5:25). Servants are required to be obedient unto their masters in singleness of heart "as unto Christ" (Eph 6:5), while their employers are to act toward their servants in the knowledge that they also "have a Master in heaven" (Col 4:1). Christ's commandments are to be kept out of love to Him (Joh 14:15). How radically different are such inducements as those from urging that which will win the esteem of our fellows! Not that which will promote our own temporal interests, but what "is *right*" (Eph 6:1) is that which the Holy Spirit presses upon us.

A final word to the preacher. The solemn fact is that every unsaved hearer is "*dead* in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1), devoid of any spiritual perception or sensibility, incapable of any spiritual action—such as evangelical repentance and saving belief of the Gospel. Nothing short of a miracle of grace can bring a lost soul from death unto life, and nothing but the almighty and invincible power of God can accomplish the same (Eph 1:19). It therefore follows that neither your faithfulness nor your earnestness can, of itself, save a single sinner: you will simply be "beating the air," unless the Holy Spirit is pleased to graciously accompany the Word with power and apply it to the heart of your hearer. None but the blessed Spirit can effectually convince of sin, and bring an unsaved person to realize his desperate condition and dire need. Even the Word itself only becomes "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6:17) as *He* wields it, and we cannot warrantably look unto Him to do so if we grieve Him by using fleshly means and worldly methods. It is unbelief in the imperative necessity of the Spirit's operations which has caused so many churches to descend to the level of the circus, and evangelists to conduct themselves like showmen. Humbly seek His presence and blessing, and trustfully count upon the same.

AUGUST

DISPENSATIONALISM

Occasionally, a brief reference is made in these pages to the crudities and absurdities of what is termed, "Dispensationalism," for some of our readers have been influenced by its evil teaching, and it becomes duty to seek to remove this stumbling-stone from their path. Others of our friends, though unacquainted with this erroneous system, need to be warned against the same. The movement was born a century ago, and has been proudly advertised and extensively propagated under the guise of "new light on God's Word"—an opening up of "the deeper things of God" It is a system of *interpreting the Scriptures*: an unwarrantable method of segregating its contents, which, if adopted, *robs* God's people of much of His Word. Not content with rightly distinguishing between what pertained unto those under the old and new covenants, and between what is spoken to the "saints" and to "the children of disobedience" (Eph 5:6), Old and New Testament alike are broken up into sections and labeled "for the Jew," "for the Gentiles," "for the church of God," and most of it "NOT to *us*." These modern Jehoikims (Jer 36:23, 28) sever one passage from another, as they are arbitrarily alleged to belong to different dispensations or eras—both in the past and in the future.

Though posing as men of exceptional insight, as "profound Bible teachers," the Dispensationalists are far from being agreed among themselves as to how many separate eras are treated of in Scripture, or at what precise point one ends and another begins. Some claim there are but seven; others, twelve; while a few make them to be fourteen. The popular Scofield Bible teaches there are no fewer than four covered by the book of Genesis alone, and that a fifth starts in Exodus 19, under which God dealt with men on entirely different lines. Dr. Scofield says: "A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will

of God.” The first he styles, “The Dispensation of Innocency,” which “ended in the judgment of the Expulsion (Gen 3:24).” The second, “Conscience,” which “ended in the judgment of the Flood.” The third, “Human Government,” and “the judgment of the confusion of tongues ended the *racial* testing.” The fourth, “Promise,” which “ended when Israel rashly accepted the Law.” The fifth, “Law,” which “extends from Sinai to Calvary.”

Now the Greek word, *oikonomia*, meaning “house arrangement,” occurs seven times in the New Testament. The first three [occur] in Luke 16:2-4, where it is rendered “stewardship,” which connotes something radically different from an *era*! In no instance does the *time element* enter into the signification of the word! In 1 Corinthians 9:17, Paul declared “a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me”: how utterly absurd would it be to conclude that an “age” had been entrusted to him!—rather was it an evangelical stewardship or economy. “If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is *given me* to you-ward” (Eph 3:2), “whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is *given to me* for you, to fulfil the word of God” (Col 1:25). In neither of those verses is there the remotest reference to a section of history, but rather to an evangelical administration. As the business of a steward is to serve and distribute, so the apostle was called to *dispense* the Gospel to the Gentiles, to communicate to others what God had revealed to him. In Ephesians 1:10—the only other reference—the simple meaning is that God’s plan or economy of salvation is to concentrate all in Christ, all the redeemed being united to one Head. Thus, the Scriptural usage of the word, “dispensation” signifies *not* an age or era, *but* a stewardship or administration of things received by commission.

What Scriptural authority, it may be asked, do the Dispensationalists have for their startling method of exegesis?—one quite unknown to the Reformers and godly Puritans! To what passages do they point as warrant for their emphatic assertion that the greater part of the Bible pertains not to those living in this Christian era?—wrongly denominated by them as “the Dispensation of Grace.” Wrongly, we say, for as a distinguishing title, it is utterly misleading, seeing that God dealt in pure grace with all He chose in Christ, from the time of Abel until the day of Pentecost: *see* Genesis 6:8; Exodus 33:12; Jeremiah 31:2; Psalm 84:11; Proverbs 3:34; Nehemiah 9:31; and Jonah 4:2. Surely some very plain and emphatic “thus saith the LORD” is required by believers today when they are dogmatically informed that the whole of the Old Testament and much in the New has no direct reference to them. But no such divine authorization is forthcoming: nothing but an appeal to the *sound* of one verse, and a human *guess* upon another!

The first passage to which they have recourse is, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, *rightly dividing* the word of truth” (2Ti 2:15)—which they affirm to mean partitioning one part to this dispensation and another to that. Let it be duly noted that this verse is not an exhortation to God’s people at large, telling them how to handle His Word; but, instead, part of the instructions given to a minister of the Gospel; nor is there any intimation in the context that the Spirit was about to enunciate a revolutionizing principle for interpreting the Scriptures. If this verse be compared with Matthew 7:6; John 16:12; 1 Corinthians 3:2, etc., its meaning is clear. The occupant of the pulpit is to give diligence in becoming equipped to give his hearers “their *portion* of meat in due season” (Luk 12:42). For him to rightly divide the word (2Ti 2:15) is to minister it *suitably* to the cases and circumstances of his congregation—to sinners and saints, the indifferent and inquiring, babes and fathers, the tempted and afflicted, the backslider and the fallen.

The remaining passage is Luke 4:16-20, where in the synagogue of Nazareth, Christ read Isaiah 61:1, and for some reason or other stopped in the middle of verse 2. The unauthorized *guess* of the Dispensationalists is that our Lord omitted the next words “and the day of vengeance of our God” (almost always ignoring the additional “to comfort all that mourn”!), because *that* pertained to a future and distant era. Scofield’s Bible says, “Jesus stopped at ‘the acceptable year of the LORD,’ which is connected with the first advent and the dispensation of grace; ‘the day of vengeance of our God’ belongs to the second advent and judgment.” Thus, we are asked to believe that Isaiah 61:2 treats of two totally different “dispensations,” and that the word “and” in the middle of it covers a period which has already extended for more than nineteen centuries! Anything more bizarre and ridiculous could scarcely be imagined. *Facts refute it!* Did not Christ plainly proclaim “the day of the vengeance of our God” when He asserted, “And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell” (Mat 11:23)? when He pronounced “woe” after “woe” upon the scribes and Pharisees? When He declared to the Jewish nation, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Mat 23:38)? When He announced of the temple, “There shall not be left here one stone upon another” (Mat 24:2)? He *did* as certainly as He also comforted all that moment with a godly sorrow.

On those two verses (2Ti 2:15; Isa 61:2) has been based an entire system of interpreting the Scriptures, which is claimed to be essential to their right understanding and apportioning. *That is all* the support which this fanciful theory has! Never was so imposing a structure erected upon so flimsy a foundation. Never were credulous simpletons

so easily beguiled as when they believed the *ipsi dixit*⁴ of these exegetical thieves, and suffered themselves to be deprived of much of God's Word by accrediting their assertions that much in the Prophets is "Millennial," that the Sermon on the Mount belongs to "the Kingdom age," and that most of the Revelation treats only of "the Tribulation period." Cease ye from man! Receive the whole Bible as God's Word *to* you and *for* you.

As a sample of the pernicious teaching of the Scofield Bible on this subject, we cite a part of its note on John 1:18: "As a Dispensation, grace begins with the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom 3:24-26; 6:4-5). The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation, but acceptance or rejection of Christ," etc. It betrays the greatest ignorance to assert that sinners were saved in a different way under the Mosaic economy. Limiting ourselves to the Psalms, we there see that there was, then, *the same* conviction of guilt and demerit (Psa 32:3-5), the same inevitable condemnation on the ground of God's Law (Psa 143:2), the same earnest carrying for underserved mercy (Psa 51:1), faith in His revealed character as a just God and Saviour (Psa 25:8), hope of pardon, resting on propitiation (Psa 130:7), pleading of God's name or glory of all His perfections (Psa 25:11), joy and peace in believing (Psa 89:15-16), trust in God's faithfulness to His promises (Psa 89:1-2), confidence in the righteousness of Another (Psa 84:9), disowning of all ground for boasting (Psa 115:1) as there is now! Thus the *same Gospel* which was "preached...unto Abraham" (Gal 3:8) was proclaimed and believed in the days of David; and Jewish sinners were no more saved then by "legal obedience" than are Gentile sinners today. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine" (2Ti 3:16). Every part is needed by us: let none filch any from you.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

56. 2 Thessalonians 3:5, Part 4

Not only does love to God promote patience towards Him in a general way, but also specifically in connection with "waiting for Christ" (2Th 3:5). As Thomas Manton (1620-1677) pointed out, "They that love God level all their thoughts and desires to this: that God may be enjoyed, that God may be glorified." It is the yearning of the new nature to delight itself in God to the fullest measure and manner of its capacity; and therefore, the language of a saint is, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Psa 42:1). Yet how little is that longing realized in this life! How distant and how broken is our communion with Him! How much there is in our daily duties which prevents the direct occupation of the mind with His perfections! But it will not ever be thus. A full, immediate, uninterrupted, and eternal enjoyment of God in Christ is promised His people. But that will only be at Christ's coming. "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1Jo 3:2)—like Him both in holiness and in happiness. Then will He say unto each of His faithful servants, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Mat 25:21, 23); and then "so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1Th 4:17).

They that truly love God not only long for an enjoyment of Him, but they also sincerely desire that He may be glorified. The honour of God's name is valued high above that of their own. The publication of His Gospel, the coming of His kingdom, the vindication of His Truth, are what their hearts are most set upon. It is also the yearning of the new nature within which makes them strive to please Him. If the deepest aspiration of their hearts could be realized, never again would they do or say anything which brought the slightest reproach upon God's cause, but rather "shew forth" His praise continually. But alas, how often is this aspiration thwarted by the activities of indwelling sin—how often they find that the good they would do is performed not, and the evil which they hate breaks forth (Rom 7:19). And how often are they made to mourn over the corruption of the Gospel and the dishonour done to God's Truth! But it will not ever be thus. At the coming of Christ, their longings will be realized: the divine promises and threatenings will all be accomplished. "He shall come to be glorified in his saints" (1Th 1:10), and all His enemies will then be His footstool.

Where there is true love unto God, there will necessarily be the same unto *Christ*, His incarnate Son, the anointed One. "Christ" ever refers to Him in His official character as Prophet, Priest, and Pontentate. As God loves His people in Christ (Eph 1:3-5) and for His sake (Rom 8:39), so we love God in Christ. God can neither be known,

⁴ *ipsi dixit* – Latin, "he himself has said it"; any arbitrary or dogmatic statement.

approached, nor loved apart from the Mediator, the Son of His love. It is in and by Christ that God is fully declared (Joh 1:18; 2Co 4:6). They who imagine they love God, and yet at the same time regard Christ as being merely a creature—and rest not their eternal hope upon the sufficiency of His propitiatory sacrifice—are fatally deceived. Christ accounted for the hostility of the Jews towards Himself by saying, “Ye have not the love of God in you” (Joh 5:40, 42); and when they boasted that God was their Father, He told them, “If God were your Father, ye would love me” (Joh 8:41-42) and “He that hateth me hateth my Father also” (Joh 15:23). Those who love not the Lord Jesus Christ with all their heart and render not divine honours to Him are unregenerate and yet in their sins: “He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father” (Joh 5:23); “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father” (1Jo 2:23).

Christ, the Mediator, is the grand Object of His people’s affections. “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity” (Eph 6:24). He is, by way of eminence, *He* whom they love. In the Canticles, we find the Spouse speaking of Him as “my beloved,” while in the New Testament, it is predicated of all His redeemed, “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice [i.e. shall rejoice—see next verse and 1Pe 4:13] with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8). This is an essential element in the Christian character. When soul is quickened by the Holy Spirit and brought to understand and believe the Gospel, he perceives that in the Lord Jesus, there is everything that is desirable, that in Him centre all excellencies in their absolute perfection; and that the benefits He has obtained for him are inestimable in value, countless in number, and everlasting in duration. Contemplating His glory, “the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (Joh 1:14), he exclaims, He is “the chiefest among ten thousand...he is altogether lovely” (Song 5:10, 16). Reflecting on what He has done and suffered, what He has given and promised, he declares, “[I] love him, because he first loved [me]” (1Jo 4:19).

Now it is the very essence of love to seek union with its object, to be present with and have intimate intercourse with the same. So it is with the Christian in reference to the Object of his affections. Yet such longings can be but very imperfectly gratified in this life, for though faith in exercise makes Him real and precious to the soul, yet the believer sees Him through a glass darkly (1Co 13:12). The regenerated one looks forward to the time when he shall “see the king in his beauty” (Isa 33:17), see Him “face to face” (1Co 13:12). He knows that his joy will be immeasurably increased when he shall be bodily “present with the Lord” (2Co 5:8), when he shall hear His voice with his outward ear, knowing that “sweet is [His] voice, and [His] countenance is comely” (Song 2:14). Not only are believers now absent from their Beloved, but they are most imperfectly acquainted with Him. They know Him, and are following on to know Him better, counting “all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus [their] Lord” (Phi 3:8). Yet, despite their best efforts in the use of means, they know but “in part” (1Co 13:12) in reference to Him whom they love. It will be otherwise by and by.

The final state of the Christian will be very different from his present one. Here he encounters trials, numerous and painful; there, he shall enjoy the glorious and blessed effects of them (2Co 4:17). Now, complete salvation—deliverance from the very presence of sin both internally and externally, full conformity to the image of God’s Son—is but the subject of hope; then it will be wholly realized. At present, Christ is apprehended from the Word by faith, imperfectly and fitfully; throughout the endless ages of eternity, Christ will be bodily present with His redeemed, and their knowledge of Him will be direct and immediate. Then shall the desire of His heart be accomplished: “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me” (Joh 17:24). This is a season of heaviness (1Pe 1:6); that shall be one of unclouded bliss: “In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psa 16:11). Here we follow after that we may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has apprehended us; then each shall exclaim, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psa 17:15).

Now this completion of the believer’s salvation and consummation of his longings will be at the coming of Christ, which will be a personal and visible appearing of Himself: “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” (Act 1:11). “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1Th 4:16-17). “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Mat 16:27). “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col 3:4). In His glorified body, Christ will for ever dwell in the midst of His people. His coming is also designated, “the *revelation* of Jesus Christ” (1Pe 1:13) unto His people, which imports a fuller manifestation of His excellencies unto them, when a

clearer discovery will be made of His personal glory and mediatorial honours, and when they shall know Him far better and more extensively than they do now.

As faith lays hold of those precious promises, and as love fires the heart, the believer yearns for the fulfilment of them; and both stimulate hope and give strength to a patient waiting. Love craves Himself, and hope is fixed upon the realization. That expectation of hope and patient waiting is expressed in Scripture in three ways. Sometimes by *looking*: “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Ti 2:13); “unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb 9:28)—not as our Sinbearer, but as our Sinremover. Sometimes by *longing and loving*: “For in this [earthly house] we groan, earnestly *desiring* to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven” (2Co 5:2); “Them also that *love* his appearing” (2Ti 4:8). Sometimes by *waiting*: “Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Co 1:7); “Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven” (1Th 1:9-10); “For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith” (Gal 5:5). The waiting is in expectation of that which is confidently hoped for; and the longing is strengthened by the deferring of immediate realization, assured that, “For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb 10:37) beyond the ordained hour.

Nineteen centuries have passed since the Redeemer left this scene and took His place on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and scoffers still say, “Where is the promise of his coming?” (2Pe 3:4). Daily there arises from the hearts and lips of God’s people the prayer, “Thy kingdom come” (Mat 6:10; Luk 11:2), and as yet, it remains unanswered. Many have been wrongly taught to base their expectation of the nearness of Christ’s return upon the conditions obtaining in this world, and which are adduced as the fulfilment of prophecy—to the repeated disappointment of such an expectation. God’s people are to walk by *faith* and not by sight: “signs” are “not to them that believe, but to them that believe not” (1Co 14:22)! Our Lord plainly declared, “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign” (Mat 12:39; 16:4). “As Rebecca spied Isaac in the distance, so faith looks upon Christ as if He had begun His journey and were now upon the way, and makes the believer stand ready to meet and welcome Him. Though it come not to pass presently, the thing is promised, and the time certainly determined in God’s decree, which is enough for faith”—T. Manton.

Why has the Bridegroom “tarried” (Mat 25:5)? Because the ordained hour of His return has not yet arrived. “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any [of them] should perish, but that all [of His “beloved” (2Pe 3:1)] should come to repentance” (2Pe 3:9)—the full number of His elect must be gathered in before Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Christ is now building the spiritual temple of the Lord (Zec 6:13; Eph 2:21-22), adding stone unto stone (1Pe 2:5); and not until it is complete will He come and “bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it” (Zec 4:7). Meanwhile, the word to His people is, “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman *waiteth* for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (Jam 5:7-8): *not* “has drawn nigh,” as men say, but “draweth nigh”—is ever getting nearer.

The similitude of the husbandman patiently waiting for the fruits of his labours is a very apt and suggestive one. He sows his grain in faith, believing that in due course, his toil will be rewarded. He waits in hope, expecting the harvest at the appointed season. The fruit does not immediately appear: he waits for weeks and sees nothing, and for months before his crop can be garnered. But he *will* have a harvest, for God has promised the same (Gen 8:22), and then will his hope be realized. So it is with the Christian: “Light is *sown* for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart” (Psa 97:11); and when Christ appears to reward His people, the joy of harvest shall be theirs. How long did the Old Testament saints have to wait for the first advent of Christ! Yet by faith, Abraham saw it “and was glad” (Joh 8:56). Even if there should be twenty thousand years before Christ’s second advent, what is that span of time in comparison with the endless ages of eternity! If our hearts be truly set upon His appearing, then love will reduce the distance between our hope and its realization, and enable us to “wait patiently” (Psa 37:7) for Him.

The attentive reader will observe that as an alternative to “patient waiting for Christ” (2Th 3:5), the margin gives “the patience of Christ.” The Greek may be rendered both ways with equal propriety. Taking it as “the patience of Christ,” the genitive case is virtually a descriptive adjective (as in “patience of hope,” 1Th 1:3), and thus signifies *Christlike patience*. In its full meaning, it is that patience which Christ requires and inculcated, which He personally exemplified and is still exercising, and of which He is the Author and Perfecter. During His earthly ministry, Christ enjoined upon His disciples a *working* patience: “Son, go work to day in my vineyard” (Mat 21:28). “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luk 9:62). He exhorted them unto a suffering or *enduring* patience: “In your patience possess ye your souls” (Luk 21:19); “He that

endureth to the end shall be saved" (Mat 10:22). He called them to a *waiting* patience: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord" (Luk 12:35-36); "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Mat 24:42).

Christ not only inculcated that threefold exercise of patience, but He also personally *exemplified* the same. Consider His patience in *well doing*. At the age of twelve, He said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luk 2:49). Throughout His public ministry, though constantly opposed, He ever went about doing good. At night time, He declined not to see Nicodemus (Joh 3:1-21), and though "wearied with his journey" (Joh 4:6), nevertheless, He ministered in grace to the Samaritan adulteress (Joh 4:7-26). "And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself" (Mar 3:20-21). Said He, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (Joh 9:4). With unflagging diligence and unwearied patience, He continued until, at the close, He could say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (Joh 17:4).

Consider Christ's patience *under suffering*: in enduring such contradiction of sinners against Himself. "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not" (1Pe 2:23). How patiently He bore with the dullness of His apostles! Many a master would have grown weary with such pupils, but in infinite love, He continued still to teach them, though they were so slow to learn. How tenderly and longsufferingly did He deal with their unbelief! When they petulantly asked, "Carest thou not that we perish?" (Mar 4:38), He said, "Why are ye so fearful?" (Mar 4:40). When they were skeptical of His feeding the multitude, He upbraided them not (Jam 1:5). How meekly He submitted to the dispensations of God: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (Joh 18:11). Though He was complete in all graces and perfect in all active obedience, the glory of His perfections is put upon His patience under suffering: the Captain of our salvation was made "perfect through sufferings" (Heb 2:10). That unrepining endurance of afflictions was what enhanced and exalted His obedience: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb 5:8).

Consider Christ's *waiting* patience. When His brethren according to the flesh bade Him go into Judea that His disciples there might witness His miracles, saying, "For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, *shew thyself* to the world" (Joh 7:3-4). He replied, "My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready" (Joh 7:6). Not then would He vindicate Himself by an open display of His glory. The appointed Day when He would appear before the world in visible majesty and power was not then. It is written, "He that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa 28:16); and Christ rendered perfect obedience to that precept, as to every other. He was never in a hurry. When the sisters of Lazarus sent word saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick" (Joh 11:3), instead of rushing at once to Bethany, "he abode two days still in the same place where he was" (Joh 11:6). It was not through any lack of compassion for those tried sisters, but because the right moment for Him to act and "shew himself strong" (2Ch 16:9) in their behalf had not arrived. He sought "the glory of God" (Joh 11:4), and therefore, waited *His* time.

With perfect composure and confident expectation, He looked for a happy issue from His sufferings: "My flesh also shall rest *in hope*. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou *wilt* shew me the path of life" (Psa 16:9-11). What is perhaps yet more remarkable, the Lord Jesus is even now exercising a waiting patience. That little-understood expression, "the kingdom and *patience* of [the ascended] Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:9) is explained by "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth *expecting* till his enemies be made his footstool" (Heb 10:12-13). The suffering Saviour has been invested with unlimited dominion, and nothing now remains but the accomplishment of those effects which His sacrifice was designed to procure—namely, the saving of His elect and the subjugation of all revolvers against God. Christ is now calmly waiting the fulfilment of His Father's promise: that Day which God has "appointed" (Act 17:31). Here too He sets us an example.

"And the Lord direct your hearts [and mine too] into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (2Th 3:5)—such patience as He Himself inculcated and exemplified, and which He alone can bestow upon and perfect in us.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

36. Jericho, Part 6 (6:15-20)

“And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times” (Jos 6:15). Israel was now put to a more exacting test than hitherto: once a day, they had marched around Jericho for six consecutive days, but on the seventh, they must do so no less than seven times. That illustrates a principle in the ways of God. In His dealings with His people, the Lord develops their graces by submitting them to a variety of trials, which are harder and harder to bear. Was it not thus with “the father of all them that believe” (Rom 4:11)? First, Abraham was called upon to leave his native land, and go forth not knowing whither. Then, after receiving promise from God of a son, his wife for many years remained barren. Finally, when the son was given and grown, the patriarch was bidden to offer him for a burnt offering. Do not expect your path to become easier, but rather that trials will be more severe. Why so?—that the sufficiency of God’s grace may be known.

Seek to visualize the course followed by Israel on this occasion: project yourself in spirit among them, remember they were “men of like passions” with you (Act 14:15). For six days, they had apparently made fools of themselves before the eyes of the Canaanites, and they did so uncomplainingly. Six times more they repeated the process, yet without any divine intervention or the slightest outward sign of success! The powerful walls of Jericho stood as firm as ever! What was the use of making still another journey around them when twelve had produced no tangible results? But they made no demur, nor declined such a seemingly senseless waste of time and energy. Instead, they carried out their orders. That is the most remarkable example of united obedience recorded in the Scriptures—emphasized here by the Spirit’s telling us twice in this verse that “they compassed the city seven times.” Admire then the grace of God which wrought so gloriously in and through them. He it was who subdued their corruptions and made them willing in the day of His power. Though trials increase in severity, so increased grace is given to bear them!

Here, as ever in Scripture, we should discern a blessed conjunction of the divine and the human, and the latter concurring with the former. God wrought secretly by imparting to them the inclination and the impulse; they exercising the same by obedient action. Though a much more severe test was made of them on this seventh day, it is expressly recorded that “they rose early about the dawning of the day.” *That* is the spirit in which to approach our tasks and perform our duties: with earnestness and enthusiasm, and not reluctantly and tardily. The more unpleasant the task, the sooner should it be tackled and disposed of. The harder be the duty, the more energetically should it be discharged: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might” (Ecc 9:10). This is not the time for the Christian to take his ease: he must “labour” before he enters into his rest (Heb 4:11). He is not called to picnic, but to “fight the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12)—and that implies strong opposition, and calls for the putting forth of all that is within us, if victory is to be ours.

“And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city” (Jos 6:16). Note well *when* that promise was made to Israel. Not until they had fully discharged their duty, not until their obedience and patience had been severely tested, only after they had completed twelve circuits of the city—were they assured that God would deliver it into their hands. Does not that fact suggest that we make too much of the promises, or rather, too little of the precepts to which they are attached? There has been a deplorable lack of balance at this point on the part of many preachers and writers. Comforting passages have been taken from their setting, and promises severed from the conditions by which they are qualified. The consoling of saints, rather than the honouring of God, is too often the aim of the pulpit. The manifestation of “good works” (Mat 5:16) and the bearing of “much fruit” (Joh 15:8) in our lives are what most glorifies the Father.

“And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout.” Previously, they had been enjoined to preserve strict silence (Jos 6:10). They were not to shout at their own caprice or pleasure, but only as and when their leader bade them—they must be completely subservient to *his* orders. Now the time had come for them to give one loud concerted shout. Why so?—to indicate the victory was secured. But this latter command was a harder one than the former. The injunction to maintain a decorous silence was but a test of their morale; but this order for them to give a grand and general shout made a very real demand upon their faith and obedience, for it was to be made while the fortress still stood intact before them! Easy enough to shout *after* the victory, but this was to be given in assured anticipation of the same. It was faith’s shout of conquest.

It had been prophetically announced by Balaam, when he was moved to say of Israel, “The LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them” (Num 23:21).

“And the city shall be accursed [“devoted”—margin], even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent” (Jos 6:17). This brings before us the dark side of the picture: with the sole exception of Rahab and her family, all within Jericho were doomed. They were accursed, being idolaters and flagrantly wicked. As such, they were “devoted to the LORD”—that is, set apart unto destruction, to the praise of the glory of His justice. “The LORD hath made all things *for himself*: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Pro 16:4). True, God hath made difference between them according to His purpose of election; yet, whether this one was “chosen...to salvation” (2Th 2:13), or that one was “before of old ordained to this condemnation” (Jude :4), both alike were created for the divine glory. In the former, God makes manifest the richest of His mercy; in the latter, He displays the purity of His holiness and the verity of His righteousness. God’s burning hatred against sin and His power to execute vengeance on all accursed to Him were solemnly demonstrated here at Jericho.

“And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD” (Jos 6:18-19). Their being forbidden to enrich themselves by any of the spoils of war was a further testing of Israel’s obedience. Thereby, they were taught not to set their hearts upon worldly wealth, nor heap up an abundance of it for themselves. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) pointed out, “God had promised them a land flowing with milk and honey, not a land abounding with silver and gold, for He would have them live comfortably in it that they might serve Him cheerfully, but not covet either to trade with distance countries, or to hoard for after time.” There was a special reason for this prohibition being laid upon Israel here (for we do not find it repeated subsequently)—namely, that Jericho was the *first fruits* of Canaan; and therefore, it was most fitting that it should be entirely devoted unto the Lord, and its treasures consecrated unto Him.

It is to be duly noted that Joshua was not acting on his own initiative, nor was he prompted by his own understanding when he prescribed the possessions of the Canaanites, for Moses had given express orders: “The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination to the LORD thy God. Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it” (Deu 7:25-26). There we see once again how Joshua was in all things, like his Antitype, regulated by divine Law. Let us also point out how that this prohibition supplied yet another line in the typical picture which the capture of Jericho presents to us: when success attends the efforts of Christ’s servants, they must be particularly on their guard against taking any credit unto themselves—all the glory must be ascribed to God alone!

“So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city” (Jos 6:20). Here was the grand reward of Israel’s courage, obedience, and patience. Looking at it from one viewpoint, it must be said that the walls of Jericho fell down by the alone act of *God*, for no human hand or power contributed to it in the least. Yet from another viewpoint, the miracle may be justly attributed unto Israel: “*By faith* the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days” (Heb 11:30). From yet another angle, it is equally permissible and correct to say that Jericho fell in response to their implicit *obedience*. Nor is there the slightest inconsistency in those three statements: far from being contradictory, they are complementary if preserved in the above order. Though He certainly is not restricted thereto, yet God is pleased, generally, to work in response to the faith and obedience of His people.

It is a very serious mistake to suppose that faith is restricted to a resting upon God’s promises; it is equally to be exercised in complying with His precepts. Trusting God is only one part of faith’s work. It is far too little recognized that conforming to God’s revealed will is also required of faith. Faith always has to do with *God*: He is its object and His Word is its rule and regulator. It was by faith that Noah and his family were delivered from the flood; yet it was because he took to heart the warning God gave him and—being moved with fear—complied with His directions and “prepared an ark to the saving of his house” (Heb 11:7). It was by faith that Abraham received the land of Canaan for an inheritance; yet in order thereto, when he was called to leave his home, he “obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Heb 11:8). The man after God’s own heart did something more than confide in Him: “I have *believed* thy commandments” (Psa 119:66) he declared. The divine commandments, equal with the divine promises, were the objects of his faith. Are they of *your* faith, my reader?

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days” (Heb 11:30). For the benefit of the many young preachers who take this magazine, we propose to sermonize that verse, and at the same time, summarize what has been before us in Joshua 6. Let us consider *the daring* of their faith. When Israel crossed the Jordan, they, as it were, burned all their bridges and boats behind them. It was not only the “armed men,” but the whole congregation which was involved. Flight was impossible, and there was no fortress in which to shelter, nor even houses to which they could retire. They were now in the enemy’s territory, completely exposed to him. To advance unto Jericho and to march quietly around its walls (within which were “men of valour,” Jos 6:2) seemed a perilous undertaking, for what was to hinder the Canaanites from shooting at them, or casting down rocks upon them? It was truly an adventure of faith, and it is adventuresome faith which God delights to honour. Unbelief is hesitant and timorous, but daring faith is confident and courageous. “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Pro 28:1). O to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Eph 6:10)!

There are three degrees of faith. There is a faith which *reposes* on the truth of the Gospel, when the weary and heavy-laden sinner comes to Christ and rests his soul upon His atoning sacrifice. There is a faith which *reckons* counting upon the veracity and fidelity of God to fulfil His promises and undertake for us (Rom 4:21; 2Ti 1:12). There is also a faith which *risks*, which dares something for the Lord. That kind of faith was exemplified by Moses when he ventured to confront the king of Egypt, and make known to him Jehovah’s demands. This daring faith was manifested by David, when, with naught but a sling and some pebbles, he went forth and engaged the mighty Goliath. It was demonstrated by Elijah when, single-handedly, he contested with the hosts of Jezebel’s false prophets on Mount Carmel. We see it again in Daniel, when he dared to be cast into the den of lions rather than comply with the idolatrous edict of Babylon’s king; and when his three fellows refused to be intimidated by the fiery furnace. We behold it again and again in the ministry and journeys of the apostle Paul, who shrank not from perils of every conceivable kind, that he might preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

In the sequel to each of the above cases, we behold how God *honours* those trusting and brave hearts. God may indeed severely try, but in the end, it will be seen that He never confounds or puts to shame those whose eyes are fixed steadfastly upon Himself, seeking His glory. It is venturesome faith which He ever delights to reward. When those who carried the man sick of the palsy were unable to get near Christ because of the press—and therefore, broke through the roof and lowered the sufferer—so far from changing them with impudence or presumption, “when Jesus saw their faith,” He owned the same by healing the sick man (Mar 2:5). When Peter essayed to walk unto Him upon the sea, Christ rebuked him not for his rashness, but because his faith wavered. Martin Luther (1483-1546) would not be deterred by his friends from going to Worms, saying he would do so, though every tile on its houses was a devil. George Muller (1805-1898) feared not to count upon God to feed and clothe all two thousand orphans, refusing to make an appeal (direct or indirect) for funds. How such examples shame the churches today! How few are prepared to risk anything in the Lord’s service!

Consider next *the obedience* of Israel’s faith—here the most prominent feature of all, Joshua himself, the priests, the armed men, the body of God’s people, carried out all their directions to the letter. The method prescribed as the means appointed not only appeared to be utterly inadequate to reason, but senseless; nevertheless, they were strictly complied with. To do nothing more than walk around the powerful walls of Jericho, and for the priests to blow upon their trumpets of rams’ horns, seemed a childish and ridiculous performance; yet that was what they had been bidden to do. Unquestionable submission to God’s revealed will, an exact carrying out of His instructions—employing none other than those means which He has assigned—is what God requires from us, both in the performance of our daily duties and in that which pertains more especially to His worship and service. We are forbidden to lean unto our own understandings or resort unto our own devices. God has plainly declared His mind unto us in the Holy Scriptures, and they are to be the alone rule and regulator of all our actions. Implicit obedience unto the Lord is absolutely essential if we are to have *His* blessing upon our efforts.

Reader, the divine commandments and precepts often appear strange unto fleshly wisdom. How absurd did God’s order appear to the great Naaman when he was bidden to bathe his leprous body in the Jordan; yet there was no healing for him until he complied with the same. How contrary was it to all human ideas for God to send His prophet to be fed for many months by a widow who had naught but a handful of meal and a little oil; yet under Him, it proved amply sufficient. What a testing of Simon’s submission when Christ told him to let down the nets for a draught: they had toiled all night and taken nothing, yet said the apostle, “Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net” (Luk 5:5). How unreasonable it must have seemed to the Twelve when Christ bade them tell the vast multitude to sit down, and only five loaves and two little fishes were in sight! And how unreasonable does it now appear unto the majority of preachers and members to heed the call to cast away all the fleshly and worldly devices which have been brought into the churches, substituting fasting and prayer, and counting upon God to bless the preaching of His own Word.

“The obedience of faith” (Rom 16:26). Weigh well those words. Too often has it been affirmed that obedience is an effect or fruit of faith. Obedience is an essential *element* of faith: the one can no more be separated from the other than can the light and heat of the sun. Where there is no true obedience, there is no real faith Godwards. The Gospel requires obedience as truly as it does reliance, for it bids the rebel sinner throw down the weapons of his warfare against God, to repent of his wickedness, and to surrender to the Lordship and yoke of Christ. In 2 Peter 2:21 the Gospel is designated “the holy commandment”; and in 2 Thessalonians 1:8 we are told that Christ will yet take vengeance upon them “that *obey not* the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,” which goes on to give the solemn answer to that searching question: “What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1Pe 4:17)—namely, they “shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord” (2Th 1:9). The Gospel does far more than issue an invitation to “receive Christ as a personal Saviour” or offer pardon to all who do so; it first makes known the holy requirements of God for us to forsake our evil ways and submit ourselves to the just claims of Christ.

Christ “became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb 5:9): not simply those who trust in Him. In like manner, the Holy Spirit is, by God, “given to them that obey him” (Act 5:32). As we began, so must we continue, and be able to say with David, “Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments” (Psa 119:66). The commandments neither sway the conscience, nor incline the affections until they be received as from God. “As the promises are not believed with a lively faith, unless they draw off the heart from carnal vanities to seek that happiness which they offer to us; so the precepts are not believed rightly, unless we be fully resolved to acquiesce in them as the only rule to guide us in the obtaining of that happiness, and to adhere to them, and to do them”—Thomas Manton (1620-1677). To “*believe* God’s commandments” is to hear His voice in them, to submit to His authority, to have our hearts and actions governed by His revealed will in them. If we heed not God concerning our present duties, we do but deceive ourselves when we imagine we are trusting Him with respect to future privileges. We must consent to the commandments as good and blessed in themselves, and love them as issuing from our Father.

COUNSELS REGARDING MARRIAGE

Your immortal soul’s welfare, and your other concerns, have possessed a large room in my heart, and that for many years; and I often resolved that if I was spared to see you change your state of life, I would offer you my best advice as to your conduct in that new condition. I intended to have done so at some length, but you know how by a late incident, I have not access to a personal visit so as to talk freely and at large upon that head; and now bodily distress and want of time do not allow my pen to write you as my inclinations suggest: only I offer a hint or two as to your approach in marriage.

This should be a time of much prayer. As before, no doubt, you aimed at impartially asking counsel from Christ, the infallible Counsellor; He can best direct in making a choice: He knows the fittest matches for His people, He chooseth the fittest comforts and cases for them. At this time and afterwards, there must be earnest and continued prayer for the Lord’s blessing, and that the covenant-right to the new relation may be cleared, so that the married persons are to take one another out of the Lord’s hand as a covenant-mercy, and not to be satisfied with possessing each other by mutual consent and desires; not to be pleased with a mere providential right, such as the very wicked have to their enjoyments, but that they may receive one another from the Lord as gifts of His peculiar love. Christ was invited to the marriage in Cana, so I hope my dear friend is not wanting in inviting Christ to her marriage, and that He may vouchsafe His presence—so necessary to married persons. Plead the gracious promise, “My presence shall go with thee” (Exo 33:14). My soul joins with you in lifting up a prayer for the fulfilment of that promise; it is the Lord’s blessing that makes a thing a comfort: the want of it makes a thing not only a cross, but hurtful to the soul. God is to have all the glory of the comfort that at any time you may find in your new relation. We are apt to look unto second causes, and forget the First. He that sendeth the present is the Giver, and not he that bringeth it to us. It is a gain, a new talent, wherewith God intrusts you to occupy withal, and manage for His glory. He puts us into relations to see how we will glorify Him in them: there is something more required of us in them, than as single Christians. God, in your designed state, will have honour from you as a wife.

My dear friend, do not forget that the marriage state has its crosses and sorrows, as well as comforts: we sail in a troublesome and tempestuous sea, and we cannot but meet with a storm before we come to the end of our voyage—there may be a smooth, calm sea at first launching out, but afterward, many storms ere we reach the harbour. Provide and prepare for the ordinary trials in that state of life, and even in time, make the reasonable supposition of uncommon crosses, painted and edged with some circumstances of a cutting and piercing nature. I have sometimes told you that the multiplying of relations proves to be the multiplying of crosses. Happy are they that have God in covenant to support them under their heavy burdens; that sanctifies their afflictions for their spiritual good, and that sweetens their bitter cup of sorrows by assuring them that their Father’s wisdom mixed the potion, and His love is at the bottom. It is a great satisfaction in the day of trouble when the Christian can say, I am here where the Lord hath set me: I came not into this state out of mere choice, or rashly and hastily, therefore, I will bear the trials of that state with patience. Seek, O seek, a readiness of heart to part with and yield up again to the Lord your new relative, when the Lord calls for him! You know that mention is made of death in the wording of the marriage vow. The law concerning all our enjoyments is, “the LORD gave, and the LORD taketh away” (Job 1:21). In all your rejoicings, let some things of the vanity of the creature be mingled. Man at his best is altogether vanity. A preparation of the heart to hold or lose the creature is a disposition hard to be attained—to attain a moderation in our possessions and losses, in our joys and griefs: how easily do we exceed in both! O take care that our Lord Jesus Christ be no loser by your marriage, but a gainer; if He be so, He will be the only One and the lovely One, and the Best Beloved of your soul. He will not have an image of jealousy set up in His place, nor be invaded by the creature. Carnal complacency in earthly comforts weakens our delight in God. Lavishing our affections inordinately on the creature and turning Christ out of His room is a very high provocation. It is a heavy case if a relation, a comfort, proves a snare, and entrenches on Christ’s prerogative, turning Him off the throne of our heart. That must still be our prevailing temper of soul: “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psa 73:25). He must still be the Lord of our heart.

Again, Christ will be a loser by your marriage if either undue or excessive love or distracting cares in family circumstances divert you from the earnest pursuit of heavenly things. There will be a time when they shall “neither marry, nor [be] given in marriage” (Mat 22:30), and that is the happiest time. There have been many that were diligent, lively Christians in their single state who, in their married state, lost their first love to Christ and His things; and through the cares of life, or the delights of this new state, they became very cold and formal in the things of God: their spiritual life sensibly decayed—but I hope better things of you. Let Christ be a gainer by your marriage, by living more to His praise, in a conscientious and cheerful performance of the duties of personal and relative religion, and that in Christ’s name—“whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col 3:17). A holy, unaffected singularity is absolutely necessary: there is a separation from and non-conformity to the world approved and commanded by the Lord (Rom 12:2). Therefore, we must not regard what the many do, or the multitude of the Lord’s professed people say and do, but what the Lord says and enjoins. The Christian has but one rule, the Holy Scriptures of Truth, the alone rule of faith and practice. It must be a small thing with us to be judged of man, but we must aim at approving ourselves unto God. Man-pleasing has great guilt in it, but to please the Lord is the Christian’s highest ambition: let others seek the praise of men; we are to seek the praise and favour of God, and to be accepted of Him. It is a great branch of practical religion to study Providence, a dark and mysterious book: God is angry with them that mind Him not, that observe not the operation of His hand. We are to study Providence by the Word: the promise and the providence are to be compared together (Psa 77:13).

The memory of the administrations of Providence is to be understood by the Word. There are general rules laid down, whereby we may learn the meaning. We must study providences entirely—view them in their connection. When regarded separately, they appear unsightly and undesirable, but beautiful in their entire scheme. Providence is crowned by the end. We judge not of a picture by the first outline, but by its completed form. We are not to judge of Providence at the first appearance: that is to judge of it before the time. The single threads of providence may seem knotty and uneven, and administer occasion of censure; but will it not raise admiration, when they are seen all woven into a curious piece of branched work? There is a mixture of good and evil, prosperity and adversity, mutually succeeding each other in the life of every Christian. The judgment of this matter God has reserved for Himself; and He acts accordingly, as to the time, manner, degrees, and other circumstances of those changes we meet with. He determines what comfort shall be bestowed upon us, when they shall be denied us, and when they shall be withdrawn from us. He will choose our inheritance for us, and the portion of our cup. We are minors, and cannot choose for ourselves. We—all of us—have our diseases; and the great Physician knows the proper medicines to be applied, fit to work on that particular evil humour which does most abound in us, and how often to repeat these bitter potions.

All the afflictions of the Lord's people proceed from a mixture of anger and love, yet love is the predominant principle that runs through the whole; not the anger of an enemy, but the anger of a Father, who is guided by wisdom, tempered by love, and intends the good of an offending child. Yet though love is the prevailing principle when we are in the school of affliction, this is hard to be believed; but it is an obvious, certain truth, if we consider the mitigations of them as to length and shortness and the inward support afforded under them, together with God's gracious ends in them. For as many as God loves, He rebukes and chastens (Heb 12:6); and some of the children, He scourges not with a small rod, but with briars and thorns, and spares them not for their cries. We are to receive His rebukes with humble reverence, and beware of quarrelling with Him or complaining to Him. We are to consider He is a provoked Father, and yet a Father still; and the child under the rod, though a disobedient one, is a child still. O for the belief of that promise, that as to His children, He, as a tender Father, with His own kind hands, will "wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev 21:4)! They shall weep and cry for affliction and for sin no more, for in that day there shall not be found the smallest trace of either! Hallelujah! Now, with my most earnest prayers that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ may richly bless you in time and eternity and make you a blessing wherever you go, and in every relation, I am your affectionate friend, *Henry Davidson*.

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

20. The Holy Bible, Part 12

17. *Its promises*, which hold out the highest felicity of which man is capable. There is a natural instinct in the human heart after happiness, yea, after eternal happiness; yet instead of looking unto God for the same, the unregenerate try to find it in the creature. They fondly imagine that satisfaction is to be obtained in things visible, that it is to be found through the medium of the senses. But in vain do they gratify their bodily lusts: material things cannot satisfy the longings of an immaterial spirit. The springs of the earth are unable to quench the thirst of the soul. Wealth does not, for the multi-millionaire is still a stranger to contentment. The honours of the world are but empty baubles, as their securers quickly enough discover. The eager devotees of pleasure find there is no real happiness in any form of amusement. Serious souls are at a loss to know whither to look for that which will reward their quest. "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?" (Psa 4:6): they neither know what it consists of, nor where it is to be found.

Hence it is that the Lord says unto them, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live" (Isa 55:2-3). God *has* "shown" what substantial and lasting "good" consists of, and where it is to be obtained. He has made known the same unto us in the wondrous and blessed *promises* of His Word: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit" (1Co 2:9-10). This is yet another of the many excellencies of the Bible: that its promises set forth the greatest happiness of which we are capable of enjoying. The One who gave us being is alone capable of putting real gladness into the human heart. That gladness comes to us not through the delights of sense, but consists in communion with the One who is the sum of excellence.

The promises of Scripture are the assurances which God has given us that He will bestow the best of blessings, for this life and also for the life to come, on those who seek them in the right spirit and comply with their terms. From the many hundreds which are scattered throughout the Bible, we can but single out a few specimens. The sum of them is that the soul of man shall delight itself in God Himself as its everlasting portion. But that is impossible until the guilty conscience has been pacified, and that can only be through the knowledge of His forgiveness of sin. Therefore, we begin with the evangelical promises which are addressed unto sinners. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa 55:7). "Come unto me [Christ], all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat 11:28)—peace of conscience, rest of soul, joy of heart. What precious promises are those! They are the promises of Him that cannot lie.

God has solemnly pledged Himself to bestow a free, full, and eternal salvation upon every penitent sinner who comes to Him as a beggar and relies upon His Word. Not only to blot out all his iniquities, but to clothe him with the robe of Christ's righteousness, to receive him as a son, and to henceforth supply his every need. He has promised to be "a sun and shield" unto all such, to "give grace and glory" and that "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psa 84:11). The promises of Satan are lying ones and those of man are unreliable, but every one of God's is infallibly sure. The writer can testify that after forty years of Christian experience, in his travels around this earth, he has never met with a single person who trusted God and found that His promises mocked him. At the close of his long life, Joshua said unto Israel, "Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you" (Jos 23:14). So too acknowledged Solomon: "Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word" (1Ki 8:56).

"And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee" (Psa 50:15). That is a promise which every person may test for himself. We can personally bear emphatic witness that many times have we put that word to the proof and never found it wanting; and many many others too can bear witness that the living God is a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. That is an argument—a well-attested one—which no infidel can answer. There is no gain-saying the fact that thousands of men and women have called upon God in the day of their trouble and were miraculously and gloriously delivered by Him. What a monument to God's faithfulness in honouring His promises was raised by George Muller (1805-1898) of Bristol, whose two thousand orphans were daily fed and clothed in answer to believing prayer! In like manner shall every one who puts his trust in the divine promises; yet receive fulfilment of that most amazing word, "when [Christ] shall appear, we shall be like him" (1Jo 3:2)—perfectly conformed to His holy image! The divine promises unmistakably bespeak their Author to be none other than "the God of all grace" (1Pe 5:10).

18. *Its profundity.* There are books in the writer's library which thirty years ago he read with no little pleasure and profit. Some of them he has recently re-read—with mingled disappointment and thankfulness. In the past, they were helpful to him: but today, they are too elementary to be of service to him. As he outgrew the clothes of childhood, so every minister of the Gospel who continues to pursue his studies assiduously will advance beyond the primers of his theological youth. Yet no matter how intensely, nor for how many years he may study God's Word, he will never advance beyond it—either spiritually or intellectually. What a laborious and thankless task would it be to read through the ablest human production twenty times! Yet many who have read through the Bible scores of times have testified that it was more attractive and edifying to them than ever. The deeper any regenerate soul digs into the wondrous contents of the Bible, the more will he discover that it contains a boundless and fathomless ocean of Truth, and an inexhaustible mine of precious treasure.

The Bible treats of the most exalted subjects which can engage the mind of man. It rises above the merely human and temporal, and occupies its readers with God, the unseen world, and eternity. Everything is shown to be related to Him whose throne is eternal in the heavens. Human conduct is viewed not so much as it appears unto their performers and fellows, but rather as it appears in the eyes of the Holy One and in the light of the final Day of reckoning. There are many things in Scripture which are above the capacity of man to have devised—such as a Trinity of persons in the Godhead, the divine incarnation and virgin birth of Christ, the union of the human nature to a divine person, and the manner in which the Holy Spirit operates upon souls. A delineation of fallen nature is given, such as neither philosophy nor medical science could furnish; the secret workings of the heart are exposed in a manner which no analysis of the self-styled "psychiatrists" could supply. Parts of human history are chronicled not for the purpose of magnifying man, but to show how far the human race has departed from God, and what obstacles stand in the way of recovery to holiness and happiness. Heaven and the everlasting bliss of the redeemed are portrayed not in a manner to gratify curiosity; still less to appeal unto the corruptions of the natural man, but at that place into which nothing that defiles can enter.

The profundity of its teaching appears throughout the pages of the Sacred Volume. The origin of sin, the fall of man, the federal relation of Adam to his posterity, the transmission of his own nature to all his descendants, the consistency of man's freedom with God's sovereignty, his total depravity with his accountability, the justification of a believing sinner by the imputed righteousness of Christ, and his union to Him as a member of His mystical body admit of no philosophical explanation. They defy intellectual dissection and cannot be mapped out so as to show their precise points of contact or mode of union with each other. They are not reducible to a system of "a common sense," but rather are presented as awful and insoluble mysteries. They possess depths which no man can sound and heights which none can scale. Yet so far from stumbling the reverent student of the Bible, those very mysteries are just what he expects to find in a book written by the Most High. They are designed to humble the arrogance of man, by a demonstration of his intellectual limitations, and should cause him to exclaim, "O the depth of

the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Rom 11:33).

19. *Its simplicity.* Here is a remarkable phenomenon: that combined with real profundity, there is the utmost simplicity. Here again we find the same thing characterizing the Word of God as appears in His works of creation: while there is much that is occult, yet there is much more that is plain and obvious. Though there be recondite prophecies and abstruse doctrines, yet on all practical matters and points of duty, the Scriptures are so clear that they may be understood by the dullest minds. What is more explicit than the precepts? “The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple” (Psa 19:7). Though there be things in the Bible which are sufficient to confound the proudest efforts of human reason, yet it does not, as to its general tenor, require either genius or erudition to grasp its terms, but is adapted to the level of the unsophisticated. Since its contents are of universal concernment, they are presented in language suited to the capacity of all. That which concerns man’s temporal well-being and everlasting felicity is written so distinctly that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. Though there be depths which no leviathan can swim, yet the babe in Christ may safely wade in its refreshing streams.

Though the Bible is full of majesty, yet the naked Truth itself is presented in a manner suited to the meanest capacity. God graciously accommodates Himself to our limitations, setting forth His mighty power under such a figure as the baring of His arm, and represents heaven unto His people as the Father’s house in which “are many mansions” (Joh 14:2). Its very unaffectedness is perfectly suited to the gravity of its Author. Its penmen employed not the “enticing words of man’s wisdom,” but wrote “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1Co 2:4). The Bible is not written in the style of the “classics”: there is an entire absence of any appearance of art. Take the four Gospels. Their obvious design is to magnify the Redeemer, yet they never resort to the usual method of panegyric. There is a plain statement of His virtuous life, yet no eulogizing of His perfections. His most gracious works are plainly recorded, and no attempt is made to heighten their effect. His wondrous miracles are chronicled as matters of fact, to speak for themselves, no comment being passed upon them, no note of admiration affixed to them. They are sufficient to suitably impress our minds, without any remarks from the narrators. In all of this, the candid mind will perceive the signature of truth, an ungarnished account of events which actually took place.

20. *Its impartiality.* To fully appreciate this striking feature of the Bible, the reader needs to cast his mind back to the conditions prevailing in society during the centuries when it was written. Women were then the mere chattel of men, slavery was extensively practiced—and with the utmost rigour—while kings reigned with the most despotic sway. Yet the teachings of Holy Writ are without the least bias, requiring obedience to their imperial edicts from all classes alike. So far from being written to keep the oppressed in awe and subjection, rulers and ruled are the subjects of its authoritative commands. Kings and subjects are bound by the same laws, liable to the same punishments, encouraged by the same promises. God’s Word declares, “There is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:22-23); while it also announces, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom 10:13). Such declarations as those were entirely foreign to the spirit and sentiments which universally prevailed in the day of God’s prophets and apostles.

The Gospel of Christ is designed for no privileged class, but is to be preached to “every creature” (Mar 16:15). It does not prescribe one way of salvation for the rich, and another for the poor—rather does it affirm on the one hand, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” (Mar 10:23), and on the other, “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world” (Jam 2:5). There is no toadying to the scholar or sage: “Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Mat 11:25). Husbands are bidden to “love their wives as their own bodies” (Eph 5:28); and masters are enjoined to treat their servants in a manner which comports with the fact that they too have a Master in heaven with whom there is there respect of persons (Eph 6:9). No such declaration as the following was ever coined by an impostor: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

21. *Its comprehensiveness.* God’s Word is a compendious and complete Rule of life, so that we may be “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2Ti 3:17). Every truth in it is designed to influence our character and conduct. It contains full and explicit instructions for all our relative duties. No case has ever occurred, or ever will, for which adequate provision has not been made in its invaluable treasury. Here are directions suited to any situation in which we may find ourselves. Whether its reader be young or old, male or female, rich or poor, illiterate or learned, he may find that which will supply all his need. That any should read it without receiving any benefit therefrom is due alone to his own vanity or perversity. His duty and his danger are plainly marked out as though it had been written for him alone. Its very fullness proclaims its author: it is a revelation and communication from the Infinite One. Its contents have supplied material for thousands of books and matter for millions of sermons.

The Bible is more than a book: it is a library. Its history covers a period of four thousand years. Its prophecies extend to literally dozens of nations. Its teachings respect good and evil, God and man, time, and eternity. It makes known how He is to be worshipped acceptably. It informs us how His blessing may be secured upon the home. It reveals the secrets of health and longevity. Here is milk for babes, meat for the strong, medicine for the sick, relief for the weary, consolation for the dying. The particular experience of every believer is so vividly delineated therein that whoever reads it aright may discover his precise state and degree of progress. In the Bible is stored up more true wisdom, which has endured the trial of the centuries, than the sum total of thinking done by men since the dawn of human history down to the present hour. Of all the books in the world, the Bible alone can rightly be said to be comprehensive and complete. It needs no addendum. It has been truly affirmed, "If every book but the Bible were destroyed, not a single spiritual truth would be lost"—R. A. Torrey (1856-1928). The comprehensiveness and fullness of the Scriptures is yet another of their innumerable evidences which demonstrate their divine inspiration.

22. *Its conciseness.* Here is yet another remarkable feature which distinguishes the Bible from other books: though it be the most comprehensive of all, yet it is the most compact. Though it contains a complete library, having no less than sixty-six books within its covers, yet a small-print copy may be carried in one's pocket. Though there is here an amazing fullness, yet no prolixity. There is an abundance of matter wrapped up in a few words. An epitome of the heavens and earth, an account of the forming of this world into an habitable globe, the creation of its denizens, the making of man, the formation of woman, their state in Paradise, a description of the garden of Eden, are all condensed into two chapters which require but two pages! If "brevity" be "the soul of wit," then here is the quintessence of wisdom. A vivid description of the fall of our first parents, how it was brought about, with the effects thereof; to which is subjoined the appearing of the Lord, their arraignment by Him, with their trial, sentence, and expulsion from the garden, are all given within the space of only twenty-four verses: briefly narrated, yet all-sufficient to answer every purpose for which the revelation of the same is made to us.

Within the space of seven chapters, we have the creation and furnishing of the world, the apostasy of our first parents, the birth of Abel and Cain, an account of their worship of God, the murder of the former, and an enumeration of seven generations of the latter, with a description of ten of the progenitors of Christ. In addition, we find in them an account of the wickedness of men, the announcement of God that He purposed to destroy the earth and the human race; His detailed instructions to Noah for the building of an ark, in which were to be preserved himself, his family, and representatives of all living creatures. Then we have described the coming of the flood, the destruction of the old world, and the salvation of all within the ark! All the wisdom of men could not have expressed and compressed subjects of such vast importance and interests within so brief a compass. Moses himself could not, unless he had been inspired by the Holy Spirit. No book besides the Bible contains so much in so short a space. The brevity of Scripture is beyond imitation. The wisdom of God is most gloriously displayed in revealing so much in language so simply and so succinct. There is nothing within the wide range of human literature which in the least resembles this striking yet little-noticed feature.

The unique brevity of Holy Writ only becomes really apparent when we compare the biographies which men have written and the systems of religion which they have drawn up. The Jews have joined to the Scriptures their Talmuds, to which they affix equal authority—the one followed by most of their rabbis consists of twelve folio volumes; while the Romanists receive with the same veneration the writings of "the fathers," the decisions of the "councils," the vast accumulations of synodal edicts and papal decretals and bulls, and a mass of "traditions" respecting both faith and morals. Who among uninspired historians and narrators would or could have recorded the birth, life, ministry, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ in less than twelve hundred lines? Who among them could have related the history of Christianity during the first history of its most memorable years within the space of thirty pages? For fullness and brevity, dramatic description yet terseness of language, for outlines of sermons, details of miraculous conversions, intervention of angels, all pictured with a few brief touches, there is nothing comparable to the Acts of the Apostles. What but the divine Mind could have comprehended in so small a book as the Bible such an immense store of information and instruction?

WELCOME TIDINGS

The newspapers record the deeds of men, and sad reading they make; the less time we devote to their soul-defiling contents, the better for our good. The saint should be constantly occupied with the doings and dealings of *the Lord*. The more he is so, the more will faith be strengthened, the heart lifted above this sinful scene, and the soul drawn out in thanksgiving and worship unto God. It is one of the marks of the low spirituality which now obtains among Christians that songs of praise are so rarely upon their lips. Only too often there is little to distinguish *their* conversation from that of the poor worldlings. When one believer meets another, instead of alluding to the weather or making reference to the political or international situation, he should say, "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together" (Psa 34:3). Instead of talking about your trials and troubles, tell of the Lord's mercy and faithfulness to you: thereby He will be honoured, and your hearer cheered and edified.

"Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" (Psa 107:8). That "Oh" is a note of exclamation and astonishment, expressing the ardour of the Psalmist's spirit. Three times more he uses the same language in that psalm. He was troubled at the abounding ingratitude and cold indifference of those around him, and his interjection should startle and shame many of us today. God has expressly bidden us to "praise him for his mighty acts" (Psa 150:20). While He is to be highly extolled for what He is in Himself, over and above all His blessings, yet He is also to be acknowledged and adored for His wonders in creation, providence, and grace. "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts" (Psa 145:4). It is fitting that we should magnify Him for what He has done for us. "While I live will I praise the LORD" (Psa 146:2): let that be the determination of every Christian reader. "A very wretch, Lord, I should prove, had I no love for Thee; rather than not Thy praises sing, O may I cease to be."

As one of the lesser-known Puritans said, "We read of the saints having harps in their hands, the emblems of praise. But though many have tears in their eyes and complaints on their lips, few have harps in their hands, blessing and glorifying God"—Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686). We might think it almost incredible that of the ten lepers cleansed by Christ, only one returned to give glory to God; yet observation shows it was sadly true to life. It is with the object of stirring up our readers to thanksgiving unto God that we insert this brief "Welcome Tidings" every year. We desire them to join with us in praising our Master, that He continues, in His infinite grace, to use our feeble efforts in blessing one and another; that even in this dark day, He is maintaining a witness to Himself in various places. Many are the encouraging letters still coming in; from a few of which we quote.

"I have been greatly helped by reading your article, 'Sin's Presence.' I never read anything in my life so like my own experience" (Ireland). "I cannot tell you how happy we are here for you and your faithful writings in these days when we find so little sincere milk of the Word" (Wyoming). "Your *Studies* continue to be the one source in current writings in which any doctrine is taught" (New Jersey). "Your work has been a greater blessing to me than anything I have in my library, except God's Word" (Preacher in Texas). "We have a little group with whom we share your messages, and I wish you knew their appreciation of them" (Alabama). "Your articles are like the Scriptures: profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness" (Canada). "This is one young minister who thanks God for you, for your labours have blessed me and helped me to better serve Him whom I love" (Oklahoma). Thank you for the *Studies*. I never read anything so discriminating, or that opens the Scripture so minutely. May God bless you in your own experience" (England).

"It is our usual custom to remember your written ministry both morning and evening, in all the details of the work" (Australia)—we greatly appreciate such prayer-help. "I do not know where I could go for more searching teaching, spiritual help, or comfort, in present-day publications, than yours" (Florida). "God has been pleased to use my employment of your writings to the conversion and up-building of numbers of my adult Bible class" (California). "It would be a tragedy if you ceased publishing, for no other magazine or periodical gives to us such solid meat. I always look forward to your next issues" (Preacher in England). "I praise God for the practical application and exhortations to obedience which the *Studies* contain. But I seem to be a very slow pupil in working out the latter. Sometimes it seems as if I am taking one step forward with one foot, and sliding back two with the other. Yet I know by the Word, and by experience, that a cleaving unto the Lord is the divine solution. How glorious that His compassions fail not, that great is *His* faithfulness" (Washington).

"Please accept the enclosed and my deep appreciation as some of the debt I owe you and your wife for the kindness and regularity with which you have sent me your magazine. I have received much instruction, consolation, and rebuke" (Preacher in England). "I can never tell you what your writings have been to my soul: they have given me more solid comfort and stability than any other magazine I have ever had" (Preacher in Wisconsin). "O that the Lord may be pleased to spare you yet a good while for the benefit of us who need more and more of the Truth made clear through the Word and our own experience. As I follow your exercise of mind in most all your articles, I glean after you. I hardly know which I enjoy best, but if any difference, I would say 'The Life and Times of Joshua.'"

There is not one in this our day who is worth as much for both my learning and comfort as your labours through the grace and mercy of God” (Preacher in North Carolina).

“Last winter, from December to April, I was snowbound in my little home by the sea. Every evening, I studied your teachings to the enrichment of my spirit. It enables me to know what the Lord requires of me” (U.S.A.). “Both my wife and I wish to thank you for the faithful, fresh, and most helpful ministry of the Word from your pen. We have both read and re-read your *Studies*, and praise His name for the well-rounded expositions” (Preacher). “The *Studies* are very much appreciated, as their depth and detail are in such contrast to many of the present-day publications” (New Zealand). “Your expositions of the Scriptures are now appreciated more than ever. A testimony on these lines, of course, involves a cutting off from most, as they will not accept it” (Australia). The Lord be praised for such encouraging testimonies—A.W. and V. E. Pink.

SEPTEMBER

CHRISTIAN HOMES

Many of those who look no farther than the temporal happiness of individuals and the welfare of the State are not insensible of the importance and value of domestic relationships, realizing that the family is but the unit of the nation. No matter how excellent the constitution and laws of a country may be, or what its material resources, they are insufficient and ineffectual, unless a sure foundation for social order and public virtue be laid in the healthy regulation and wise discipline of its families. The nation is but the aggregate of individuals comprising it; and unless there are good fathers and mothers, good sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, there will be no good citizens. It is because our home life has so sadly deteriorated that social decay is now so far advanced, nor can it be arrested until parents once again properly discharge their responsibility. We have no hesitation in saying that the future welfare of Britain (and the U.S.A. too) is more seriously menaced by the relaxation of family government and the breakdown of home life than by any governmental incompetence or foreign hostility.

Home! How much that one word used to convey! It is still one of the most precious in the English language unto some of us. Much more so when to all its natural attractions are added the hallowed associations which gather around a *Christian* home. Is not our favourite concept of heaven embodied in that blessed expression, “my Father’s House” (Joh 14:2). Because the Christian is not his own, but bought with a price (1Co 6:19-20), he is to aim at glorifying God in every relation of life. No matter what station he occupies, or wherever he be, he is to serve as a witness for Christ. Next to the church of God, his own home should be the sphere of his most manifest devotedness unto Him. All its arrangements should bear the stamp of his heavenly calling. All its affairs should be so ordered that everyone entering it should feel, “God is here!” The supreme aim of family life should be *household piety*, everything else being subordinated thereto.

It is in the home our *real* characters are most manifested and best known. Out in the world, a certain measure of restraint is placed upon both our corruptions and our graces; but in the home, we are freer to act naturally, and it is there that our worst and best sides alike are exhibited the plainest. As a close observer and one of wide experience said, “I can never form a correct judgment of a man from seeing or hearing him in a religious meeting. He may seem a very spiritual person there, and say very beautiful things, but let me go home with him, and there I learn the actual state of the case.” He may indeed pray like a saint in the church, but unless his home be governed according to the Word of God, and his own conduct be regulated by the spirit of Christ, he fails to witness for him in that most important and influential sphere.

The reality and extent of “a work of grace” in the soul are most clearly revealed amid the petty trials of home life. In the Scriptures, we find some of its most eminent characters subjected to that severe test. For example, the Lord gave as the reason for the intimate confidences He was about to make unto Abraham, “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD” (Gen 18:19): thus his home life was as pleasing unto God as was his public. Nor are the Scriptures less explicit in showing us the disastrous consequences which attend a believer’s unfaithfulness in this relation. A notable case in point is the fearful ruin of Eli’s family: “I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not” (1Sa 3:13). The state of a *preacher’s home* is likewise made the test of his character: he is disqualified from the sacred office, unless he be “one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity,” adding, “(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)” (1Ti 3:4-5).

“What have they seen in *thine* house?” (2Ki 20:15). Have you observed, my reader, how much in the Scriptures is in the interrogatory form? How frequently the Lord used that method of teaching, both with His disciples, the masses, and His enemies! It is a most definite and searching form of instruction. A considerable part of God’s Word is made up of questions; and it is our wisdom not only to thoughtfully and prayerfully ponder them, but to regard the same as being addressed *to us* individually—and thereby bare our hearts to their penetrating power. This we should do with the “Where art thou?” of Genesis 3:9, right through the Scriptures to the “wherefore didst thou marvel” of Revelation 17:7. The one now before us was uttered by way of *rebuke* unto Hezekiah’s vanity, who—in a spirit of pride and ostentation—had shown the messengers from Babylon the treasures of his palace.

“What have they seen in *thine* house?” Let each of us take that inquiry home to himself and herself. What do visitors, especially those who spend a night under your roof, behold in thy home? Do they see a household which is well ordered, everything regulated according to God’s Word; or do they behold a scene of confusion and turmoil? Do the furnishings of your home bespeak a heart which is dead to the world? Is there a noticeable absence of that carnal luxury and fleshly display which mark those whose affections are set upon things below? On the other hand, is there that cleanliness and tidiness everywhere which honours the Lord? Nothing is more incongruous for one who professes to be a stranger and pilgrim (1Pe 2:11) here than to behold him or her endeavouring to outshine their godless neighbours in that which ministers to “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1Jo 2:16). Equally so do neglect and dirt indicate that something is wrong with the heart, and mar a Christian’s testimony.

“What have they seen in *thine* house?” Do they behold a husband “under petticoat government,” or one who takes his proper place at the head of the home? The household must have a leader; and God has committed rule to the husband, and holds *him* responsible for its management. It is no valid excuse for him to say that he is the breadwinner, and therefore, he leaves the wife to run the house. Not that he is to be a tyrant, but firm, asserting his authority, ruling in holy love. Yet unless the wife fully co-operates, much of his effort will be unavailing. Not only does God require her to be subject unto her husband’s will (Eph 5:22, 24), but to loyally support and further him—unless his requirements manifestly clash with the Bible. He is necessarily absent from the home most of the day, and therefore, it largely devolves upon her to “train up” their children “in the way [they] should go” (Pro 22:6).

“What have they seen in *thine* house?” Little or nothing to distinguish it from the worldlings?—or everything in it aiming at the glory of God? The husband and wife conducting themselves as “being heirs together of the grace of life” (1Pe 3:7)? The children brought up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph 6:4) and “in subjection with all gravity” (1Ti 3:4)—or utterly spoiled, unruly, and a trial to those who have to endure their presence? Do visitors behold an example of parental piety, of salutary discipline maintained, evidences on every side that their hearts are set upon something higher than the baubles of earth? Do they see the family altar? Do they behold the Sabbath day—duly honoured—all unnecessary cooking avoided? If they do not, they will rightly suspect the genuineness of your Christian profession! If those things be absent, be not surprised if your children abandon religion as they grow older, having no confidence in what they were reared. God search every one of us with this important question.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

57. 1 Timothy 1:17; 6:15-16

It strikes one as somewhat strange that in the three “Pastoral Epistles” (which should receive special attention from all ministers of the Gospel!), there is no record of a single prayer which their author offered for either of their recipients, though they were his own “sons” in the Faith. He did indeed inform Timothy that “without ceasing” he had “remembrance of him in his prayers night and day” (2Ti 1:3), but no mention is made of any particular requests that he offered to God on his behalf. Probably several practical lessons may be learned from that silence. But may we not see in this omission a lovely delicacy of spirit? Had the apostle specified that he was begging God to strengthen this or that grace or to equip him for the discharge of certain duties, it had possibly conveyed the impression that Timothy was defective in the one or remiss in the other. Hence the absence of what might be regarded as casting reflection upon his spirituality. But while no petitionary prayers on his behalf are recorded, two most blessed doxologies are contained in the first epistle, thereby inculcating an essential ministerial duty, and setting before this young servant of Christ an admirable example which he did well to emulate.

“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1Ti 1:17). “Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen” (1Ti 6:15-16). We do not propose to treat these two prayers singly, but rather couple them together, for they both partake of the same character, are found in the same epistle, and obviously have much in common. Moreover, it would be placing too great a tax upon the readers’ patience were we to draw out our comments upon them so as to devote two articles unto them, though we shall not be able to quite complete our remarks thereon in this one. In our contemplation of them, we shall point out first their distinctive *nature*; second, consider the *Object* to which they are addressed; third, ponder their *substance*. They are of a most elevated character, and therefore, one requires to be in a truly spiritual frame in order to appreciate their sublime contents, and to make a personal use of the same.

In the opening article of this series, we pointed out that for the purpose of general classification, the prayers of Scripture may be described as those of humiliation, those of supplication, and those of adoration. The first are expressions of repentance and consist of confessions of sin. The second are expressions of faith, wherein we make requests of God to supply the needs of ourselves or of others. The third are expressions of veneration and love, wherein we are occupied with the perfections of God Himself, and pour out our hearts in worship before Him. The last are *doxologies*, which consist of a magnifying of the divine Being, a celebrating of His excellency. Both of the passages quoted above partake of this nature. In them, God is adored for what He is in Himself. We often request the Lord, “Teach us to pray,” when we ought to entreat Him to cause us to make a better use of what He has already taught us. He has graciously furnished us with all necessary instruction—both in His own recorded prayers and in those of His apostles. In them, He has plainly revealed that our hearts should be engaged with God Himself, contemplating His wondrous attributes and seeking His glory, and not be thinking solely of ourselves and the supply of our wants.

In that prayer which Christ has given His disciples, He has supplied a perfect model. In it, He has taught us not only that it is our privilege to ask for those things which are needful for ourselves and fellow-believers, but also to ascribe unto God those excellencies which pertain unto Himself. The due consideration that He is “Our Father which art in heaven” (Mat 6:9) and the expression of the fervent desire, “Hallowed be thy name,” take precedence of a presentation of our own personal requests; while “Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever” (Mat 6:13) is to be heartily acknowledged, and a sense of the same remain upon our souls at the conclusion of our petitions. To praise and adore God for what He is in Himself is an essential part of our duty. It is required that we respond to that call, “Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise” (Neh 9:5). *That* is the chief end of worship: not to benefit ourselves, but to honour God. Many of our petitions begin and end with self, and therefore, in no wise honour God; but “who-so offereth praise glorifieth me” (Psa 50:23) is His own declaration. Praise is to be offered unto Him not because He needs it, but because He is entitled to the same, and because it is a testification of our reverence, faith, and love for Him.

The hearts of the apostles being fully taken with the glory of God, their mouths and pens frequently gave expression thereto. How often Paul breaks forth in the midst of an argument or discussion to bless God. Thus in Ro-

mans 1, when charging the heathen for having changed the glory of the incorruptible God into that of the creature, he, with holy horror at such dishonour done to the great God, interjects “who is blessed for ever. Amen” (Rom 1:25). So in chapter nine, when, after mentioning the Deity of Christ, the apostle added, “who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen” (Rom 9:5). When concluding his discussion of election and reprobation, he is filled with awe and adoration at the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, and at the absolute independency and the inscrutability of His sovereignty, then ends with “to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom 11:36). So too he concludes the epistle: “To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen” (Rom 16:27). At the beginning of the Galatian epistle, having mentioned the Father, he at once adds, “to whom be glory for ever and ever” (Gal 1:5). In Ephesians, he began with “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 1:3), and ends the third chapter with a fuller doxology. In Philippians, “Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Phi 4:20).

It was upon a narration of his conversion that Paul broke out in the first of the two doxologies which are here engaging our attention, while it was his mentioning “the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Ti 6:14) which was the immediate occasion of the latter. So too at the close of his letter to the Hebrews, after mentioning Christ, he added “to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Heb 13:21). In like manner, Peter’s heart was so full that he began his first epistle with “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope” (1Pe 1:3). In the fourth chapter, he utters praise “that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1Pe 4:11); while in the fifth chapter, he adores the God of all grace, thus, “To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1Pe 5:11). The spirit of Jude was also elevated to such a height that he concluded with “To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude :25). While John, at the beginning of the Revelation, follows the salutation from God the Father, the Spirit, and Jesus Christ with “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev 1:5-6).

What fervour of heart, elevation of spirit, homage of soul, do such utterances breathe. What an example do they set before all the servants of God to exalt and magnify Him both in their own affections and before the saints! How they rebuke the formality of the modern pulpit and the coldness which now prevails in the pew. How they give point to that injunction, “Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name” (Psa 29:2)—that is, for what He is in Himself, and not simply for His benefits. It is a duty incumbent upon us not only to return thanks unto God for His mercies, but to magnify Him for the excellence of His nature and the glory of His name. The ebullitions of praise quoted above are abstracted from all blessings received, being spontaneous celebrations of the divine perfections. They were tributes due unto God Himself. How little of this venerating of the divine Majesty is now heard! Sad indeed, is it, a mark of the low level of spirituality now obtaining in the gatherings of the Lord’s people, that they do not more resound with His praises. The absence of such evinces a grievous lack of a sense of God’s excellency and the coldness of our affections—“for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Mat 12:34), as from its straitness, the lips are silent!

When the soul be in a healthy condition, it cannot but exclaim, “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name (Psa 103:1). Yet how rarely do we now hear such language as this: “Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all” (1Ch 29:10-11). The praises rendered to God by His saints are so acceptable and delightful to Him that they are termed a “habitation” to Him (Psa 22:3); and let it be noted that that was what supported the Lord Jesus: though the nation treated Him as a “worm” (Psa 22:6)—yet no matter, so long as *Thou* art praised! Not only is praise due unto God, but it is fitting for us. Believers are “an holy priesthood” (1Pe 2:5), and therefore, are they to bring offerings unto God. The offerings they present must accord with the nature of their priesthood; and since the one be spiritual, so must be the other, and therefore are the churches enjoined: “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).

Not only should God be worshipped by us collectively in the assembly, but by the saint individually in private. “I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore” (Psa 86:12). A gracious soul cannot really contemplate God without exulting in Him and exclaiming, “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Exo 15:11). If our hearts were more engaged with the divine Being and our minds meditated upon His wondrous character, there would be more admiring of the same and sounding forth of His worth. “I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Psa 34:1). If such were the case with us, we should be lifted above the

petty trials of this life and forget our minor aches and pains. Praising and adoring God is the noblest part of the saint's work on earth, as it will be his chief employ in heaven. The unregenerate are blind to the divine beauty and incapable of perceiving His glory, much more so of rejoicing in the same. But those who behold Him with the eyes of faith as He is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ cannot but be at a loss for words to express their veneration and admiration of Him.

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1Ti 1:17); "Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen" (1Ti 6:15-16). Who is it that is thus celebrated in these verses? Different answers have been returned. Some, in view of John 1:18, say it is the Father; others, influenced by the context, regard it as the Son. While it be plain from John 5:23 that the incarnate Son is *entitled* to equal honour and homage as the Father; and while Revelation 5:12-13, compared with 4:11, makes it clear that in heaven He actually *receives* the same, yet some of the expressions made use of in these doxologies scarcely appear applicable to the God-man Mediator. He is neither invisible, nor unapproachable. Moreover, it is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, which, in His times, shall show or demonstrate "who is the blessed and only Potentate" (1Ti 6:15). On the other hand, we would not personally restrict these ascriptions of worship unto the Father; rather do we regard them as having *the Godhead* itself in view.

It seems to the writer that these doxologies contemplate the triune Jehovah, the Godhead itself without distinction of Persons, yet not viewed abstractedly; but rather as revealed in and through the Mediator, the Lord Jesus. Admittedly, that conducts us into deep waters, where it behoves us to move with the utmost circumspection, and express ourselves in holy fear and trembling. The finite mind is utterly incapable of forming any concept of the essence of God in its absolute nature, infinity, and blessedness. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit exist, and co-exist, in a manner quite incomprehensible to us. The unity of the divine essence and the trinity of Persons therein is inconceivable. We must go to the Scriptures for any proper ideas of the same. There we have the doctrine stated, but no explanation is furnished. The triune God is the great "I am": "Him which is, and which was, and which is to come" (Rev 1:4). Abstracted from all beings and things, He is of Himself and from Himself alone, self-existent, self-sufficient. But the *doctrine* of the Trinity is a revelation which God has given us concerning His nature, persons, and perfections in Christ. The Eternal Three can only be known to us in Their covenant transactions, and as They stand related to us in the Lord Jesus. We have nothing whatever to do with an absolute God, but with God as made known by that One, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col 2:9).

Christ is "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15)—not simply of the Father, but of the Godhead. The Lord Jesus is "God [the triune God]...manifest in the flesh" (1Ti 3:16). In Him, the blessed Trinity is declared and made known to Their uttermost discovery. He is the Fellow of the Lord of hosts. He is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Heb 1:3). Christ is the Medium and Mirror in which we behold Him, worshipping God in the acknowledgment of His Persons. Not that the Three Persons are swallowed up in Christ, but that Their persons and perfections are revealed in and through Him. All thoughts of the Godhead apart from Christ—and without the consideration of Him as God-man—lead only to the contemplation of absolute Deity, and leave us without any view of the ineffable subject as it is declared in the Gospel. Only as we view the Eternal Three as They stand related to us in Christ can we form any right concepts of Them. The divine Persons have manifested Themselves in the distinctive acts of Their wills toward us, in Their purpose respecting us, in the salvation planned for us before time, and its accomplishment *in Christ*. The Father's everlasting love to us is in Christ (Eph 1:3-4); and the Spirit's office and work in us is from Christ: making Him precious to us, conforming us to Him, and maintaining our communion with Him. When Christ was openly declared at His baptism, then was the whole Trinity manifest.

Turning now more directly to the substance or contents of these doxologies, we are taught by the same how we are to conceive of the Glorious One, and the worship which is due to Him for His excellency. A close comparison of the two prayers reveals that the same essential perfections of Deity are extolled in both of them, though various terms are employed, the one serving to amplify and cast light upon the other. Thus, we conceive that "the King eternal" of 1 Timothy 1:17 signifies the same as the fuller expression, "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" of 1 Timothy 6:16. The "immortal" of 1 Timothy 1:17 is clearly parallel with "who only hath immortality" of 1 Timothy 6:16. The "invisible" of 1 Timothy 1:17 is explained as "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen" (1Ti 6:16). "The only wise God" in the former has no balancing clause in the latter. The one closes with "be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1Ti 1:17); the other, with "to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen" (1Ti 1:16). Let us now endeavour to contemplate these several perfections of the Godhead, begging Him for girded minds and enlarged hearts.

“Now unto the King eternal”: “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.” That very expression, “the King *eternal*,” at once intimates it is the *essential* perfections of Deity which are here being celebrated. Therein our thoughts are lifted far above all dispensational relations or temporal administrations. Jesus Christ is indeed the “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev 19:16), but considered as God-man He has not been so eternally, for His humanity had no existence ere time began; nor was He vested with such dominion during the days of His flesh. It was after His resurrection—as the reward of His unparalleled humiliation and suffering, and in testification of His meritorious and finished work—that God so highly honoured the Son of man; and that He declared, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Mat 28:18). What has just been pointed out in no wise militates against the fact that because Christ was the Son of God incarnate, from the moment of His birth worship was due to Him; and that during the days of His public ministry, He was entitled to obedience and subjection; yet it was subsequent to the completion of His earthly mission that God crowned Him with glory and honour. Hence, it is Deity as such which is here owned and magnified as “the King eternal.”

“The blessed and only Potentate.” The reference is to the Godhead itself, without distinction of Persons. God Himself, the Triune God, is the source of all blessedness and felicity, God is self-sufficient, infinitely blessed and happy in Himself, and nothing can impair or disturb His serenity and sublimity. “The blessed and only Potentate.” God’s blessedness and *dominion* are necessarily conjoined, for the glory of God especially appears in His unrivalled sovereignty and supremacy, whereby He rules over all. It is His distinct honour that He has no equal, “For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD?” (Psa 89:6). He is the “*only* Potentate,” for all subordinate, derivative authority is from Him: “By me kings reign, and princes decree justice” (Pro 8:15); “There is no [magisterial] power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom 13:1). When Pilate said to the Saviour, “Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?” He answered, “Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above” (Joh 19:10-11). “His kingdom ruleth over all” (Psa 103:19), “and none can stay his hand” (Dan 4:35).

“The King eternal.” He is “the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity” (Isa 57:15). He is “high” in the excellency and transcendency of His being, “lofty” in His independency and dominion. Inhabiting eternity when none of His creatures had a being, dwelling all alone in His self-sufficiency. It brings real and solid peace unto a gracious soul to realize that God is upon the Throne of the universe, directing its affairs both small and great, and working all things after the counsel of His own will. As the believer views Him thus, he is constrained to say, “Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!” (Psa 113:5-6). If our hearts were more occupied with the King eternal, we should be less perturbed by what is happening in the world. Nay, more, if our renewed minds were truly engaged with the high and lofty One, our language would be, “I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever...I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty” (Psa 145:1, 5). How the elevated spirit and exalted worship of the Old Testament saints should put present-day Christians to shame!

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

37. Jericho, Part 7, Faith (6:18-26)

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days” (Heb 11:30). In our last, we contemplated the daring and obedience of Israel’s faith on this memorable occasion, and now we turn to observe the *discipline* of it. We have reference to Joshua 6:10, where we learn that the people were commanded, “Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout.” That injunction constituted a very real test of their morale. For all that host of Israel to preserve strict silence as they journeyed around Jericho’s walls was a severe restraint upon their natural inclinations—the more so that no explanation for the same was furnished them. There are times when to preserve silence is far harder than for us to express what is on our minds. The tongue is an unruly member (Jam 3:5-8), yet God requires us to control the exercise of it; and there are occasions when to be mute is a manifestation of grace which is honouring to Him. Such was the case when fire from the Lord devoured the presumptuous sons of Aaron, and their father “held his peace”

(Lev 10:3); and when David was sorely chastised by God, and he was “dumb” and “opened not [his] mouth” (Psa 39:9).

How often are the sinews of faith cut by the injudicious and unfriendly criticisms of those who pose as our Christian friends, who so far from encouraging us to adhere strictly to our Rule, would have us conform to this world! How often is the servant of Christ hindered by the God-dishonouring counsels and carnal suggestions of church members when he seeks to employ none but spiritual weapons! How much mischief is wrought by those who are perpetually talking about the difficulties confronting us! The soldiers of Christ must be trained: faith must be disciplined—each one in the ranks of the Lord’s hosts must learn there is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Ecc 3:7). The children of Israel must neither make any sally upon this garrison of the Canaanites, nor employ the customary war-cries of assailants; but, instead, preserve a solemn silence as in sacred procession they encompassed the city. That might have conveyed the impression that they were lacking in spirit and zeal, thereby rendering them increasingly despicable in the sight of their enemies, yet that was the manner in which they were required to conduct themselves. God delights to make use of contemptible instruments and means, that the glory may be His alone.

We turn next to consider the *patience* of their faith, which was conspicuously evidenced here. The walls of Jericho did not fall down the first day nor the sixth that Israel marched around them, but only “after they were compassed about seven days” (Heb 11:30). Nor did they fall the first time they were encompassed on the seventh day, but not until after seven circuits had been made on that day. No less than thirteen journeys around them were completed before the power of God was displayed. Why so?—to test their patience, as well as their courage and obedience. They must be kept waiting on the Lord. “As promised, deliverances must be expected in God’s way, so they must be expected in God’s time”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714). Israel were required to carry out the orders they had received, to persevere in the performance of duty, and leave the issue with the Lord. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, but to those who are steadfast and persistent. “It is good [though we may not think so at the time] that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation [deliverance] of the LORD” (Lam 3:26).

Observe how one Scripture throws light upon another: Hebrew 11:30 does not tell us that Israel encompassed Jericho seven times on the seventh day, nor does Joshua 6 inform us that they did so “by faith.” As pointed out previously, neither the priests nor the people received any assurance from Joshua that success would attend their efforts: they are seen there simply complying strictly and patiently with the instructions they had been given. But in Hebrew 11, the Holy Spirit discloses to us that they acted *in faith*. But how could that be, seeing they had no promise to rest upon? We wonder if that question presents any difficulty to the reader. We hope not, for it is a mistake to suppose there can be no faith in God unless we have some definite word from Him to warrant it. So far as Scripture acquaints us, when Abraham was told to sacrifice Isaac upon the altar, he received no promise that he would be restored to him again; nevertheless, it was “by faith” he offered Isaac, “accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead” (Heb 11:19). David had no promise that he would slay Goliath, yet he had full confidence that God would enable him to do so. Daniel had no guarantee of deliverance from the lions, yet he “believed in his God” for protection from them (Dan 6:23).

Faith has to do with a *known* God, with One who is a living reality to the soul, with One who can be counted upon to undertake for us. It is God in His revealed character, as made known to us in His Word, God in Christ in covenant relation to us, who is the Object of faith. True, a definite promise makes it easier to act faith, yet is not the Promiser greater than the promises, as the Giver is to all His gifts! And when we are unable to locate a promise which precisely meets our particular case, that should not deter us from having implicit confidence in God Himself. When David was guilty of the terrible sins of adultery and murder, there was no sacrifice under the law available for such crimes, but he had recourse to the known mercy of God (Psa 51:1)—the infinite mercy of an infinite God; nor was he confounded. So with Israel before Jericho. They had for years been supernaturally fed in the wilderness, and unfailingly guided by the pillar of cloud and fire. They had witnessed the miracle-working power of Jehovah acting on their behalf in opening a way for them through the Jordan. And now they confidently counted upon His showing Himself strong in their behalf in overthrowing this mighty citadel.

Yes, it was “by faith” in the daring and obedience of faith they acted, trusting God to work for them. But He was pleased to put their faith to a severe proof: they were required to exercise the “patience of hope” (1Th 1:3), to persevere in the course God had appointed, expecting Him to honour the same. Yea, to repeat their performance again and again, and still without the least sign of their efforts being rewarded. Why so?—to make it the more evident that the conquest of Canaan was of the Lord and not of them. Each fruitless journey around the city made it increasingly apparent that their enemies were to be overcome not by their power, but by God’s. What a lesson is

there here for each of us. “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him” (Psa 62:5). “And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you...blessed are all they that wait for him” (Isa 30:18). But is it not at that very point most of us fail the worst? How easily we become discouraged if our efforts do not meet with prompt success, or if our prayers be not speedily answered! How impatient is the flesh!

“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Heb 10:36). Indeed we have, for each of us is very prone to say of the Lord, as his mother said of Sisera, “Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?” (Jdg 5:28). Speaking to His disciples, the Lord Jesus declared, “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luk 18:1). How much we need to take that word to heart! How often have we “fainted” when victory was almost in sight! We become discouraged when our “Jericho” does not fall the first or second time it is encompassed. Most of us find it much harder to *wait* than to believe; yet we prove by painful experience that our fretful impatience accomplishes no good, nor speeds the desired event a single moment. Let us be more definite and earnest in begging the Holy Spirit to work this grace of patience in us, and to be “watching thereunto with all perseverance” (Eph 6:18), assured that “in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal 6:9).

Consider for a moment *the assurance* of their faith—a striking proof of which was given by them in what is recorded in Joshua 6:20. There we are told, “So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat.” Twice over in that verse does the Holy Spirit record that which was so honouring to the Lord. During all their circuits of the city, they had been bidden to maintain a complete silence, but when their obedience and patience had been fully tested, they were ordered to “shout,” for said their leader, “the LORD hath given you the city” (Jos 6:16). But mark it well, that shout must be made while the powerful walls still stood intact! It was therefore a shout of faith, of confidence in God, of full assurance that He would appear in their behalf and recompense their “patient continuance in well doing” (Rom 2:7). That shout signified their strong persuasion that victory was certain. That is what assurance consists of: an unshakable belief that God will make good His Word, a steadfast reliance that He will reward “them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6).

That concerted and loud shout of Israel *before* the actual event was one of confident expectation. By such assurance, God is greatly glorified. Though Abraham was about a hundred years old and his wife’s womb dead, when he received promise of a son, he was “fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform” (Rom 4:21). When the son of the woman of Shunem died, so strong was her faith that, though none had previously been restored to life, she confidently expected her son to be revived (2Ki 4)—her actions in verse 21 and her words in verse 23 evince the same. Of our Lord’s mother, it is said, “And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord” (Luk 1:45). To the distressed mariners, Paul said, “Be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me” (Act 27:25). What examples are these of the heart’s full reliance upon God while outward appearances were quite unpromising! When Dr. Robert Moffatt (1795-1883), the missionary who had laboured for years among the Bechuanas without seeing a single seal to his ministry, received a letter from friends in England who wished to make him a present, asking him to specify what it should be, he answered, “A communion set”! Months after, when it arrived, more than a dozen converted natives sat down with him to remember the Lord’s death. Say not “How wonderful,” but “How deplorable I do not trust Him more fully.”

Take note of the *renunciation* of their faith. Israel’s being forbidden to seize the spoils of war, and being told that the silver and gold must be “consecrated unto the LORD” (Jos 6:18-19), teaches us that real faith takes no credit unto its subject, but ascribes all the honour of its performances unto the Giver. Faith precludes all boasting and self-congratulation (Eph 2:8-9). Faith belongs to those who are “poor in spirit” (Mat 5:3). So far from promoting Laodicean self-esteem, it humbles us into the dust, causing us to look away from self unto God. It is a self-emptying grace, moving us to stretch forth the beggar’s hand. Consequently, it takes no praise to itself, but gives the whole unto its Bestower. Its language is “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake” (Psa 115:1). Blessedly was this exemplified by Abraham. When the Lord gave him the victory over Chedorlaomer, and the king of Sodom invited him to take the spoils unto himself, Abraham answered, “I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD...That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet...lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich” (Gen 14:22-23)!

Finally, behold the *triumph* of faith. “And it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city” (Jos 6:20). Nothing can stand before faith: the most formidable obstacles give way to it. “All things are possible to him that believeth” (Mar 9:23) as the whole of Hebrew 11 clear-

ly shows. The language of an expectant faith is, “Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies” (Psa 60:12), because faith looks away from self, with all its infirmities and limitations, unto the Almighty. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1Jo 5:4): when it is in exercise, the world can neither enthrall nor intimidate, for it elevates the heart above the creature. Israel’s capture of Jericho is recorded for the encouragement of the saints of all generations, and our lengthy consideration of the same will have been in vain, unless it has put new life into us as it has demonstrated afresh the invincibility of God’s purpose, the sufficiency of His power, and His readiness to put it forth on the behalf of those who render implicit obedience to His revealed will and count upon His rewarding the same.

“And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword” (Jos 6:21). For several centuries, the longsuffering of God had waited, because “the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full” (Gen 15:16). Forty years previously, in the first year of the Exodus, the Lord had solemnly threatened them, bringing the sword of Israel to the borders of Canaan; and then withdrawing His hand for a time, giving them a further respite. But the period of waiting was now over. That united shout from Israel was the sign that the Lord would tarry no longer, that the day of His wrath was come. All the guilty inhabitants of Jericho were made a solemn and awful sacrifice to the divine justice. “The Canaanites were ripe for destruction, and the Lord was pleased, instead of destroying them by a pestilence, a famine, an earthquake, a devastating fire from heaven, to employ the Israelites as the executioners of His vengeance, both for their warning and instruction, and for that of all who read these records. Had an angel been commissioned to slay them (as one did Sennacherib’s army: 2 Kings 19:35), who would have charged Him with iniquity or cruelty? In all public calamities, infants are involved and tens of thousands die with great agony every year.

“Now either God is not the agent in these calamities, which opinion—though often implied in man’s reasonings on these subjects—is not far from atheism; or they must consist with the most perfect justice and goodness. What injustice then could there be in ordering the destruction of a guilty race by the sword of His people? Or what injustice can be charged on them while executing His express commission, as ratified by undeniable miracles? It is evident that the hand of God would be far more noticed in these uncommon events than if He had destroyed His enemies by the ordinary course of second causes. The malignity of sin, with the indignation of God against sinners and His power and determination to inflict condign punishment on them would be far more conspicuous and impressive. In short, every man who by reading the account of these awful judgments, in any age or place, has been led to a deeper sense of the evil of sin, and warned to repent and seek mercy from the Lord—will to eternal ages glorify the divine Wisdom and goodness tested, in the very dispensations which embolden the blasphemies of the impenitent and unbelieving”—Thomas Scott (1747-1821). “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God” (Rom 11:22): the latter is as truly a divine perfection as is the former.

In Joshua 6:22-25, we see how the promise given to Rahab in Joshua 2:14, 19 was made good: “By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace” (Heb 11:31). Therein we behold the mercy of God unto those who really turn to and believe in Him. The inhabitants of Canaan had heard of Jehovah’s drying up the waters of the Red Sea, and of Israel’s destroying of Sihon and Og, but Rahab alone believed “that the LORD hath given you the land” (Jos 2:9). She evidenced her faith by receiving the two spies with good will, and sheltering those servants of God from their foes at the hazard of her own life (illustrating the principle that faith ever requires self-denial), and by a strict compliance with their instructions. The blessed consequence and sequel was that she “perished not with them that believed not” (Heb 11:31). The preservation of her house, which was “upon the town wall” (Jos 2:15), was as manifest a miracle as was the falling down of all other parts of it, and typified the eternal security of those who trust in the Lord.

Let us now briefly epitomize some of the many important lessons inculcated and illustrated by the contents of Joshua 6.

1. Closed doors and high walls are no insuperable obstacle when God be for us and with us: Acts 12:10 (verse 1).
2. Faith is to behold that which is invisible to sight and reason: John 8:56; Hebrews 11:1 (verse 2).
3. Divine promises do not render needless the discharge of responsibility (verse 3).
4. God pours contempt on human pride by appointing means which are contemptible in the eyes of the world (verse 4).
5. Encouragements (verse 5) are not to be bandied about promiscuously, but given to the diligent and faithful (verse 16).
6. The “ark,” in which was the Law, and the “trumpets” of jubilee, which announced the Gospel, tells of the preacher’s twofold work (verse 6).

7. The rank and file of God's people are required to support and hearten His ministers (verse 7).
8. The Lord's presence with them (Mat 28:20) is what is to animate and regulate His ministers (verse 7).
9. The position of honour is reserved for the ark and the priests: Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 (verse 9).
10. Muffle not the Gospel trumpet and let it give forth no uncertain sound: 1 Corinthians 14:8 (verse 9).
11. We must be "swift to hear, slow to speak": James 1:19; 1 Peter 3:15 (verse 10).
12. All murmuring against God and unwarrantable criticisms of His servants must be suppressed (verse 10).
13. God takes note of and appreciates thoroughness, the completing of each task assigned (verse 11).
14. Punctuality, diligence, whole-heartedness, must ever characterize the servant of Christ (verse 12).
15. Though no visible results appear, the priests must blow their trumpets "continually" (verse 13).
16. Patience and perseverance are called for in the discharge of all our God-given duties (verse 14).
17. The more trying and difficult the task, the more earnestly should we set ourselves to it (verse 15).
18. When success is delayed, our efforts are to be increased and not diminished (verse 15).
19. We must not be discouraged over the lack of early success, but let patience have her perfect work (verse 15).
20. God's promise is to be faithfully relied upon during the time when there is no indication of its fulfilment (verse 16).
21. Though saints as such have no commission to speak in public, yet their mouths are to utter the Lord's praise (verse 16).
22. It is implicit confidence in Himself which the Lord ever delights to honour—"when" (verse 16).
23. The whole world lieth in the Wicked One and is under the wrath of God (verse 17).
24. We bring trouble upon ourselves when we set our affection on earthly things (verse 18).
25. God never confounds those who trust and obey Him (verse 18).
26. The most unlikely means are used by God in the doing of great things (verse 20).
27. Eternal destruction is the portion of all out of Christ (verse 21), eternal security of those who trust Him (verses 22-23).
28. Build not again the things you have destroyed or renounced: Galatians 2:18 (verse 26; compare Psa 85:8).

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

21. The Holy Bible, Part 13

23. *Its numerics.* As the Creator has been pleased to provide an endless variety in Nature, which appeals to widely different tastes and temperaments—both as it respects objects for the eye, sounds for the ear, scents for the nose, and flavours for the palate—so He has deigned to supply many different kinds of evidence for the inspiration of His Word, which are suited to all kinds of minds. As one man prefers this dish or flower to that, so one investigator will be more impressed and convinced by a particular line of demonstration than another. It is with that fact in mind we have prepared these articles and multiplied their divisions. All of them will not appeal with equal potency and pertinency to the same reader: what strikes one most forcibly may seem jejune⁵ to another, while what one finds unimpressive may settle the matter for another. Thus with the line we are about to take up. Some may deem it fanciful and unsatisfactory, while others will not only find it interesting and instructive, but weighty and conclusive.⁶

⁵ **jejune** – not interesting or satisfying; dull or empty.

⁶ Much of Pink's article is helpful and Biblically sound. However, the editor believes that a word of caution regarding Bible-numerics is appropriate. John J. Davis and David Martyn Lloyd-Jones express sound, Biblical judgment in this matter:

"The study of Biblical numbers can be a very rewarding and satisfying venture provided it is done within the limits of sound hermeneutics. Any attempt to construct an elaborate system of interpretation based solely on the occurrence or non-occurrence of certain numbers can be very dangerous. There is a

Our present argument may be briefly stated thus: as there are innumerable evidences of mathematical design in God's works of creation, we should naturally look for the same in His Word. If the One who "tellethe the number of the stars" (Psa 147:4), who "bringeth out their host *by number*" (Isa 40:26), who "weigheth the waters *by measure*" (Job 28:25), should vouchsafe to grant the sons of men a written revelation, it is to be expected that it will bear similar evidences of numerical significance and exactitude. If the heavenly bodies move with such unfailing regularity that an eclipse can be calculated centuries in advance of its occurrence, and if all of our chronometers be set by the motion of the sun, which never varies the fraction of second, then it is to be anticipated that similar phenomena will appear in the Holy Scriptures. Nor is such an expectation disappointed: rather does receive abundant confirmation and illustration. Everywhere in the Bible there are to be found the same evidences of a supreme Mathematical Mind as appears to the careful observer in the material realm.

Those marks of mathematical design are seen both in the general and in the particular. For example, twelve is the number of rule or government. Thus, the only theocracy or nation immediately governed by God, and in whose midst He set up His throne, comprised twelve tribes; and when Christ established his spiritual kingdom upon earth, He ordained twelve apostles to be his ambassadors. Now both Scripture and common observation tell us that God has set in the heavens "two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night" (Gen 1:16). In perfect accord with that fact, day and night alike have twelve hours, each hour consisting of sixty minutes (12 x 5), with twelve months for the year. From the remotest ages of antiquity, astronomers have divided the stellar heavens into the "twelve signs of the Zodiac"; so too the vast circle of the heavens has been divided into 360 degrees or 12 x 30. But why should *twelve* thus pervade the heavens? Why not ten or fourteen? Man can give no reason. But Scripture supplies the explanation: "the heavens do *rule*" (Dan 4:26), and twelve is the number which stands for that!

The very *structure* of the Bible evinces numerical design and arrangement. First we have the five books of the Pentateuch, like basal blocks. They are surmounted by the twelve historical books—Joshua to Esther. Next follow the five "poetical"—Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon. Then come the five major prophets, succeeded by the twelve minor ones. Above these are the five historical books of the New Testament, then the twenty-one Epistles (by five writers!); and over all, like a crowning dome, the Apocalypse. It will be seen that five is the number which occurs most frequently, appearing conspicuously at four points: at the beginning of the Old Testament and at the beginning of the New Testament; the other two in the centre of the Bible! Nor will the student of Scripture be surprised at this when he discovers that the numerical significance of that number is divine *grace*. Hence five is the dominant number in the Tabernacle; and hence too, the five great offerings of Leviticus 1-6. "This mathematical law, pervading the Book, is at least a hint of the mathematical mind of the Author, who reveals the same regard to the symmetry of number and form in the material universe"—*The Bible and Spiritual Life*, Dr. Arthur. T. Pierson (1837-1911).

Before passing from the more general to the particular, let us point out that Bible numerics assure us of the integrity of the Canon of Scripture. How so? The very number of its books intimates the Canon is complete. The Old Testament has in it 39, or 3 x 13, and three is the number of manifestation and thirteen of apostasy: its dominant theme being the *apostasy* of man and of Israel. The New Testament has just 27 books, or the cube of three: 3 x 3 x 3, and three is the number of God and of manifestation—God fully and finally manifested in the incarnate and risen Christ. Now take out a single book or add one (like "Asher"), and that significance will disappear! But as it is in Nature, so with the Bible: its wonders and perfections, especially in minutiae, are only perceptible to the studious investigator. When examined under the microscope, the flakes of snow and even the scales of the herring (as the writer recently saw for himself) are formed and arranged after perfect geometrical patterns. In like manner, the number of times a word or an object is found in the Bible is always in strict harmony with the meaning possessed by that numeral.

As others before us have pointed out, *four* is the number of the world or earth. The fourth day of Genesis 1 saw the material creation completed—the fifth and sixth being devoted to furnishing and peopling the earth. It is divided into four quarters: north, east, south, west. It has four seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. The fourth

definite place for the study of the use of symbolic numbers and their theological implications. But the interpreter must beware that he be not carried away with this approach and lose sight of the all-important literal uses of numbers. In this age of semantic and theological confusion, let us who handle the Word of God do so with power and simplicity, both of which are results of the Spirit's leadership." (John J. Davis, "Biblical Numerics," *Grace Journal* Vol. 5:3, 43 [Winona, Indiana: Grace Seminary, 1964])

"I have seen many people completely side-tracked by Numerics. It is a very interesting subject. There is deep meaning in the numbers that are used in the Bible—no question about that! But what the devil does is to encourage this interest unduly. Christians read many books about it, and in the end they are able to prove almost anything. They put down certain numbers corresponding to certain particular letters, and they make their additions and their subtractions, and spend the whole of their time in playing with biblical numbers. It is a very real snare." (D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Christian Warfare: An Exposition of Ephesians 6:10 to 13* [Edinburgh; Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976], 187)

clause in the Family Prayer is: “Thy will be done in *earth*” (Mat 6:10). Four Gospels present our Lord’s earthly ministry. *Five*, which is 4 + 1 (God coming to the aid of the creature), is the number of *grace*. The fifth day’s work in Genesis 1 illustrates: “life” and “God blessed them” occurring for the first time. When Joseph signified his peculiar favour unto the beloved Benjamin, his “mess was five times so much” as that of any of his brethren (Gen 43:34); and while he provided change of raiment for them, he gave “five changes of raiment” to Benjamin (Gen 45:22). The fifth clause in the Family Prayer is “Give us this day” (Mat 6:11), etc. The fiftieth year was that of “jubilee.” Six is the number of man, for he was made on the sixth day, and see Revelation 13:18. There were six cities of refuge for the manslayer (Num 35:13). In the Bible, there are six words for “man”—four in the Old Testament and two in the New. Our Lord was crucified by men and for men at “the sixth hour”!

Seven, as is well known, is the number of perfection: how exceedingly striking then that, in Matthew 1:17, the Holy Spirit informs us there were “fourteen generations” from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonish captivity, and fourteen from the captivity till Christ: or forty-two in all. And forty-two is 7 x 6: the forty-second generation from Abraham being the perfect Man! Stand in holy awe, my reader, before such divine handiwork. *Eight* signifies a new beginning. It was Noah, “the eighth person” (2Pe 2:5), who stepped out of the ark on to the earth to begin a new order of things. Circumcision was to be administered on the eighth day (Gen 17:12). On the eighth day, Israel’s priests entered upon their service (Lev 8:33 and 9:1). On that day, the leper was cleansed (Lev 14:10-11), and the Nazarite was restored (Num 6:2, 10, 13). Just eight penmen were employed by God on the New Testament. Thirteen is the number of revolt or apostasy: “Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled” (Gen 14:4). Note Esther 3:13! In Mark 7:21-22, our Lord enumerated thirteen features of man’s apostate heart. The “dragon,” the arch-apostate, is mentioned just thirteen times in the New Testament. Much of the above has been culled in *Numbers in Scripture: Its Supernatural Design and Significance in Scripture*, by E. W. Bullinger (1837-1913)—unobtainable.⁷

The same meaning appears in their multiples. Thus, one of the significations of two is that of witness (Joh 8:17; Rev 11:3); and fourteen speaks of perfect or complete witness, as in Nehemiah 8:4, the fourteen epistles of Paul. Fifteen (5 x 3) is a manifestation of grace: 2 Kings 20:6; Leviticus 23:6, 34, 39. Ten is the number of responsibility (Gen 18:32, 24:55; Exo 34:28); and therefore, when Christ graciously fed the multitude, they were required to partake in an orderly manner—“make them sit down by fifties [5 x 10] in a company” (Luk 9:14). Jude is the twenty-sixth book (13 x 2) in the New Testament and its obvious theme is *apostasy*, witnessing unto and against it: verses 4-8, 11-13, 24—a fitting prelude to the Revelation. When the Jews treated Paul as an apostate, they laid upon him “forty stripes *save one*”—39 or 13 x 3 (2Co 11:24)! Thus, all through the Scriptures, numbers are not used haphazardly, but with design. Not only so, but though they are employed by no less than forty penmen, yet always with *uniform precision*; which can only be accounted for on the ground that all were inspired by one and the same Spirit.

24. *Its reserve.* Had the Bible been of human origin—a fraud passed off upon the world—exactly the opposite had been the case. When human writers take up matters of extraordinary interest, they deal with them dramatically rather than prosaically, and in a manner which will appeal to lovers of the sensational. But there is nothing like that in the Scriptures: instead, a holy constraint rests upon its scribes. When secular writers arouse curiosity, they endeavour to satisfy it; whereas the sacred penmen lift not a finger to remove the veil from off the mysteries of which they treat. They never draw upon their imagination, nor indulge in that speculation which is so prominent in the authors and disciples of all heathen religions. That can only be accounted for on the ground that the Holy Spirit suppressed their natural proclivities. The divine inspiration of the Bible appears not only in what is said, but equally in what is not said. Its silences are as eloquent as its speech. No explanation is given of the *modus* of the three Persons in the Godhead—in marked contrast to the presumptuous reasonings of not a few theologians, who sought to be wise above what is written.

How scanty the information furnished on many things upon which the human heart craves light! In the historical portions, men and nations appear abruptly, raising the curtain of oblivion, stepping to the front of the stage for a brief moment, and then disappearing into the unknown. It is full of gaps which human authors would have filled in. How often we wish the Evangelists had been more communicative. Had they been left to their own wisdom, the Gospels had been much fuller and lengthier! No description is given of the bodily appearance of Christ: they say not a word about His stature, complexion, or features. What is yet more remarkable—except for one brief statement concerning Him as a boy of twelve—the first thirty years of our Lord’s life are passed over in complete silence, which is very different from the fabled accounts of the Apocryphal writers! There is not the least gratifying of idle

⁷ In Pink’s day, Bullinger’s book had become scarce but has now been reprinted in numerous editions. It is online at http://philologos.org/_eb-nis. However, Bible-numerics is a controversial subject, and the editor encourages readers to approach both the subject and Bullinger with much caution. Though a learned scholar, Bullinger was known as an ultra-dispensationalist because he taught that the Gospels and Acts were under the dispensation of Law. He also taught that the church did not begin until Acts 28:28.

curiosity in the Bible, but a noticeable repressing of the same. Nothing is told us of the experiences of the soul—either redeemed or reprobate—immediately after death, and little about the Eternal State. The Scriptures are not for entertainment, but are given for practical and spiritual ends.

While Holy Writ makes known many facts unto us, it does so no further than they contribute to the design of the Holy Spirit and are for our moral instruction. Very little information is furnished, and sometimes none at all, concerning the amanuenses of God—we do not even know who wrote the books of Ruth and Esther. No account is given of the closing hours of Peter, Paul, and John. It is not thus with uninspired historians and biographers! How natural for the apostle John to have spoken of our Lord's mother in terms of adulation, yet not a word does he utter which affords the least support to the sickly sentimentality and blasphemous idolatry of the Popish Mariolatry. Only once is she mentioned after Christ's ascension, and then at a prayer meeting: not as the object of supplication, but taking her place among brethren and sisters as a supplicant (Act 1:14)! Frequent mention is made in the Gospels of "the devils" or "demons," yet nowhere are we told anything about who or what they are. There are many matters of which we should welcome information, but the Bible is silent thereon, because such knowledge respected not our duty, nor would it have promoted personal piety. But nothing concerning our well-being is omitted. An account is given of how the human race became infected with the virus of sin, but not a word on the origin of evil.

25. *Its ingenuousness.* Had the historical portions of the Old Testament been a spurious production, how vastly different had been their contents! Each of the books was written by a son of Abraham, yet nowhere do we find his posterity flattered. So far from extolling the virtues of the Jewish nation, it is uniformly portrayed as an ungrateful, rebellious, and sinful people. There is scarcely a book in the Old Testament which does not relate that which is most unfavourable and highly disgraceful to them. Nowhere do we find their bravery eulogized, and never are their victories ascribed either to their valour or military genius. Success is always attributed unto Jehovah their God. In like manner, their defeats are referred unto Him, as withholding His power because their evil conduct had justly displeased Him. Their defeats are accounted for neither by misfortune nor bad generalship, but to their own wickedness restraining a holy God from showing Himself strong in their behalf. Now such a God is not the creation of the human mind, nor are such historians actuated by the common principles of human nature. Time after time, Israel's subjugation by heathen nations is faithfully chronicled.

The Jewish historians have also impartially recorded the numerous backslidings and spiritual declensions of their own people. One of the outstanding truths of the Old Testament is the unity of God, that beside Him there is none else, that all others are false gods, and that the paying of any homage to them is the sin of all sins. Yet the idolatry of Israel is frankly and repeatedly recorded. The guilt of some of their leading men is mentioned, as that of Aaron and Solomon. Nor is there the slightest attempt made to excuse such appalling wickedness: instead, it is openly censured and roundly condemned. Nor do the writers spare *themselves* or omit that which is to their discredit. Moses concealed not the reflection cast upon his own tribe (Gen 34:30; 49:5), nor the incest of his parents (Exo 6:20), or the rebellion of his sister (Num 12:1). He failed not to set down his own faults and failings, but frankly tells us of his disinclination to respond to Jehovah's call (Exo 4:10-14), his murmuring against God (Num 11:11-14), his lack of faith after so many divine interpositions on his behalf (Num 11:13), and the Lord's displeasure against him because of his disobedience (Num 27:12-14). Such unsparing fidelity is found not in those who are left free to follow the bent of their own hearts.

The same unusual feature is found in the New Testament. John the Baptist is presented as a most eminent personage: miraculously born, the Lord's forerunner, accorded the high honour of baptizing Him. Where had human wisdom and sentiment placed him among the Saviour's followers? Surely, as the most distinguished and favoured of His attendants, set at His right hand. Whereas he was granted no familiar discourse with Him, but was treated with apparent neglect, suffered to be cast into prison through no fault of his own, and left there unvisited. See him harassed with unbelief, doubting whether or no He was the true Messiah. Had his character been the invention of fraud, nothing had been said of his lapse of faith. The same shocking unbelief is recorded of the apostles, who not only basely deserted Christ in the hour of His crisis, but had no expectation of His rising from the dead; nay, when informed that He had done so, were full of scepticism. A spurious history had omitted such glaring blemishes. But the Bible characters are painted in the colours of truth and nature, and in the unrivalled honesty of its penmen, we have yet another evidence that they wrote by divine inspiration and not by natural impulse.

26. *Its majestic tone.* If God be the Author of the Bible, we should naturally expect to find in it a loftiness of tone and majesty of diction which surpasses all human productions. And such is indeed the case, especially in those portions of it which more especially treat of the divine perfections. Amidst great plainness of speech and homeliness of expression, adapted to the meanest capacity, there is often an elevation of spirit and grandeur of language which not only command attention, but fill with reverent awe. Thus, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for

the LORD hath spoken” (Isa 1:2). “The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble” (Psa 99:1). It would be the height of presumption for any creature to speak thus, yet perfectly fitting for the Almighty to do so. When the Son of God became incarnate, the people who heard Him declared that “he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Mat 7:29); and the very officers sent to arrest Him testified that “never man spake like this man” (Joh 7:46). The same qualities mark God’s written Word. It possesses a sovereign majesty which is unrivalled and inimitable.

Though the contents of the Bible be not presented pompously or bombastically, but calmly and with becoming dignity, yet there is an unmistakable elevation of style and an august solemnity of diction which is without parallel. God speaks therein, and reveals the glory of His excellence. His supremacy, His omniscience, His holiness, His immutability, His faithfulness, His goodness and grace, are set forth in a manner worthy of Himself—yet at the same time, admirably suited to our weakness. The most laborious efforts of scholars and rhetoricians are insipid in comparison with those passages which are particularly designed to convey to us due apprehensions of the One with whom we have to do. “It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in” (Isa 40:22). Yet, “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young” (Isa 40:11).

Space permits us to adduce but one other specimen. “O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind: Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire: Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever. Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away” (Psa 104:1-7). Where shall we find in human compositions anything so chaste, so elevated, so sublime!

SLEEPY SAINTS

Part One

What an anomaly! Drowsing on the verge of eternity! A Christian is one who, in contrast to the unregenerate, has been awakened from the sleep of death in trespasses and sins, made to realize the unspeakable awfulness of endless misery in hell and the ineffable joy of everlasting bliss in heaven; and thereby brought to recognize the seriousness and solemnity of life. A Christian is one who has been taught experientially the worthlessness of all mundane things and the preciousness of divine things. He has turned his back on Vanity Fair and has started out on his journey to the Celestial City. He has been quickened into newness of life and supplied with the most powerful incentives to “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phi 3:14). Nevertheless, it is sadly possible for him to suffer a relapse, for his zeal to abate (Ti 2:14), his graces to languish, for him to leave his first love (Rev 2:4), and become weary of well-doing (Gal 6:9; 2Th 3:13). Yea, unless he be very much on his guard, drowsiness *will* steal over him, and he will fall asleep. Corruptions still indwell in him, and sin has a stupefying effect. He is yet in this evil world, and it exerts an enervating influence. Satan seeks to devour him, and unless resisted, steadfastly will hypnotize him. Thus, the menace of this spiritual “sleeping sickness” is very real.

Slumbering saints! What an incongruity! Taking their ease while threatened by danger. Lazing instead of fighting “the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12). Trifling away opportunities to glorify their Saviour, instead of redeeming the time (Eph 5:16; Col 4:5): rusting, instead of wearing out in His service. We speak with wonderment and horror of Nero fiddling while Rome was burning; but far more startling and reprehensible is a careless Christian who has departed from God, bewitched by a world which is doomed to eternal destruction. Such a travesty and tragedy is far from being exceptional. Both observation and the teaching of Scripture prove it to be a common occurrence. Such passages as the following make it only too evident that the people of God are thus overcome. “It is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed” (Rom 13:11). “Awake to righteousness, and sin not” (1Co 15:34). “Awake thou that sleepest” (Eph 5:14). Each of those clamant calls is made to the saints. So, too, is that exhortation addressed to them, “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day:

we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” (1Th 5:5-6).

Our Lord gave warning of the same phenomenon in Matthew 25:1-13, which points some very searching lessons upon the subject now before us. We do not propose to give an exposition of those verses; still less, waste time on canvassing the conflicting theorizings of men thereon. Instead of indulging in useless speculations upon what has been termed the “prophetic” application of that passage, we intend to dwell upon what is of far more practical importance and profit to the Christian’s walk. First, let it be duly noted that this parable of the Virgins was delivered by Christ not to a promiscuous multitude, but to His own disciples: it was *to them* that He said, “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Mat 25:13). Therein He exhorted His followers to maintain an attitude of the utmost alertness and diligence, to be on their guard against a sudden surprisal, to see to it that they were in a constant state of readiness to welcome and entertain Him at His appearing. In that thirteenth verse, Christ clearly indicated the principal design of this parable—namely, to enforce the Christian duty of watchfulness, particularly against the tendency and danger of moral drowsiness and spiritual apathy in the performance of our duties.

Second, we would here earnestly warn the reader against placing any restrictions on the words of Holy Writ. In the light of the Analogy of Faith—that is, the general tenor of Scripture—it is quite unwarrantable for us to *limit* the words, “wherein the Son of man cometh” to His ultimate appearing at the end of this age or world. It is our duty to make use of the Concordance and carefully observe the different senses in which the “coming” of Christ is referred to in the Word, and distinguish between them. For example, the communications of grace to God’s people in the administration of His Word and ordinances is spoken of thus, “He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth” (Psa 72:6, and compare Deu 32:2). Again, there was a judicial coming of the Lord in the destruction of Jerusalem, when He made good the threat, “What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others” (Mark 12:9)—He came not literally in Person, but instrumentally by the Romans! Then there is also a “coming” of Christ to His people in the renewed manifestations of His love: “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will *come* unto him, and make our abode with him” (Joh 14:23).

Christ has come to His people *vicariously*: as He declared unto the apostles, “I will not leave you comfortless: *I will come* to you” (Joh 14:18)—where, according to the preceding verses, the principal reference is plainly to the public descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Again, Christ often visits His people in the chariot of *His providence*: sometimes favourably; at others, adversely, as in “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else *I will come* unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick” (Rev 2:5, and compare verse 16). Again, He “comes” *instrumentally* by the ministry of the Gospel: “And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And *came* and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh” (Eph 2:16-17, and compare Luk 10:16). Again, He comes *spiritually* to those who yearn for and seek after fellowship with Him: “I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev 3:20). Finally, He will come literally and visibly (Act 1:11; Rev 1:7). Thus, it is a serious mistake to jumble together the communicative, judicial, manifestative, vicarious, providential, instrumental, and spiritual “comings” of Christ; as it also is to *restrict* to His second advent every verse where it speaks of His “coming” or appearing.

In like manner, it is equally wrong for us to limit our Lord’s “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Mat 25:13) to a “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Ti 2:13). Most of the other seven things mentioned above are *not* to be excluded therefrom. We are to be on the *qui vive* (or alert) for His approaches to us in the means of grace, attentive to His appearings before us in providence, recognize Him in the ministry of the Gospel, and expectantly wait His visits of intimate fellowship. The Christian’s continuance in this world is the period of both his “watching” and his “waiting” for removal therefrom; and since he knows not whether that will be by death or by his being caught up to meet the Lord in the air, he is to be prepared for either event—if he be so for the former, he will be for the latter. This call for him to “watch” signifies that he is to “keep [his] heart with all diligence” (Pro 4:23), “keep [himself] from idols” (1Jo 5:21), “keep [himself] in the love of God” (Jude 21), “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: [knowing that though] the spirit indeed is willing...the flesh is weak” (Mat 26:41). In a word, that exhortation requires us to attend to the interests of our souls with unremitting diligence and circumspection.

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom” (Mat 25:1). This is not said to be a similitude of the attitude of “the Bride” toward her Bridegroom, for the scope of it is wider, taking in the whole sphere of Christian profession. Hence in what follows, the “virgins” are

divided into two groups—the regenerate and the unregenerate. Thus, it would have been inaccurate to designate the whole of them “the Bride”! It is therefore a discriminating parable, like that of the wheat and tares, and that of the good and bad fish in Matthew 13. If it be asked, Why should Christ address such a parable unto the apostles, the answer is, Because there was a Judas among them! It is outside our present scope to consider the “foolish” virgins: suffice it to say that externally, they differed not from the “wise” ones. They represent not the irreligious and immoral, but unsaved church members—those who have “escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the [not “their”!] Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 2:20), but who have never experienced a miracle of grace in their hearts. Though having lamps in their hands, they had no oil “in their vessels” (Mat 25:3-4)—no grace in their souls! This calls for writer and reader to make honest and careful examination of themselves, to “give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (2Pe 1:10).

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins.” Many and varied are the figures used to describe the disciples of Christ. They are spoken of as salt, as lights, as sheep, as living stones, as kings and priests. When complete, and in its corporeal capacity, the Church is referred to as the Lamb’s “Wife”; but individually, they are termed “the virgins her companions” (Psa 45:14, and compare Song 8:13; Rev 1:9). They are called “virgins” for the purity of their faith: for none—no matter how pleasing is his personality or irreproachable his outward conduct—who is fundamentally unsound is to be regarded as a Christian. Thus the apostle, when expostulating with a local church for giving a hearing to false teachers—told them, “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have [ministerially] espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2Co 11:2). Again: they are called “virgins” for the purity of their worship. God is a jealous God and will not brook any rival; and therefore, we find all through Scripture that idolatry is expressed as harlotry—hence the vile and corrupt Papacy is designated, “THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS” (Rev 17:5). Once more: they are called “virgins” for the purity of their walk, refusing friendship and fellowship with the adulterous world, and cleaving to Christ—“they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” (Rev 14:4).

The saints are expressly bidden *to go forth* to meet the Bridegroom. “Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals” (Song 3:11)—an exceedingly interesting and blessed verse which we must not dwell upon. It is the antitypical Solomon, the Prince of Peace, who is here in view. His “mother” is the natural Israel, from whom according to the flesh He sprang—a figure of the spiritual Israel, in whose hearts He is “formed” (Gal 4:19). The “day of his espousals” was when Israel entered into a solemn covenant with the Lord (Jer 2:2, and see Exo 24:3-8 for the historical reference)—adumbrating our marital union with Christ, when we “gave [our] own selves to the Lord” (2Co 8:5) and were “joined unto the Lord” (1Co 6:17), crowning Him the King of our hearts and lives. Here the “daughters of Jerusalem”—the same as the “virgins”—are bidden to “behold” their majestic and glorious King: to attentively consider the excellency of His person, to be engaged with His perfections, to admire and adore the One who is “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16). But in order thereto, there must be active effort on their part. Not to the dilatory does Christ reveal Himself (Song 3:1).

“Which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.” The taking of their lamps signifies making an open profession of their faith. They were not secret disciples, hiding their light under a bushel, but those who were unashamed to be known as the followers of Christ. Luke 12:35-36 serves to explain this force of the figure: “Let your loins be girded about, and your *lights* [more literally] burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord.” Of His forerunner, Christ said, “He was a burning and a shining light” (Joh 5:35). But other thoughts are suggested and things implied by these virgins taking their lamps. It tells us they availed themselves of suitable means, making provision against the darkness which they would encounter. The principal means for the Christian is the Word, which is “a light [same Greek word as in Luk 12:35 and Joh 5:35] that shineth in a dark place” (2Pe 1:19). It also shows they had no intention of going to sleep, but purposed to remain vigilant; which renders more searching what follows. It also intimates they were sensible of the difficulty of their task. Only one who, after a full day’s work, has sat out the night by a sick bed knows how hard it is to keep alert throughout the long hours of darkness.

It needs to be clearly realized by the believer that the Word is supplied him not only as “bread” to feed upon, a “sword” for him to employ in repulsing the attacks of his enemies, but also as an illuminator: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet” (Psa 119:105), revealing those paths in which I must walk if I would meet with the eternal Lover of my soul. “And went forth to meet the bridegroom” (Mat 25:1). *That* must ever be our object in the use of means and attendance upon the administration of the divine ordinances. That going forth to meet the Lord is to be understood as expressing both external and internal action. Externally, it signifies separation from the world, especially its pleasures, for Christ will not be met with while we waste our time engaging in them. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers...come out from among them” (2Co 6:14-17) must be heeded if we would “meet the bridegroom” (Mat 25:1). More particularly, their going forth denoted a turning of their backs upon the apostate ec-

clesiastical system: Christ had informed His disciples that he had abandoned a Judaism which had rejected Him (Mat 23:37-38), so if they would meet with Him, they too must “go forth therefore unto him without the camp” (Heb 13:13). The same is true now.

If the Christian would meet with and have blessed fellowship with Christ, he must not only walk in separation from all intimacy with the profane world, but turn his back on every section of the religious world which gives not Christ the pre-eminence. That calls for the denying of self and “bearing his reproach” (Heb 13:13). Our readiness so to do will depend upon how highly we esteem Him. *Internally*, it signified the activity of their affections. It imports their delight in Him, that He was the Object of their desires and expectations. It connotes the exercise of their graces upon Christ, an outgoing of the whole soul after Him; such a going out after Him as David had: “One thing [supremely] have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD [the place of communion] all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD” (Psa 27:4). There can be no soul-satisfying beholding of His excellency, unless there be deep longing for and earnest seeking after Him, which is what is purported by the “went forth to *meet* the bridegroom!” (Mat 25:1).

SATAN’S SIEVE

Luke 22:31-32

If it be asked, Why did not Christ prevent what He foresaw, and could hinder? I answer: 1. The grace of God is not debtor to any man—God cannot be unrighteous in suffering that which He is not bound or obliged to hinder. 2. God would not suffer evil in or upon His children if He did not know how to bring good out of evil, yea, the greatest good out of the greatest evil. God suffers temptations to take place for many good reasons, but here I shall only name from Simon’s case. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1Co 10:12). Here we may remark that those whom God advances to the greatest excellencies, Satan assaults with the greatest violence. As the sun beats hottest upon the rising bank, so is Satan’s envy leveled most against those whom God hath advanced above others—either in grace or honour. God had no sooner marked out Job for his uprightness, but Satan marked him out for envy and mischief. When Joshua stood before the angel of the Lord, Satan stood at his right hand to resist him (Zec 3:1). Yea, he set upon Christ with all his forces (Mat 4:1-11).

Why does God permit this? 1. For the trial and so for the honour of His graces in them. “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1Pe 1:6-7). Thus He turned Satan loose upon Job. As a cutler taking a sword and striking it against an anvil knows what metal it is made of, so God knows what metal His servants are made of; and what Satan can do, what he would do, and what he shall do. By this means, God designs the advancement of His own glory, in the victory of faith in the issue: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown” (Jam 1:12). 2. God’s grace is increased in His children by being exercised. Temptation is a school for training Christ’s soldiers: as a sword glisters by using, which would rust in the scabbard. Exercise is good for our spiritual health; especially such as God designs for high and honourable service—He will have them well tried; as we dig low when we have a mind to build high.

The above is a brief extract from a sermon by Ralph Erskine (1685-1752), 1742.

OCTOBER

CHRISTIAN EMPLOYEES

How intensely practical is the Bible! It not only reveals to us the way to heaven, but is also full of instruction concerning how we are to live here upon earth. God has given His Word unto us to be “a lamp unto [our] feet, and a light unto [our] path” (Psa 119:105): that is, for the regulating of our *daily walk*. It makes known how God requires us to conduct ourselves in all the varied relations of life. Some of us are single, others married; some are children, others parents; some are masters, others servants. Scripture supplies definite precept and rules, motives and encouragements for each alike. It not only teaches us how we are to behave in the church and in the home, but equally so in the workshop and in the kitchen, supplying necessary exhortations to both employers and employees—clear proof God has not designed that all men should be equal, and sure index that neither “Socialism” nor “Communism” will ever universally prevail. Since a considerable portion of most of our lives be spent in service, it is both for our good and God’s glory that we heed those exhortations.

A secular writer recently pointed out that “work has increasingly come to be regarded as a distasteful means to the achievement of leisure, instead of leisure as a recuperative measure to refit us for work.” That is a very mild way of saying that the present generation is pleasure mad and hates any kind of real work. Various explanations have been advanced to account for this: such as the ousting of craftsmanship by machinery, the fear of unemployment discouraging zeal, and the doles, allowances, and reliefs which are available for those who don’t and won’t work. Though each of those has been a contributing factor, yet there is a more fundamental and solemn cause of this social disease—namely, the loss of those moral convictions which formerly marked a large proportion of church-goers, who made conscience of serving the Lord while engaged in secular activities, and who were actuated by the principles of honesty and integrity, fidelity and loyalty.

Nowhere has the hollowness of professing Christians been more apparent during the last two or three generations, than at this point. Nowhere has more reproach been brought upon the cause of Christ than by the majority of those employees who bore His name. Whether it be in the factory, the mine, the office, or in the fields, one who claims to be a follower of the Lord Jesus should stand out unmistakably from his fellow employees who make no profession. His punctuality, his truthfulness, his conscientiousness, the quality of his work, his devotion to his employer’s interests, ought to be so apparent that there is no need for him to let others know by his *lips* that he is a disciple of Christ. There should be such a marked absence of that slackness, carelessness, selfishness, greed, and insolence which mark the majority of the ungodly, that all may see he is motivated and regulated by higher principles than they are. But, if his conduct belies his profession, then his companions are confirmed in their opinion that “there is nothing in religion but talk.”

Nor does the whole of the blame rest upon them: *the pulpit* is far from being guiltless in this matter. The Lord has expressly bidden His servants to preach thereon, as being a subject of great importance and an essential part of that doctrine which is according to godliness. “Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. *These things teach* and exhort” (1Ti 6:1-2). But where is the minister today who does so? Alas, how many have despised and neglected such practical yet unpopular teaching! Desirous of being regarded as “deep,” they have turned aside unto doctrinal disputes or prophetic speculations which profit no one. God says, “If any man teach otherwise, He is proud, knowing nothing” (1Ti 6:3-4)!

Once again is the pastor divinely ordered, “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober...The aged women likewise...Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded...servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (Ti 2:1-10). Are you, fellow minister, speaking upon *these* things? Are you warning servants that all needless absenteeism is a sin? Are

you informing those of your church members who are employees that God requires them to make it their constant endeavour to give full satisfaction unto their masters in every part of their conduct: that they are to be respectful and not saucy, industrious and not indolent, submissive and not challenging the orders they receive? Do you teach them that their conduct either *adorns* or *disgraces* the doctrine they profess? If not, you are sadly failing in carrying out your commission.

In view of the almost total silence of the pulpit thereon, it is striking to see how frequently the New Testament epistles inculcate and enlarge upon the duties of employees. In Ephesians 6, we find the apostle exhorting, “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men” (Eph 6:5-7). Christian servants are required to comply with the calls and commands of their employers: to do so with respectful deference to their persons and authority, to be fearful of displeasing them. They are to be as diligent in their work and to discharge their duties with the same conscientious solicitude when their master is *absent* as when his eye is upon them. They are to perform their tasks “with good will,” not sullenly and reluctantly, but thankful for an honest means of livelihood. And all of this as “the servants of Christ,” careful not to dishonour Him by any improper behaviour, but seeking to glorify Him: working from such motives as will sanctify our labours and make them “spiritual sacrifice” unto God.

In Colossians 3, the apostle also exhorted, “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Col 3:22-23). Every lawful command he must obey, however distasteful, difficult, or irksome. He is to be faithful in every trust committed to him. Whatsoever his hand findeth to do, he must do it with his might (Ecc 9:10)—putting his very best into it. He is to do it readily and cheerfully, taking pleasure in his work. All is to be done “as to the Lord,” which will transform the secular into the sacred. Then it is added, “Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col 3:24)—what encouragement to fidelity is that! “But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done” (Col 3:25) is a solemn warning to deter from failure in duty, for “either in this world or the other, God will avenge all such injury”—John Gill (1697-1771).

“Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully” (1Pe 2:18-19). This repeated insistence of the apostles for employees discharging their duties properly, indicates not only how much the glory of God is involved therein, but also that an *unwillingness* on their part makes such repetition necessary—evidenced by those who take two or three days’ extra holiday by running off to religious meetings, thereby putting their masters to inconvenience. Holiness is most visible in our daily conduct: performing our tasks in such a spirit and with such efficiency as will commend the Gospel unto those we serve. Let it be borne in mind that these instructions apply to *all* servants—male and female—in every station and condition. Let each reader of these pages who is an employee ask himself or herself, How far am I really making a genuine, prayerful, and diligent endeavour to comply with God’s requirements in the performance of my duties? Let no “rules of unions” nor “regulations of shop stewards” be allowed to set aside or modify these divine commandments.

It is to be pointed out that the above precepts are enforced and exemplified in the Scriptures by many notable examples. See how the Spirit delighted to take notice of the devotion of Eliezer, even praying that the Lord God would “send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham” (Gen 24:12); and note how faithfully he acquitted himself and how well he spake of his master. Jacob could say, “And ye know that with all my power I have served” (Gen 31:6): can *you* aver the same? Though a heathen, “his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight” (Gen 39:3-4): what a testimony was that! Scripture also chronicles the unfaithfulness of Elisha’s servant and the fearful judgment which came upon him (2Ki 5:20-27). Finally, let all domestics and employees remember that the *servant place* has been honoured and adorned for ever by the willing and perfect obedience of the incarnate Son of God! “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do with thy might” (Ecc 9:10)—put your very best into it.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

57. 1 Timothy 1:17; 6:15-16, Part 2

“The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1Ti 6:15). The apostle here gives glory unto the triune God, first for that blessedness which is in Himself. To be “blessed” is for one to be richly endowed and joyous. Such is God to an infinite and inconceivable degree, for there is in Him such a meeting together and fullness of all excellencies as to render Him complete in Himself. God has not to go outside Himself for perfect felicity. As the apostle declared to the Athenians, the great God who made and rules the world is not beholden to men for the worship of their hands, “as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” (Act 17:25). God is obligated to none, being absolutely independent. Praise is then rendered to God as “the only Potentate,” as Sovereign over all. He has not only all-sufficiency and happiness within Himself, but He has absolute power and dominion over all creatures and things. Put the two together: infinite fullness and infinite might in Himself, and God is indeed “blessed,” and is to be owned as such, yea, feared, admired, and adored as “The Blessed One.” “Blessed be the most high God” (Gen 14:20). No less an honour is ascribed to Christ: “Who is over all, God blessed for ever” (Rom 9:5).

“Who only hath immortality” (1Ti 6:16). This is in apposition to or is the complementary perfection of “the King *eternal*”: God is not only without beginning of days, but end of them too. “Who only hath deathlessness” would be a literal rendering of the Greek word. The reason why God is immortal is because He is impeccable or not liable to sin. A different term is used in 1 Timothy 1:17 for “immortal,” and signifies “incorruptible.” “God cannot be tempted with evil” (Jam 1:13). Why? Because He is its very opposite: the ineffably Holy One. Death is the wages of sin, and since God be impeccable and incorruptible, He is immortal or deathless. Moreover, He is the living God: “For with thee is the fountain of life” (Psa 36:9). He has “life in himself” (Joh 5:26) by essence and not participation. God is not only immortal, but He “only hath immortality” (1Ti 6:16). The holy angels are immortal, as will also be the resurrected bodies of the redeemed, but that immortality is derived, bestowed by God. But God, and He alone, “*hath* immortality” essentially, underived, in full possession, in Himself and from Himself. He alone hath immortality simply and absolutely, being the fountain of it. As such, He is to be acknowledged and adored.

“Invisible” (1Ti 1:17). Observe carefully this is also celebrated as another of the divine perfections. There is a fullness in the words of Scripture which pertains not to those of man’s, so that frequently, there is more contained in and implied by them than is actually expressed. Such is the case here: God is not only invisible to sight, but He is impalpable to the senses and incomprehensible to reason. He is, in Himself, inscrutable unto all creature intelligence. Despite the revelation of Himself which God has been pleased to make by His Word and by His works, we still have to say, “Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?” (Job 26:14). “He admires the depths of that which is undiscovered. What we know of God is nothing in comparison with what is in God, and what God is. After all the discoveries which God has made to us and all the inquiries we have made after God, still we are much in the dark concerning Him”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714). Of His essential glory, we cannot conceive. Only as we entertain a due appreciation of the greatness of God and the immeasurable distance between Him and us, shall we be filled with holy fear and awe unto Him.

“Dwelling in light unapproachable” (Revised Version). Some may inquire, How is that to be harmonized with “Clouds and darkness are round about him” (Psa 97:2)? Several answers may be returned. First, the Psalmist has reference to the ways of God which are hidden from us. We are incapable of perceiving *how* He acts, much less of understanding *why*. His providences are greatly deep, much more so are His counsels inscrutable to the human mind. Secondly, that language is also designed to reprove our curiosity and presumption. We are far too prone to pry into what is not revealed, instead of performing our known duty. Third, it is said to try our faith: God will be trusted and honoured even when we cannot see His hand or perceive His undertaking for us. Fourth, after all, Psalm 97:2 approximates very closely to 1 Timothy 6:16, for even the saint is utterly incapable of understanding the divine essence or nature. There is such an overwhelming light in God that it is darkness to us. As one said, “The most eagle-like eyes of a human understanding are not only dazzled but quite blinded by His brightness.” We may indeed, draw near by faith unto Him who is light, but not so by reason.

The symbolism of the old covenant taught the same truth, namely, the unapproachable glory in which Deity dwells. Thus, in the setting of “bounds unto the people round about” the base of Sinai (Exo 19:12) at the giving of the Law; the veiled darkness in the holy of holies in the tabernacle and the temple, where the Shekinah abode between the cherubim on the mercy seat to which Solomon alluded at the dedication of the temple: “Then spake Sol-

omon, The LORD said that he would dwell in the thick darkness” (1Ki 8:12); and in the seraphim veiling their faces as they stood above the throne of Jehovah (Isa 6:1-2). On the other hand, the figure is varied in “the light dwelleth with him” (Dan 2:22) and “in thy light shall we see light” (Psa 36:9). Putting the two together, “dwelling in light unapproachable” signifies that the divine glory is too ineffable for any creature to draw nigh or apprehend. God only is able to comprehend Himself. Our most spiritual and exalted notions of Him are obscure and inadequate at best. There must for ever remain an incalculable distance between the Infinite and the finite: the God-man Mediator is alone qualified to make known the One to the other—so far as it is for His glory and our good.

“Whom no man hath seen, nor can see” (1Ti 6:16). That fact is stated again and again in the Scriptures. Even the highly favoured Moses—who was granted such intimate and prolonged communion with God when he requested, “Shew me thy glory”—received answer: “I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee...Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live” (Exo 33:18-20). So too almost at the end of the New Testament, we are told, “No man hath seen God at any time” (1Jo 4:12). God is invisible, though the whole universe is full of Him and exhibits Him. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Psa 19:1). Yet *that* is not to “see God,” but only what He hath wrought. “It is visible *that* He is, for He clothes Himself with light as with a garment (Psa 104:2), it is invisible *what* He is, for ‘he made darkness his secret place’: Psalm 18:11”—Stephen Charnock (1628-1680). The fullness of His glory can never be known by any creature: “His greatness is unsearchable” (Psa 145:3). Even the beatific vision of heaven will not consist of a sight of God as God, but rather as He shines forth in a manifestative and communicative way in the Person of Christ, as suited to finite capacities.

“Unto...the only wise God” (1Ti 1:17). As those words were before us in our exposition of Romans 16:27, and (D.V.) will come before us in Jude 25, they need not detain us now. They celebrate another of the perfections of Deity, namely, His omniscience. Yet when we utter such a term, how feebly do we grasp its immeasurable purport. “His understanding is infinite” (Psa 147:5) and “there is no searching of his understanding” (Isa 40:28). As one has said, “The profoundest creature wisdom deserves not the name of it when compared with God’s. The wisdom of the angels is but folly to Him.” All creature wisdom is imparted by God: *His* wisdom is original, essential, incapable of addition or diminution. “By wisdom [God] made the heavens” (Psa 136:5), “in wisdom hast thou made them all” (Psa 104:24). But above all is God to be praised for that “hidden wisdom” which He ordained before the world unto our glory: “Which none of the princes of this world knew” (1Co 2:7-8), but which is revealed in the Gospel, a contemplation of which moved the apostle to exclaim, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” (Rom 11:33). To the “only Potentate...Who only hath immortality” (1Ti 6:15-16), to “the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1Ti 1:17).

58. Philemon 4-6

Though it be one of the shortest books in the New Testament, the epistle to Philemon is one of the least read by God’s people and is certainly one of the least preached from. Scarcely anything appears to have been written on it. We have therefore decided to devote a few paragraphs unto the same, though more in the way of general remarks than a detailed exposition of the prayer itself, for it is full of important instruction and valuable lessons. The epistle to Philemon is the only strictly private letter of Paul’s which has survived the passage of time. Doubtless he wrote many more, but this one alone God saw fit to preserve in the canon of Scripture. All his others were either addressed unto local churches or were pastoral letters of authoritative direction. This one, though written under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents its writer to us from quite a different angle. Here we behold the “prisoner of Jesus Christ” (Phm 1) throwing off as far as possible his apostolic dignity and parental authority over his converts, speaking simply from the heart, as one Christian to another, in an admirable strain of humility and courtesy. It is therefore of peculiar interest and value, inasmuch as it falls outside of what may be termed Paul’s official sphere of ministry, affording us an insight into his personal and private life.

In this epistle, Paul throws off the restraint of authority and employs the language of familiar intercourse, addressing Philemon as “brother” (Phm 1, 7), which breathes the spirit of freedom and equality. Herein we behold how—under the apostolic mission, as well as under divine inspiration—there was room for the free play of personal character and intimate correspondence. “We seem to know him better as an apostle, because we are allowed to see him when he chooses not to be an apostle, but a minister and a man. But even beyond this, we may fairly draw from this epistle the priceless lesson as to the place which true courtesy and delicacy occupy in the Christian character, and especially as to their entire compatibility with high apostolic enthusiasm, with a keen insight into realities as distinct from forms, and with the greatest plainness of speech in due season. We understand how true courtesy, as

distinct from artificial and technical culture of manners, is the natural outcome of the 'lowliness of mind' in which each esteems others 'better than' himself, and of the sympathy of love which looks not only upon our 'own things,' but even in greater degree upon 'the things of others' (Phi 2:3-4)"—Charles John (C. J.) Ellicott (1819-1905). A careful comparison of this epistle with his others will discover a marked difference of tone throughout it.

Philemon appears to have been a Christian of some eminence, residing at Colosse (Col 4:9), who had been saved under Paul's ministry (Phm 19). Onesimus was one of his slaves, who had robbed his master, forsaken his service, and fled five hundred miles away to Rome. This was providentially overruled unto his eternal good, for the hand of God directed him to attend Paul's preaching (Act 28:30-31), which was blest of the Spirit unto his conversion (Phm 10). Though Onesimus had greatly endeared himself to the one who was (instrumentally) his spiritual father and been useful unto him in his imprisonment, yet Paul realized it was only right to send him back unto his master. Accordingly, he wrote this touching letter unto Philemon begging that his erstwhile refractory slave might be given a favourable reception. His design was to effect a reconciliation between him and his fugitive servant, now a brother in Christ. The apostle had full confidence that his appeal would not be in vain. It is highly probable that Paul's request was granted and that Onesimus was received into his master's favour and given his freedom. Tradition says that he afterwards became a minister of the Gospel.

In the course of his letter, Paul used the most affecting arguments and affectionate inducements to move Philemon to grant his request. (1) An implied appeal from his love to the saints in general: verse 5. (2) From consideration of the one who made this request: who might have used his apostolic authority, but chose rather to entreat him in love, by an appeal to his own condition—aged, in prison, so deny me not: verses 8-9. (3) From the particular relation of Onesimus to Paul—his own son in the faith: verse 10. (4) From the transformation which had been wrought in him—"now profitable": verse 11. (5) From the strong affection which Paul had for Onesimus: verse 12. (6) From his unwillingness to act herein without the approval of Philemon: verses 13-14. (7) From the special relation Onesimus now sustained unto Philemon—"a brother beloved": verses 15-16. (8) From the intimate bonds which obtained between Paul and Philemon: verse 17. (9) From the assurance given by Paul that he would personally make good any loss Philemon incurred: verse 18. (10) From the joy and refreshment which his granting of this plea would afford the apostle: verse 20. Was a more powerful appeal ever made, or such an earnest and winsome suing for the pardon and kindly reception of a disloyal slave!

Many are the important truths exemplified in this epistle. Therein we have a striking demonstration of the sovereignty and abundant mercy of God upon a dishonest slave: though sin abounded, divine grace did much more abound. Therein we have inculcated the Christian duty of peace-making, seeking to bring together two brethren in Christ who are alienated. Paul's unhesitating acknowledgment of this runaway slave as "my very heart" (verse 12, American Revised Version) intimates with what affection the ties between the minister and his people, the parent and his child, the master and his servant, should be felt and owned by saints in all the circumstances of life. How delicately yet forcibly did the apostle urge upon Philemon (and us) to "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies," etc. (Col 3:12-13)! Admire and emulate the humility of Paul, who did not consider it was beneath him to be concerned in performing such an office as to reconcile a master to his servant. See here a blessed setting forth of the spiritual equality of all who are in Christ Jesus: the chief of the apostles freely owning this converted menial as "a brother beloved" (Phm 16).

Yet observe the balance of truth there. Though there be such equality so far as their standing before God and their spiritual inheritance were concerned, yet those facts in no wise set aside inequalities in other relations and respects. The rights which masters have over their servants are not cancelled when the latter become Christians. That new relation into which we are taken by virtue of a living union with Christ must not be regarded as annulling the obligations of natural relations, nor of the arrangements and responsibilities of ordinary society, so far as they are not sinful. Though in Christ, there was now no difference between Philemon and Onesimus, that did not alter the fact that the one was still a master and the other a servant: the saving grace which had been communicated to the soul of the latter would be most suitably exercised in showing forth the respect and submission which was due unto the former. There is a *natural* order established by God on earth between husband and wife, parent and child. There is also a *governmental* order which God has allowed men to institute by His authority, and He requires His people to conduct themselves suitably to the order He has ordained; "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," etc. (1Pe 2:13-15).

Finally, be it noted that we have in this epistle an exquisite typical picture of the grand truths set before us in the Gospel—let the young preacher develop the following outline into a separate sermon. First, the sinner's deep need is portrayed in the case and condition of Onesimus. God is our Creator, Owner, and Ruler, and therefore, as creatures and subjects, we are under bonds to serve or obey Him. But fallen man is "born like a wild ass's colt"

(Job 11:12) thoroughly untractable, unwilling to wear the yoke. Not only is he a rebel against the divine government, but he is, morally, a thief: misusing his time and talents, and thereby robbing God of His glory. In consequence, he is alienated from God (Eph 4:18), a wanderer in the far country of self-pleasing and sin. See how all of this is illustrated in Onesimus, who became an unprofitable servant by revolting from his master, stealing from him and becoming a fugitive. It is to be noted that the “*if* he hath wronged thee” (Phm 18) is not one of doubt, but of concession, signifying “[*since*] he hath”—compare John 14:3; Colossians 3:1. Second, the experience of Onesimus shows that the condition of no sinner is hopeless: Luke 19:10; Hebrews 7:25. Third, in his case, the ministry of one of God’s servants was used to his conversion.

Fourth, in Paul’s proffering to be bondsman for Onesimus (Phm 18), we have a figure of the grace of Christ in voluntarily becoming the Surety of his people, assuming the whole of their debt. Those words, “Put that on mine account” express the same readiness as had the Redeemer to be charged with the sins of His redeemed. Fifth, let it be carefully noted that more than a bare reconciliation was to be effected between Philemon and Onesimus: “Receive him *as myself*” (Phm 17), said the typical surety. Not only is the guilt and pollution of the believing sinner removed from before the sight of God, but he is “accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:6). Thus the basic truth of *imputation* was here adumbrated. Onesimus was not only exempted from the punishment of his crimes, but—through the benevolence of his benefactor—made partaker of benefits which he had merited not. Believers receive the reward of Christ’s righteousness by a reciprocal transference (2Co 5:21). Sixth, in the whole of Paul’s pleading on behalf of Onesimus, we have an image of the intercession of Christ for “his own.” Seventh, the real change effected in the character and conduct of the one saved by Christ appears in the return of Onesimus to his master—a chief evidence of genuine repentance is a present performance of those duties which had previously been neglected.

Very few words must suffice upon Paul’s prayer for Philemon. First, its *object*: “my God” (Phm 1:4). That the special relationship which He sustains unto His children should be owned by them, was the first lesson in prayer. Christ taught us: “Say, Our Father which art in heaven” (Luk 11:2). “I will praise thee, O Lord my God” (Psa 86:12). “God, even *our own* God, shall bless us” (Psa 67:6). Second, its *heartiness*: “making mention of thee *always* in my prayers” (Phm 4). No casual supplicant was Paul. Third, its *occasion*: “I thank my God...hearing of thy love and faith” (Phm 4-5). The fact that thanks were returned to God for those graces was an acknowledgement that He is the Author of them: that they originate not with man. They are the fruit of the Spirit, evidences of His regenerating work. Thanksgivings should be offered unto God not for ourselves only, but for our fellow-Christians also. “We must be affected with joy and thankfulness for any good in them, or done by them, or bestowed on them, as far as it is known to us, and seek for them what they need. In this lies no little part of the communion of saints”—M. Henry. This was ever Paul’s custom: Romans 1:8; Ephesians 1:15-6. Colossians 1:3-4.

“Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints” (Phm 5). Wherever the one grace exists, the other is found. In the mystical Body of Christ, believers have communion both with the Head and with all its members: with the One by faith; with the other, by love. Hence we find the two things so often conjoined by the apostle: not only as equally essential, but as equally necessary to prove our interest or participation in that Body. Without love unto the saints, we are no more members of Christ than without faith in Him. Fourth, its *petition*: “That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus” (Phm 6). Request was here made that Philemon might be divinely enabled to give still further proof of his faith and love, by bringing forth more abundant fruit, in acts of benevolence, in ministering to the needs of others. Thereby those graces would be “effectual” in promoting the glory of Christ and the welfare of fellow saints.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

38. Defeat (6:27-7:4)

The seventh chapter of Joshua presents to us a drastically different scene from those which have engaged our attention in the previous chapters; yea, so startling is the contrast that we are reminded of that old adage, “Truth is stranger than fiction.” Up to this point, everything had gone smoothly and blessedly for Israel, but now their progress is suddenly halted. Hitherto we have witnessed them, under God, going from strength to strength and glory to

glory. Strict obedience to the divine commands had marked their every movement; here, the very reverse obtained. They had duly attended to the essential matter of circumcision and had kept the appointed Passover feast. On His part, the Lord had wrought wondrously for them, bringing them through the Jordan dryshod and overthrowing the principal fortress of the enemy without a blow having to be struck by Israel. But a startling contrast now confronts us: immediately following the memorable victory at the formidable Jericho, Israel suffer humiliating defeat at the much weaker town of Ai. A member of the tribe of Judah had committed a grievous crime, and the whole nation suffers in consequence. As there was a serpent in Eden and a Judas among the apostles, so there was an Achan in the midst of an obedient Israel.

A series of sad failures are set before us in the passage we are about to consider. The whole nation is thus depicted, "The hearts of the people melted, and became as water" (Jos 7:5). That dejection of God's people was occasioned by the cowardice shown by three thousand of their armed men, who had "fled before the men of Ai," thirty-six of them being slain as the enemy chased them (Jos 7:4-5). That had been preceded by the remiss conduct of Joshua himself, who, instead of seeking counsel from the Lord, had acted upon the carnal advice of his spies (Jos 7:4). The men whom Joshua had sent out to reconnoitre Ai so far forgot their place that, upon their return, instead of making a simple report, they presumed to inform their commander-in-chief of the policy which *they* deemed it best for Israel to follow on this occasion (Jos 7:3). But before all this, the anger of the Lord had been kindled against Israel by the sin of Achan at Jericho (Jos 7:1). *That* was what explained all which followed: the cause of which they were the consequences. One decayed apple will soon infect a whole box of sound ones; or, to change the figure for a more Scriptural one, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1Co 5:6).

In the light of history, there is nothing at all unusual in the sad failures mentioned above, for poor human nature is as "unstable as water" (Gen 49:4). Yet in view of the fact that this generation was far and away the best which Israel ever had, and that Jehovah Himself was their Captain (Jos 5:15) in the conquest of Canaan, it does seem strange that such a deplorable lapse now occurred. How are we to account for the divine permission, yea, foresay that the Lord suffered this grievous defection for such reasons as these? First, to teach all succeeding generations of His people that they are never in greater danger of yielding to the pride of their hearts than when the Lord's power has been most signally displayed on their behalf. Second, to exemplify the basic truth that, if we are to enjoy a continuation of God's governmental blessing, we must remain steadfast in our subjection to His holy will. Third, to set before His saints a lasting warning that the Holy One is jealous of His glory, and will not condone sin in His own people. Fourth, to emphasize that nothing can be concealed from Him: that the most secret actions of an individual fall beneath His observation (Pro 15:3).

How ominous is the initial "But" of Joshua 7:1—the first chapter of our book opening thus: sad intimation of what follows, and well suited to point the contrast with the closing verse of chapter 6. There we read, "So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country" (Jos 6:27); now we are told, "But the children of Israel committed a trespass...for Achan... took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel" (Jos 7:1). The contrast is a double one: the Lord was *with* Joshua, but here His anger was kindled *against* Israel. The consequence of the former was that Joshua's fame was proclaimed abroad; the sequel of the latter is that he was humiliated and lies on his face before the ark (Jos 7:5). How often are the brightest prospects dimmed and the most promising projects hindered by sin! It was so with king Saul, and later with Solomon. Thus with Israel's progress in the conquest of Canaan: victory at Jericho gives place to defeat before Ai. How this shows us that a time of success is when we most need to be on our guard, and "rejoice with trembling" (Psa 2:11). The moon never suffers an eclipse except at a time when it is at the full! Grace is needed by us to use the grace God gives us and to save us from turning His blessings into curses.

Here, then, is another most important practical lesson for us to lay to heart in connection with the possessing of our possessions and the present enjoyment of our spiritual heritage. When God has vouchsafed light from His Word and opened up to us some passage, beware lest we become conceited and attribute the same to our own perspicuity. When victory is granted over some lust or deliverance from a powerful temptation, boast not, but rather endeavour to become more watchful. When God gives the pastor souls for his hire and prospers his labours, humbling grace must be diligently sought that he may not cherish the spirit of Nebuchadnezzar and say, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of *my* power" (Dan 4:30). Remember that solemn warning, "But Jeshurun [Israel] waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; *then* he forsook God" (Deu 32:15). We need to be much on our guard and fight against the Laodicean self-sufficiency and self-glorying of this evil day. Unless we be kept "little in [our] own sight" (1Sa 15:17) and "poor in spirit" (Mat 5:3), the overthrow of some Jericho in our experience will be followed by an ignominious defeat before an Ai!

“But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing” (Jos 7:1). This awful trespass was committed within the very environs of Jericho, immediately after God had miraculously caused its walls to fall down flat. In connection with the destruction and sacking of that city, specific instructions had been given to Israel that they must neither spare any lives nor take any of the spoils unto themselves (Jos 6:17-19). The spiritual lesson for us therein is that “the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12) in which the Christian is called to engage consists of a mortifying of the flesh, the denying of self, and the renouncing of this world in our affections. It was far more than a bare theft of which Achan was guilty, namely, the heinous act of sacrilege—a taking of that which was “consecrated unto the LORD”! (Jos 6:19). It is to be carefully noted that the Holy Spirit has furnished us with the genealogy of the offender, and since there is nothing meaningless or unimportant in the Word of truth, it behoves us to attend to this detail. Achan was the immediate descendant of “Zerah,” and *he* was the son of Judah’s whoredom (Gen 38:15-30). What a solemn example of the sins of the fathers being visited upon the children!

Significant indeed is the name of this disturber of the nation’s peace and prosperity, for Achan means “Trouble.” It is both solemn and striking to note how the Holy Spirit has phrased His allusion to Achan’s sin: He does not say “one of,” but rather “the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing” (Jos 7:1). God regarded them as a unit, and hence, what one individual (does is) considered also the sin of the nation. This is borne out by what follows, for the whole congregation was affected thereby; “and the anger of the LORD was kindled against [not simply “Achan” but] the children of Israel” (Jos 7:1). We have a parallel in the local church of the New Testament: “whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it” (1Co 12:26), an example of which is furnished in Joshua 5:1-7, of the same epistle. Israel had been plainly warned that if any one of them took of the accursed thing, they would “make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it” (Jos 6:18), yet that solemn warning deterred not the selfish and rebellious Achan. Until the walls of Jericho fell, all kept strictly to rank, but upon their fall, they went “every man straight before him” (Jos 6:20). Thus the moment discipline was relaxed, the reprobate cared only for himself.

“And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Bethaven, on the east side of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country” (Jos 7:2). Joshua did not rest on his oars, but proceeded to the task which lay before him, sending out scouts to examine the next place to be captured. After such a notable victory, he did not deem himself entitled to sit down and take things easy, or give himself to feasting; but believed in the policy of striking while the iron is hot. The best time to hoist sail is when the wind is blowing, so that advantage may be taken of the same. Thus it is spiritually. When favoured with a breeze from Heaven (Joh 3:8), it is a propitious season for religious enterprise. Yet observe that the zeal of Joshua was tempered with prudence: he did not rush blindly ahead, but wisely took a preview of what was next to be done. It is the feverish energy of the flesh which impels professing Christians to act hurriedly and rashly, instead of sitting down first, and consulting whether they be able and sufficiently equipped for the task which they assay (Luk 14:31). There is a happy mean between recklessness and a caution which degenerates into apathy.

Ai was a place of sacred memories, for in Genesis 12:8, we are told of Abraham that “he removed...unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent [emblem of being a ‘stranger and pilgrim’ there], having Bethel on the west, and Hai [same as ‘Ai’ in Joshua 7] on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD [symbol of his being a worshipper], and called upon the name of the LORD.” But now this territory was occupied by the wicked and marked out for destruction. It was because of their abominable idolatry and immorality that the Lord used Israel as His instrument of judgment upon the Canaanites (Lev 18:24-25; Deu 18:10-12). Evidence of this is found in the names mentioned in Joshua 7:2, for “Bethaven” signifies “House of vanity” or “iniquity.” Incidentally, we may note an example of the minute accuracy of Scripture in the topographical reference there: “Go up and view the country,” said Joshua, while the Holy Spirit informs us in Genesis 12:8 that Abraham “removed from thence unto a *mountain* on the east of Bethel”—which means “The House of God.” Ah, my reader, there are no “contradictions” in Holy Writ, but, instead, the most perfect harmony throughout; but only the reverent and diligent student perceives that.

“But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan...took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel. *And* Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai...saying, Go up and view the country” (Jos 7:1-2). The two verses are linked together, and thereby a solemn lesson is pointed. It is evident that Joshua was ignorant of the perfidy of Achan, and therefore, was quite unaware that the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel. It is a very serious thing to provoke the Lord, and thereby forfeit His providential smile. Yet how few of the “churches” today are conscious that the anger of the Lord is kindled against them!—kindled against them for the self-same reason that it was here against Israel, namely, for having trafficked in “the accursed thing.” Dispensationalists may deny it, and say *that* occurred under “the Dispensation of

Law,” but there is no parallel in this “Dispensation of Grace.” Therein they betray their crass ignorance, and, it is much to be feared, their unregeneracy—hearts which know not the Holy One. The case of Ananias and Sapphira (Act 5; Rev 2:14-16 and 20-23) and a quenched Spirit in our midst clearly give the lie to their assertions.

“And the men went up and viewed Ai. And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few” (Jos 7:2-3). In carrying out Joshua’s orders, those men acted commendably, but in taking it upon them to advise their general, their conduct was most reprehensible. It was nothing but downright impudence for those subordinates to tell Joshua what he should do. Had he asked for their suggestions, it had been a different matter, but to proffer them unsought was a piece of impertinence. It appeared to be the language of kindness, prompted by consideration of others—to save the great bulk of the nation from a needless waste of energy. Yet, plausible as were their words, it was carnal counsel they gave: as much so as Peter’s “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee,” which seemed to emanate from deep solicitude for Him, when in reality, it issued from Satan (Mat 16:22-23). The same answer which the Redeemer returned unto the apostle was due these spies: “Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” They were leaning on the arms of flesh, filled with a sense of self-sufficiency.

These men who returned from their reconnoitering were inflated with pride. Their language was that of presumption, engendered by previous success. They began to entertain the idea that they belonged to a great nation, and none could stand before them. They contemptuously regarded Ai as an easy prey, as their “for they are but a few” (Jos 7:3) indicated. What need for the whole of the army to journey thither: a small company of *our* men will suffice. There was no dependency upon the One who had wrought wonders for them. Instead, they felt that a couple of battalions could do wonders, and that there was no need for Israel to put forth all their strength. Alas, how like unto them God’s servants and people often are today. When the Lord is pleased to exercise His power in the saving of souls, preaching appears to be an easy matter, and the minister is tempted to spend less time and labour in the preparation of his sermons. And when God grants a saint victory over some powerful lust, he is apt to feel there is less need to pray so earnestly. But such a spirit is disastrous. Only as we continue sensible of our weakness shall we seek strength from Above. Take warning from this incident and strive against pride and presumption, especially when God has granted some success.

“Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few” (Jos 7:3). How different was that conceited boast from the language of the first spies: “And they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land” (Jos 2:24)! Let not victory lead to negligence. We have no right to count upon the Lord’s doing all for us, unless we make full use of the means that He has appointed. All of Israel were required to assemble at Jericho: none was left behind in his tent, none suffered to remain at a distance as a mere spectator. It might appear to them as a needless waste of “man-power,” but God required it; and gave success to their obedience. *There* was the precedent for them to follow. But the dictate of carnal wisdom intervened. Ai appeared to be an inconsiderable place and no great force required to reduce it. Self-confidence promised an easy conquest, so the greater part of the army might be spared. Instead of regarding it as a blessed privilege for the whole nation to behold the Lord showing Himself strong in their behalf, these men said, “Make not all the people to labour thither” (Jos 7:3) or to be a “weariness,” as the word is eight times rendered elsewhere—just as at the close of the Old Testament, a degenerate Israel said of God’s worship, “what a *weariness* is it!” (Mal 1:13).

“So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men” (Jos 7:4). Very solemn indeed is that, for it shows us what the most honoured of God’s servants are when left to themselves. We say not, “the most eminent,” for that savours far too much of the flesh; but rather the “most favoured.” Whatever privileges we have enjoyed, or nearness to God has been granted us, we are still entirely dependent upon Him for a *continuance* of preserving grace. If that be withheld from any one of us for a single hour, we shall miserably fail and sin. The upholding Spirit was now withdrawn from Joshua for a season (why so will be pointed out later), and therefore, he acted as a natural man would and followed the carnal policy advanced by his underlings. Instead of rebuking their pride with “Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off” (1Ki 20:11), he adopted their fleshly policy. This was the more lamentable and excuseless because express instructions had been given him, “And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at *his* word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in” (Num 27:18-21).

Alas, the evil leaven of Achan’s trespass was at work, “[leavening] the whole lump” (1Co 5:6), secretly yet surely defiling all his fellows. Failing to ask counsel of the Lord, Joshua was now deprived of spiritual perception, and so discerned not the carnality and evil of the plan set before him. He should have realized at once that it was at

direct variance with the divine pattern given him at Jericho. *There* everything was done in complete obedience to the revealed will of God, in full dependence upon Him, and yet without the slightest neglect of means or human instrumentality—the entire congregation took their assigned places and parts. But *here* there was no inquiring of God’s mind, no reliance on His intervention, and a small part only of the “armed men” (Jos 6:9, 13) were deemed sufficient to perform the work of the whole. Thus the greater part would be idle, and the congregation itself deprived of the grand privilege of witnessing the mighty works of their God. When Jericho fell, the whole nation saw by whose Hand its powerful walls were demolished, and could give Him the glory. Thus, the plan adopted now by Joshua was a breaking in upon the divine design.

How solemnly does that point the injunction, “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?” (Isa 2:22). What a warning is there here for the pastor to give no heed to the carnal advice of his church officers, and to say with David, “My soul, wait thou only upon God” (Psa 62:5). Emulate the apostle who “conferred not with flesh and blood” (Gal 1:16). It matters nothing what others think and say of you as long as you have the divine approbation. No matter how plausible may be the suggestions proffered, take orders from none save your Master. At the beginning of the campaign, Joshua had given commandment that the Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manassah should “remain in the land” and not enter into possession of their inheritance on the other side of Jordan “until the LORD have given your brethren rest” (Jos 1:12-15), thereby insisting that the whole of the twelve tribes should present a united front before the enemy until victory was complete. But the plan now followed introduced disunity. It is the following of fleshly methods which generally brings divisions among the people of God. Later, the Lord said to Joshua, “Take *all* the people of war with thee” (Jos 8:1). He had to return to the divine plan before there could be any success!

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

22. The Holy Bible, Part 14

27. *Its undersigned coincidences.* Infidel impugnors of the Scriptures and deniers of their divine inspiration have shown some industry and ingenuity in gathering together apparent contradictions between different statements in the Bible. But such alleged contradictions are only apparent, and betray the ignorance and misapprehension of those who urge them. The men who present them are merely retailing old cavils, which have been refuted again and again. On the other hand, those who undertake the defence of the Bible may appeal to innumerable proofs not only of its general harmony, but also of its detailed consistency and verbal precision. The veracity of Holy Writ is demonstrated by hundreds of undersigned coincidences in it, or the un-collaborated agreement of one part with another. Though the Bible has in it sixty-six books, written by forty penmen, covering so many generations in the world, relating to widely different states of society, containing such a variety of matter upon so many different subjects, and abounding in supernatural incidents; yet it exhibits concord in all its parts, which becomes increasingly evident the more closely it be examined. Their consonancy without collusion is too uniform to be accidental, and too incidental to have been mutually planned.

That which gives greater force to this argument is its self-evident feature that the perfect agreement of all its writers is *undersigned* on their part. The closer their productions be scanned, the more is it manifest that their perfect unity was not studied but casual. This line of argument was developed at considerable length by William Paley (1743-1805) and later by John James (J. J.) Blunt (1794-1855), who fully evinced the minute agreement and yet unpremeditated concurrence of one writer with another. The value of such evidence cannot be overestimated. As Professor Blunt pointed out, “It does not require many circumstantial coincidents to determine the mind of a jury as to the credibility of a witness in our courts even when the life of a fellow-creature is at stake.” When independent narrators describe an incident in detail and there is no discrepancy but perfect accord between their several accounts, we logically conclude that they have related actual occurrences—the more so when there is no indication of either conference or contrivance. We shall now condense a number of examples from those authors.

After Joseph’s brethren had cast him into the pit, we are told that “they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to *Egypt*” (Gen 37:25). Now this, by no means an obvious incident to have suggested itself, does ap-

pear to be a very natural one to have occurred. But what is more to our point, it tallies exactly with what we read of elsewhere; yet in a passage which has no reference whatever to the one just cited, namely, “Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to *embalm* his father...and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days” (Gen 50:2-3). This it was the practice of the Egyptians to embalm their dead; and hence, the Ishmaelites would find a ready market in Egypt for their spices! Again, when during the famine Joseph possessed himself on the king’s account of all the land of Egypt, “only the land of the priests bought he not” (Gen 47:22)—as a specially favoured class, they were exempted. In perfect accord is the fact that the final mark of the king’s regard for Joseph was his giving him to wife, “the daughter of Potipherah [*the*] priest of On” (Gen 41:45)—showing that the priests were held in peculiar esteem by their monarch.

“Moses...gave...two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon, according to their service: And four wagons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari” (Num 7:6-8). Why twice as many to the one as to the other? No reason is expressly stated, yet if we turn to an earlier chapter—separated by sundry details on other matters—we discover for ourselves a satisfactory explanation: the sons of Gershon carried the *lighter* part of the tabernacle furniture (Num 4:25); those of Merari, the heavier (Num 4:32). Does cunning contrivance or truth lie behind that? “But he [Israel’s king] shall not multiply horses to himself” (Deu 17:16) The governors of Israel rode on “white *asses*” (Jdg 5:10, and compare Jos 15:18; 1Sa 25:23); and it was the asses and not the horses of Kish which were lost (1Sa 9:3). News of Absalom’s death was brought to David by runners on foot (2Sa 18:21-23). Thus, it appears quite incidentally in the history of Israel that for several centuries, they had *no horses*—a coincidence of reality which had never occurred in a fiction.

When praising the Lord for deliverance from their enemies, Deborah mentioned there was not “a shield or spear” among the Israelites (Jdg 5:8). Strange though that be, it fully accords with several other details found in that book. Ehud “*made him* a dagger” (Jdg 3:16), Shamgar slew the Philistines “with an ox goad” (Jdg 3:31), Jael had to improvise and use a tent peg (Jdg 4:21), Samson searched in vain for a weapon till he “found a new jawbone of an ass” (Jdg 15:15). Yet more remarkable was Gideon’s victory over the Midianites with trumpets and broken pitchers, with their satirical cry of faith, “the *sword* of the LORD, and of Gideon” (Jdg 7:15-22). No explanation is furnished by the writer of Judges, nor does he link together those incidents. But when we turn to 1 Samuel 13:19-22, they are fully accounted for, for there we are told that when the Philistines subdued Israel, they suffered “no smith...throughout all the land of Israel”! Those who are qualified to weigh evidence will perceive in such “undesigned coincidences” the marks of truth—the more convincing, since our attention is not directly called to them.

“Goliath, of Gath” (1Sa 17:4). Let us mark the value of that casual mention of the giant’s town—a detail of such little importance that its insertion or omission apparently mattered nothing. In Numbers 13:32-33, we are informed that the sons of Anak were men of the giants. Later, that Joshua “cut off the Anakims from the mountains...[and] destroyed them utterly with their cities,” but a few remained “only in Gaza, in *Gath*, and in Ashdod” (Jos 11:21-22). Thus, 1 Samuel 17:4 is found to square with those independent statements in Numbers and Joshua—in the mouth of those three witnesses, the veracity of history being established! In 1 Samuel 22:3-4, David trusted his father and mother to the protection of the Moabites. Why he made such a strange and dangerous choice, we are not told. Had not the book of Ruth come down to us, the mystery had been left unexplained; but there, we learn that the grandmother of David’s father was a Moabitess (Ru 4:17); and thus, the propriety of his selection of their place of refuge appears—yet only by comparing the two books together is the circumstance accounted for.

The undesignedness of many passages in the Gospels is overlooked in our familiar acquaintance with them. For instance, why were the sick brought to Jesus “when the even was come” (Mat 8:16)? From the parallel passages (Mar 1:21; Luk 4:31), we learn that the transaction took place on the Sabbath—which ended at *sunset* (Lev 23:32). Then from Matthew 12:2—an entirely independent passage—we discover there was a superstition among the Jews that “it was not lawful to [heal] upon the sabbath day.” No explanation is given in Matthew 8:16; and had it not been for the accounts of Mark and Luke, we had not known it *was* “the sabbath”! Note Herod, “said unto *his servants*” (Mat 14:1-2). Why? There must have been some particular reason: Luke 8:3 and Acts 13:1 show that Christ had followers in Herod’s household. How came it to pass that Peter, a stranger, who had entered the house in the night, and under circumstances of some disorder, was identified by the maid in *the porch* (Mat 26:71)? Joh 18:16 tells us: Peter had stood there with John until “her that kept the door” admitted them—one Gospel minutely confirming the other.

The Bible, my reader, consists of no cunningly devised fables, but authentic records of momentous events. They court examination and will sustain the most diligent scrutiny, evidencing themselves to be eminently trustworthy and faithful accounts of actual happenings. While they relate much that is extraordinary, miracles many and mighty, yet confidence in the historicity is established by the numerous marks of reality, consistency, and accuracy,

which the ordinary matters of fact combined with them constantly exhibit. The exact agreement between incidental statements in wider separated parts of the Bible argues the truthfulness of each of them. The closer we check one narrative with another, the more does the veracity of the writers appear. Thus, when I find Paul declaring that Cephas was accompanied by his “wife” (1Co 9:5), and that he alone of the twelve apostles was said to be married (Mat 8:14); and when I find him affirming that from “a child” Timothy had “known the holy scriptures” (2Ti 3:15)—which necessarily implies at least one *Jewish* parent—and then discover his mother *was* “a Jewess” (Act 16:1), I am compelled by the very obliquity of such statements to accept them as inerrant.

28. *Its dispassionate poise.* In all the historical narratives of Old and New Testaments alike, there is a most noticeable absence of any expression of feeling on the part of those who penned them. One and all maintain candour and calmness when chronicling the most pathetic or the most atrocious incidents. There is no trace anywhere of *their own* delight or anger, not a single outburst of that personal bitterness and rancour which so often mar the writings of uninspired men. Instead, we behold a mild equanimity and quiet dignity breathing throughout the sacred pages. Thus, when the fall of our first parents, with all its disastrous consequences, is recorded, it is without any reflections of the scribe annexed thereto. The murder of Abel is related, but no recriminations are cast upon Cain. Even when informing us there was “no room...in the inn” (Luk 2:7) for Joseph and Mary, and that the newly born Saviour was perforce laid in a manger, the evangelist indulges in no cutting invectives upon those who so grievously insulted the Son of God.

When another evangelist records the ferocious and wicked attempt of Herod upon the life of the infant Saviour, by ordering all the children in Bethlehem under the age of two to be slain, he voices no horrified denunciation at such brutality; and when he relates how the legal parents of Christ had to flee into Egypt in order to escape from the murderous designs of that king, he pronounces no railing accusation upon him, such as an ordinary writer had deemed fit. Another of them tells us of the tetrarch of Galilee vilely yielding to the demand of a dancing girl that the head of John the Baptist be brought to her in a charger, but refrains from all aspersion upon the woman’s baseness and the weakness and wickedness of his consenting to the murder of our Lord’s forerunner; and with unparalleled honesty, states that “the king was exceeding sorry” (Mar 6:26). It was not that the evangelists were devoid of feeling, but that they were so completely under the control of the One who moved them to write that their natural passions were wholly subdued.

Still more remarkable is the entire absence of any reproaches from the evangelists upon the glaring injustice of the judges of the Redeemer, the horrid indignities to which He was subjected during His last hours, and the blasphemous taunts hurled at him as He hung upon the tree. Their temperate and unvarnished description of Christ’s trial and crucifixion is without a parallel. Instead of indignantly upbraiding Caiaphas and Pilate, instead of hot strictures upon the hypocritical priests and Pharisees, instead of strong declamations of the brutal soldiers, there is nothing but the calm discharge of their task as sacred historians. How entirely different from the temper and tone of the ordinary biographer when recounting the injuries of those he loves or highly esteems! So, too, in the accounts of our Lord’s resurrection. What an opportunity did that unique event afford the evangelists to break forth in accents of admiration! What an occasion was it for extolling the powers of their triumphant Redeemer! Instead, there is only a brief account of the bare facts of the case. Surely it is patent that such moderation and sobriety can only be accounted for on the ground that the Holy Spirit fully controlled them; that as the amanuenses of God, they wrote not by natural impulse, but by divine inspiration.

29. *Its amazing anticipations.* Since these articles are specially designed for the young who are assailed by the infidelity of those who pose as “Advanced Thinkers,” a few words require to be said upon the scientific reliability of the Bible. First, there is not a word which clashes with any known *fact* discovered since it was written. Therein it differs radically from the Shafter of the Hindus (which affirms the moon to be 50,000 leagues higher than the sun!), the Koran of Mahomet (which teaches the mountains were created “to prevent the earth from moving”!), the statement of Pope Saint Zachary (d. 752) (which denied the antipodes), or the blunders which the latest generation of scientists find in the writings of their immediate predecessors. Second, the Bible makes known “secrets of Nature,” of which all contemporary writings were totally ignorant. Space permits of but few illustrations to show that the Bible has always been far in advance of “science.”

There is not a little recorded in Holy Writ of which the ancients knew nothing, but which was verified long afterwards. For example: “Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the *south*” (Job 9:9); centuries after that was said, the southern hemisphere was unknown! “He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing” (Job 26:7): sustaining it in space without any material support kept in position by the centre of gravity. As Dr. Leathers (King’s College, London) pointed out, “Job, more than three thousand years ago, described in the language of scientific accuracy the condition of our globe.” “Or even the silver

cord [the spinal column] be loosed, or the golden bowl [the skull] be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel be broken at the cistern" (Ecc 12:6). The lungs take in and pour out air as a pitcher does water. The heart is "the wheel" on which the pitcher is brought up from the cistern: one of its lobes receives blood from the veins, the other lobe casts it out again, pulsing it through the arteries. Therein *the circulation of the blood* was figuratively described long before Harvey discovered it!

Any good encyclopedia will inform its readers that in the seventeenth century A.D., Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) discovered the "law" of the circular motion of the wind; yet long before Solomon had declared, "The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits" (Ecc 1:6). It will likewise attribute to him the discovery of "the law of evaporation," yet the Bible had previously made known, "He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth" (Psa 135:7). One would think from man's writings that the scientists had invented these things! But many centuries before coal was first mined, Job declared, "As for the earth, out of it cometh bread: and *under it* is turned up as it were fire" (Job 28:5): combustible material which provides the most suitable fuel for the furnace. Millenniums before Henry Ford (1863-1947) was born, Nahum (Nah 2:4) foretold, "The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings"!

In Genesis 15:5, God said to Abraham, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them," while in Jeremiah 33:22, we read that "the host of heaven cannot be numbered." When those verses were penned, none on earth had the least idea there was a countless number of stars. Claudius Ptolemy (AD 90-AD 168) made a catalogue of the whole sphere of the heavens and made them to be but 3,350! But when Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) turned his telescope on the heavens, he discovered there were many more than had been seen by the naked eye; when William Parsons (Lord Rosse, 1800-1867) used his great reflector, he found they were to be numbered by the million; and when Sir Frederick William Herschel (1738-1822) examined the "milky way," he learned it was composed of countless myriads! How came it that Moses and Jeremiah used expressions so far in advance of the knowledge of their day, unless guided by Omniscience? "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that *day*...he that is in the field...in that *night* there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left" (Luk 17:30-35). How strikingly accurate: day on one side of the earth, night on the other!—a fact quite unknown in Luke's time!

30. *Its ineffable purity.* This appears relatively, by comparing the Bible with other writings, for it far excels all human codes of law in the injunctions, prohibitions, and motives, as the light of a sunny day does that of a foggy one. It is equally evident when considered absolutely, in itself lays open, as no other book, the turpitude and horrid nature of sin as "the abominable thing" which God hates (Jer 44:4), and which we are to detest and shun. It never gives the least indulgence or dispensation to sin, nor do any of its teachings lead to licentiousness. It sternly condemns sin in all its forms, and makes known the awful curse and wrath of God which are its due. It not only re-proves sin in the outward lives of men, but discovers the secret faults of the heart, which is its chief seat. It warns against its first motions, and legislates for the regulating of our spirits, requiring us to keep clean the fountain from which are "the issues of life" (Pro 4:23). Its promises are made unto holiness, and its blessings bestowed upon the pure in heart. The ineffable and exalted holiness of the Bible is its chief and peculiar excellency, as it is also the principal reason why it is disliked by the majority of the unregenerate.

The Bible forbids all impure desires and unjust thoughts, as well as deeds. It prohibits envy (Pro 23:17), and all forms of selfishness (Rom 15:1). It requires us to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Co 7:1), and bids us "abstain from all appearance of evil" (1Th 5:22)—injunctions which are quite foreign to the "moralists" of the ancients! Heavenly doctrine is to be matched with heavenly character and conduct. Its requirements penetrate into the innermost recesses of the soul, exposing and censuring all the corruptions found there. The law of man goes no farther than "thou shalt not steal," but that of God, "thou shalt not covet" (Exo 20:15,17). The law of man prohibits the act of adultery, that of God reprehends the looking upon a woman to lust after her (Mat 5:28). The law of man says, "thou shalt not kill" (Exo 20:13); that of God forbids all ill-will, malice, or hatred (1Jo 3:15). It strikes directly at that which fallen nature most cherishes and craves: "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!" (Luk 6:26)—a denunciation of no human invention! It prohibits the spirit of revenge, enjoins the forgiveness of injuries, and contrary to the self-righteousness of our hearts, inculcates *humility*.

Though we have now set forth no fewer than thirty separate lines of evidence for the divine Authorship of the Scriptures, we are far from having exhausted the subject. We might have shown that the divine inspiration of the Bible is attested by its miraculous preservation through the centuries, its unrivalled influence upon humanity, its perennial freshness, its inexhaustible fullness, its marvellous unity, its verification in Christian experience; but we

have previously written thereon. Separate sections could have been devoted to the setting forth of its minute accuracy, its pride-abasing contents, its inculcation of altruism, its power to search the conscience, its intense realism—dealing not with theorizings and idealizings, but the actualities of life, its utter unworldliness, its sanctifying tendency, its teaching on Providence; but we forbore lest the reader be wearied, and because young preachers should now be able to work them out for themselves.

SLEEPY SAINTS

Part Two

“Went forth to meet the bridegroom” (Mat 25:1) denotes a craving for fellowship with and a definite seeking after Him, and where *they* be absent, it is vain to think we are among those who “love his appearing” (2Ti 4:8). Those words refer to the exercise of the believer’s graces, so that he can say, “My soul followeth hard after thee” (Psa 63:8). Of *faith*, acted upon its Object, viewing Him as His person and perfections are portrayed in the Word. Of *hope*, expecting to meet with Him, for Him to manifest Himself unto us (Joh 14:21), as well as being for ever with Him. Of *love*, which desires its Beloved and cannot be content away from Him. It is for the affections to be set upon “those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col 3:1), resulting in a stranger and pilgrim character on earth (1Pe 2:11). It is a going out of self, absorbed with the One who loves us and gave Himself for us. Only so can He be experientially encountered, beheld with delight, fellowshiped. That “went forth to meet the bridegroom” (Mat 25:1) is *such* a going forth of the affections and exercise of our graces upon Him as made Paul to say, “But what things *were* gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phi 3:7-8).

“While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept” (Mat 25:5). How pathetic! How searching and solemn! The season of *His* tarrying was the time of *their* failing. They did not continue as they began. Their graces were not kept in healthy exercise. They ceased to attend unto the great business assigned them. They grew weary of well-doing (2Th 3:13). Instead of occupying our heads with the “prophetic” fulfilment of the verse, we need to bare our hearts and suffer them to be searched by it. Instead of saying, Those words now accurately describe the present condition of Christendom as a whole, we need to inquire how far they pertain to each of us individually. Far more to the point is it to ask myself, *Am I* a slumbering and sleeping Christian? Nor is that question to be answered hurriedly. If on the one hand, I need to beware of thinking more highly of myself than I ought, or pretend all is well with me when such is not the case; on the other, God does not require me to act the part of a hypocrite, and in order to acquire a reputation for humility, claim to be worse than I am. Peter was not uttering a presumptuous boast when he said unto Christ, “Thou knowest that I love thee” (Joh 21:15-17). But Judas was an imposter when he greeted Him with a kiss (Luk 22:48).

But before we can truthfully answer the question, *Am I* spiritually asleep?, we must first ascertain what are the marks of one who *is* so. Let us then, in order to assist the honest inquirer, describe some of the *characteristics* of sleep. And since we are not making any effort to impress the learned, we will be as simple as possible. The things which characterize the body when it is asleep will help us to determine when the soul is so. When the body is asleep, it is in a state of inactivity, all its members being in repose. It is also a state of unconsciousness, when the normal exercises of the mind are suspended. It is therefore a state of insensibility to danger, of complete helplessness. Spiritual sleep is that condition wherein the faculties of the believer’s soul are inoperative and when his graces no longer perform their several offices. When the mind ceases to engage itself with divine things, and the graces be not kept in healthy exercise, a state of slothfulness and inertia ensues. When the grand truths of Scripture regarding God and Christ, sin and grace, heaven and hell, exert not a lively and effectual influence upon us, we quickly become drowsy and neglectful.

A slumbering faith is an inactive one. It is not exercised upon its appointed Objects, nor performing its assigned tasks. It is neither drawing upon that fullness of grace which is available in Christ for His people, nor is it acting on the precepts and promises of the Word. Though there still be a mental assent to the truth, yet the heart is no longer suitably affected by that which concerns practical godliness. Where such be the case, a Christian will be governed more by tradition, sentiment, and fancy, rather than by gratitude, the fear of the Lord, and care to please Him. So

too when his hope becomes sluggish, he soon lapses into a spiritual torpor. Hope is a desirous and earnest expectation of blessedness to come. It looks away from self and this present scene and is enthralled by “the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1Co 2:9). As it eyes the goal and the prize, it is enabled to run with patience the race set before us. But when hope slumbers, he becomes absorbed with the objects of time and sense, and allured and stupefied with present and perishing things. Likewise when love to God be not vigorous, there is no living to His glory; self-love and self-pity actuating us. When the love of Christ ceases to constrain us to self-denial and a following of the example He has left us, the soul has gone to sleep.

Where those cardinal graces be not in healthy exercise, the Christian loses his relish for the means of grace, and if he attempts to use them, it is but perfunctorily. The Bible is read more from habit or to satisfy conscience than with eager delight, and then no impression is left on the heart, nor is there any sweet meditation thereon afterwards. Prayer is performed mechanically, without any conscious approach unto God or communing with Him. So in attending public worship and the hearing of the Word: the duty is performed formally and without profit. When the body sleeps, it *neither eats nor drinks*: so it is with the soul. Faith is the hand which receives, hope the saliva which aids digestion, love the masticator and assimilator of what is partaken. But when they cease to function, the soul is starved, and it becomes weak and languid. The more undernourished be the body, the less strength and ability has it for its tasks. In like manner, a neglected soul is unfit for holy duties, and the most sacred exercises become burdensome. Thus, when a saint finds his use of the means of grace wearisome and the discharge of spiritual privileges irksome, he may know that his soul is slumbering Godwards.

In the parable itself, four causes of spiritual sleep are indicated.

1. *Failure to remain watchful*. In its wider sense, “watching” signifies an earnest taking heed unto ourselves and our ways, realizing how prone we are to “turn again to folly” (Psa 85:8). So long as the saint be left in this world, he is in constant danger of bringing reproach upon the holy Name he bears, and becoming a stumbling-block to his brethren. Watchfulness (the opposite of carelessness) is exercising a diligent concern and care for our souls, avoiding all occasions to sin, resisting temptation (Mat 26:41). It is to “stand fast in the faith, quit you like men” (1Co 16:13)—be regular in our duties. When we be lax in serving the Lord, in mortifying our lusts, and less fervent and frequent in prayer, then slumber has begun to steal over us. Ultimately, it respects “looking for that blessed hope” (Ti 2:13), which is a very different thing from awaiting the fulfilment of prophecy or the accomplishing of an item in God’s “dispensational programme.” It is far more than expecting an important event, namely, the second advent of Christ Himself; and that implies delight in Him, yearning after Him, practical readiness for His appearing: Luke 12:35-36.

2. *The Bridegroom’s delay* resulted in lack of perseverance on their part. Since we know not how soon or how long deferred will be our call to depart from this world, we need to be unremitting in duty, in a state of constant readiness. Not only a desirous expectation, but a “patient waiting for Christ” (2Th 3:5) is required of us. “Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching...And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants...And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through” (Luk 12:37-39). It was because Moses tarried so long in the Mount that Israel grew weary of waiting and gave way to their lusts—a warning to us not to relax our vigilance. How long had the Old Testament saints to wait for His first advent! “Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it...Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts” (Jam 5:7-8), exercising faith and hope. See Luke 21:36.

3. *Intimacy with graceless professors*. The wise virgins failed because they were in too close contact and fellowship with the foolish ones. That is confirmed by the divine warning, “Be not deceived: evil communications [the verbal form of that Greek word is rendered ‘communed with’ in Act 24:26] corrupt good manners,” which is immediately followed by “Awake to righteousness, and sin not” (1Co 15:33-34), showing us that intimacy with the Christless produces lethargy. “We are more susceptible of evil than good: we catch a disease from one another, but we do not get health from one another. The conversations of the wicked have more power to corrupt than the good to excite virtue. A man that would keep himself awake unto God, and mind the saving of his soul, must shake off evil company”—Thomas Manton (1620-1677). See Psalm 119:115. It is not the openly profane, but the loose and careless professor who is the greatest menace to the Christian. Hence, “having a form of godliness, but denying [in-action] the power thereof: from such *turn away*” (2Ti 3:5).

4. *Inattention to the initial danger*: They “slumbered” (a lighter form) before they slept! How that shows the need for taking solemn and earnest heed to the beginnings of spiritual decline! If we yield to a spirit of languor, we shall soon lapse into a sound sleep. One degree of slackness and carelessness leads to another: “Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep” (Pro 19:15). Once our zeal abates and our love cools, we become remiss and heedless. If we do

not fight against a cold formality when engaged in sacred exercises, we shall ultimately cease them entirely. All backsliding begins in the heart! Sin stupefies before it hardens. If we cease to heed the gentle strivings of the Spirit, conscience will become calloused. “David, when he fell into adultery and blood, he was like one in a swoon... We have need to stand always upon our watch. Great mischiefs would not ensue if we took notice of the beginnings of those distempers which afterwards settle upon us”—T. Manton.

Other causes of spiritual sleepiness which are not directly indicated in the parable are specified in or may be deduced from other passages. For example: “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way” (Psa 119:37). The apposition of those two petitions clearly connotes that an undue occupation with worldly things has a deadening effect upon the heart. Nothing has a more enervating influence on the affections of a believer than for him to allow himself an inordinate liberty in carnal vanities. Again, “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares... Watch ye therefore, and pray always” (Luk 21:34-36). Gluttony not only dulls the senses of the body, but renders the mind sluggish too; and thereby the whole man is unfitted for the discharge of spiritual duties, which call for the engaging and putting forth of “*all* that is within [us]” (Psa 103:1); equally so do carking cares which engross the attention and stupefy the understanding render the affections torpid. Yet more searching is it to observe that “be sober” *precedes* “be vigilant” in 1 Peter 5:8. Sobriety is freedom from excesses, particularly a sparing use made of the lawful comforts of this life. Any form of intemperance breeds inertia. If, then, we are able to keep wide awake, we must be “temperate in *all* things” (1Co 9:25).

The *consequences* of spiritual sloth are inevitable and obvious. Space allows us to do little more than name some of the chief ones. (1) Grace becomes inoperative. When faith be not exercised upon Christ, it nods and ceases to produce good works. When hope languishes and becomes inactive, the heart is no longer lifted above the things of time and sense by a desirous expectation of good things to come. Then love declines and is no longer engaged in pleasing and glorifying God. Zeal slumbers and instead of fervour, there is heartless formality in the use of means and performance of duties. (2) We are deprived of spiritual discernment, and no longer able to experientially perceive the vanity of earthly things and value of heavenly, and the need of pressing forward unto them. (3) A drowsy inattention to God’s providences. Eyes closed in sleep take no notice of His dealings with us, weigh not the things which befall us. Mercies are received as a matter of course, and signs of God’s displeasure are disregarded (Isa 42:24-25). (4) Unconcernedness in the commission of sin, so that we cease mortifying our lusts and resisting the devil. Spiritual stupidity makes us insensible to our danger. It was while David was taking his ease that he yielded to the devil (2Sa 11:1-2). (5) The Holy Spirit is grieved, His gracious operations are suspended, and His comforts withheld. (6) So far from us overcoming the world, when our spiritual senses be dulled, we are absorbed with its attractions or weighted down by its cares. (7) We are robbed by our enemies (Luk 12:39)—of God’s providential smile, of our peace and joy. (8) Fruitlessness: see Proverbs 24:30-31. (9) Carnal complacency: peace and joy being derived from pleasant circumstances and earthly possessions, rather than Christ and our heritage in Him. (10) Spiritual poverty: see Proverbs 24:33-34. (11) Indifference to the cause and interests of Christ: it was while men slept Satan sowed his tares, and abuses crept into the church. (12) A practical unpreparedness for Christ’s coming: Luke 21:36; Rev 16:15.

Let us now point out some of the *correctives*. (1) Spiritual sleepiness is best prevented by our faith being engaged with the person and perfections of Christ. It is not monastic retirement, nor the relinquishment of our lawful connection with the world, but the fixing of our minds and affections upon the transcendent excellency of the Saviour, which will most effectually preserve us from being hypnotized by the baits of Satan. A believing and adoring view of Him who is “fairer than the children of men” (Psa 45:2) will dim the lustre of the most attractive objects in this world. When the One who is “altogether lovely” is beheld by anointed eyes, the flowery paths of this scene become a dreary wilderness, and the soul is quickened to press forward unto Him, until it sees the King in His beauty face to face. (2) Especially will a keeping fresh in our hearts the unspeakable sufferings of the Saviour draw us away from threatened rivals, and inspire grateful obedience to Him. “For the love of Christ [particularly His dying love] constraineth us” (2Co 5:14). (3) By praying daily for God to quicken and revive us. (4) By being doubly on our guard when things are going smoothly and easily. (5) By maintaining a lively expectation of Christ’s appearing (Heb 9:28). (6) By attending to such exhortations as Hebrews 12:2-3, allowing no abatement of our vigour. (7) By putting on the whole armour of God (Eph 6:13-18). ❧

NOVEMBER

HONOURING GOD

“Them that honour me I will honour” (1Sa 2:30). Those words were addressed unto Eli after he had failed lamentably in his duty both as a father and as the high priest of Israel. His sons were wild and wayward, and he “restrained them not” (1Sa 3:13)—no, not even when they “made themselves vile,” and by their evil example, “[made] the LORD’S people to transgress” (1Sa 2:22-24). Interpretatively, Eli had “[honoured his] *sons* above [Jehovah]” (1Sa 2:29); and therefore, a terrible judgment from heaven fell upon himself and his house. Therein we behold a most striking contrast. When Israel committed idolatry at Shittim and one of them was caught in the act, the grandson of Aaron took a javelin and slew the man of Israel and his heathen paramour. In consequence, the Lord said, “Phinehas...hath turned my wrath away.” But more, “Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God” (Num 25:10-13). Phinehas the priest had honoured God, and God highly honoured him and his family. Eli had dishonoured Him, and he and his sons brought down condign judgment onto themselves (1Sa 2:31-36).

What has been pointed out above illustrates a fundamental principle in the governmental ways of God—namely, that He regulates His providences according to our conduct. Those who give Him His proper place in their lives are richly rewarded here, as well as hereafter. God’s dealings with us in this life are largely determined by the manner and measure in which we esteem and magnify Him. What is signified by “honouring” the Lord is clearly exemplified by the case of Phinehas: he put the glory of God’s name above all personal and sentimental considerations, being zealous in promoting and protecting His interests here on earth. Contrastively, what is meant by *not* “honouring” the Lord appears in the sad failure of Eli and his sons, who thought more of personal and family concerns than of hallowing God. In what follows, we seek to show some of the most important things that are included in this expression, “them that honour *me*.”

God Himself. This requires that we have right views of Him. Unless our thoughts about Him be shaped by what Scripture reveals concerning God’s being, character, and perfections, we shall entertain the most erroneous and degrading ideas of Him. Such, alas, is the case with the great majority today even in Christendom: to them the Deity of Holy Writ is “the unknown God.” The popular conception now prevailing is that God is fickle, sentimental, and weak, so that He has much cause to complain “thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself” (Psa 50:21). His absolute sovereignty, His ineffable justice, His awe-inspiring majesty, His ineffable holiness, are unperceived by multitudes of professing Christians. God is to be honoured by ascribing to Him the glory of His matchless excellency (Exo 15:11; Psa 104:1). He is to be honoured by sanctifying Him in our hearts (Isa 8:13). By trusting, adoring, and obeying Him. He is to be honoured in our public worship: “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints” (Psa 89:7). “Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious” (Psa 66:2).

His Son. Nothing is so dear unto God as the honouring of Christ. No sooner was He laid in the manger than a multitude of the heavenly host was sent over Bethlehem’s plains to proclaim, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luk 2:14). When in Servant form He was baptized in the Jordan, the heavens were opened, and the voice of the Father was heard saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat 3:17). When suffering unspeakable humiliation upon the cross, He moved the centurion to testify, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Mat 27:54). After His mission on earth was completed, God highly exalted Him by seating Him at His own right hand. It is His express will “that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father” (Joh 5:23): all manner of worship which is due to the Father is due to the Son (Rev 5). We honour Christ by resting on His finished work, by taking His yoke upon us, by obeying His precepts, by following the example He has left us, by showing forth His praises.

His Word. God has “magnified [his] word above all [his] name” (Psa 138:2), that is above every other medium through which His perfections are revealed. His wisdom and power are displayed in creation and providence, but His will and the way of salvation are made known in His Word. Our reverence for the Word indicates the measure

in which we truly honour God. Our reverence for the Word is manifested by receiving it without question or qualification as the inspired and infallible communication from God. By yielding unreservedly thereto, subordinating reason and all natural inclinations to its divine authority. By taking it as our sole Rule and Standard in all matters of faith and practice, so that the determining question is not how do others believe and act, but what saith the Scriptures? (Act 17:11). By meditating upon it day and night, making it the food of our souls. By our characters being formed and conduct regulated by its teachings: obeying its statutes, heeding its warnings, drawing strength and comfort from its promises.

His Sabbath. Our proper observance thereof is made a basic test of our honouring of the Lord (Isa 58:13). Its institution and divine observance is placed upon the very frontispiece of Holy Writ (Gen 2:2-3). It proclaims the Creator of heaven and earth and is a perpetual witness against the lie of evolution (Exo 20:11). It now celebrates the rising again of our Lord from the dead (Psa 118:22-24). It is an emblem of the eternal rest provided for the people of God (Heb 4:9-10). The most striking example of its holy observance by believers is found in Luke 23:56. Devoted women purposed to show respect to their Lord by anointing His dead body, which had been hurriedly placed in the grave. Accordingly, they “prepared spices and ointments,” but instead of performing love’s office that night or next morning, they “rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.” Not until the Sabbath was over did they go to the sepulchre with their spices. And they were the first to whom the risen Saviour appeared (Mat 28:9). That is recorded, my reader, for our learning.

His Gospel. It is in the proclamation of the same, as a revelation of divine grace through Christ unto sinners, that the churches most honour God. The Law must indeed be preached, yet in subserviency to the Gospel. The sinner requires to hear what the Law charges him with, that he may learn his need of fleeing to Christ for discharge from its curse and condemnation. While “by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:20), nevertheless, it is not by the preaching of the Law that sinners are delivered from its penalty. No, it is the Gospel of Christ which is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom 1:16). Now the triune God is honoured by the churches when the Gospel is preached in its unadulterated purity and its unfettered freeness; as it is slighted and insulted by the pulpit when displaced by any other substitute.

His Spirit. We must confine ourselves now to a single aspect. He is honoured by the evangelist and by the church when He is looked unto and counted upon for His blessing on the preaching of the Gospel. It needs to be clearly recognized that neither the faithfulness nor the earnestness—still less the logic or the rhetoric—of the preacher will or can quicken a single soul. “Not by [human] might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zec 4:6). Alas that the churches, in their desire to “appeal to the young people,” now have more faith in worldly methods and musical attractions; and in consequence, the Spirit is quenched. To our knees, in supplication to Him, is the great need and call of the hour.

His Cause. “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase” (Pro 3:9). Remember that He it is who “giveth thee power to get wealth” (Deu 8:18). And think you that He does so in order that we may gratify selfish lusts and indulge extravagant tastes? No, God’s bounty unto us is to be used in works of piety and charity, and not wasted upon luxuries and vanities. Christ still sits over against the treasury, beholding how we cast into it (Mar 12:41; Heb 13:8). Our “substance” must not be limited unto money, but understood as including all the talents which God has given us: given, for the express purpose of honouring Him, and not for magnifying ourselves. All that we are and have is to be dedicated to His glory.

“Them that honour me I *will honour*” (1Sa 2:30). All history attests it. Those nations which have honoured God, circulated His Word, and respected His Sabbath, have been most blest by Him. Those churches which have preached His Gospel and depended on His Spirit have been the fruitful and flourishing ones. Those individuals who have honoured His Son and been regulated by the Scriptures have enjoyed most peace and joy in their souls.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

59. Hebrews 13:20-21

This prayer contains a remarkable epitome of the entire epistle—an epistle to which every minister of the Gospel should devote special attention. Nothing else is so much needed today as expository sermons on the epistle to the Romans and the Hebrews: the former supplying that which is best suited to repel the Legalism and Arminianism which are now so rife; and the latter to refute the cardinal errors of Rome and expose the sacerdotal pretensions of her priests. It provides the divine antidote to the poisonous spirit of ritualism, which is now making such fatal inroads into so many sections of a decadent Protestantism. That which occupies the central portion in this vitally important and most blessed treatise is the Priesthood of Christ, which embodies the substance of what was foreshadowed both in Melchizedek and Aaron. Therein it is shown that His one perfect sacrifice has forever displaced the Levitical institutions and made an end of the whole Judaic system. That all-sufficient oblation of the Lord Jesus made complete atonement for the sins of His people, fully satisfying every legal claim which God had upon them, thereby rendering needless any efforts of theirs to placate Him. “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb 10:14), or set apart unto God in all the excellence of His finished work.

God’s acceptance of Christ’s atoning sacrifice was demonstrated by His raising Christ from the dead and setting Him at the right hand of the Majesty on high. That which characterized Judaism was sin, death, and distance from God—the perpetual shedding of blood and the people shut out from the divine presence. But that which marks Christianity is a risen and enthroned Saviour, who has put away the sins of His people from before the face of God, and has secured for them the right of access unto Him. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness [liberty] to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Heb 10:19-22); that is, with full confidence in the infinite merits of Christ’s blood, depending entirely thereon. In his prayer, the apostle makes request that the whole of what he had set before them in the doctrinal part of the epistle might be effectually applied unto their hearts. In a brief but comprehensive sentence, Paul asks that there might be wrought in the redeemed Hebrews all unto which he had exhorted them in the previous chapters. We shall consider the object, plea, request, and doxology of this benedictory invocation.

“Now the God of peace” is the One to whom this prayer is directed. As we have intimated in earlier articles, the various titles by which the apostles addressed the Deity were not used at random, but were chosen with spiritual discrimination. They were neither so poverty-stricken in language as to always supplicate God under the same name, nor so careless as to speak with Him under the one which first came to mind. Instead, in their approaches to Him, they carefully singled out that attribute of the divine nature, or that particular relationship that God sustains to His people, which most accorded with the specific blessing they sought. The same principle of discrimination appears in the Old Testament prayers. When holy men of old sought strength, they looked to the Mighty One. When they desired forgiveness, they appealed to “the multitude of [his] tender mercies” (Psa 51:1; 69:16). When they cried for deliverance from their enemies, they pleaded His covenant faithfulness. We dwelt upon this title, “the God of peace,” in our article upon Romans 15:33 (June 1944); and in addition to our previous remarks thereon, would now point out:

First, it is a distinctively *Pauline* title, no other New Testament writer employing the expression. Its usage here is one of the many internal proofs that he was the penman of this epistle. It occurs just seven times in his writings: in Romans 15:33, and 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 3:16; and here in Hebrews 13:20. It is evident therefrom that our apostle had a special delight in contemplating God in this particular character. And well he might, for it is an exceedingly blessed and comprehensive one; and for that reason, we have done our best, according to the measure of light granted us, to open its meaning. In the sequel, we shall suggest why Paul, rather than any of the other of the apostles, coined this expression.

Second, it is a *forensic* title, viewing God in His official character as Judge. It tells us that He is now reconciled to believers. It imports that the enmity and strife which formerly obtained between them is now ended. That previous hostility had been occasioned by man’s apostasy from his Maker and Lord. The entrance of sin into this world disrupted the harmony between heaven and earth, severed communion between God and man, and brought in discord and strife. Sin evoked God’s righteous displeasure and called for His judicial action. Mutual alienation ensued, for a holy God cannot be at peace with sin, being “angry with the wicked every day” (Psa 7:11). But divine wisdom could devise a way whereby rebels should be restored to His favour without any reflection upon His honour, and

divine grace did provide a means which put away their sins and fully satisfied His justice. Through the obedience and sufferings of Christ, full reparation was made to the Law and peace was re-established between God and sinners. By the gracious operations of God's Spirit, that enmity which was in the hearts of His people is overcome, and they are brought into loyal subjection to Him. Thereby the discord had been removed and amity created.

Third, it is a *restrictive* title. God is "the God of peace" only to those who are savingly united unto Christ, for "there is therefore now no condemnation" to them which are in him (Rom 8:1). But far different is the case with those who refuse to bow to the scepter of the Lord Jesus and take shelter beneath His atoning blood. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Joh 3:36). Note, it is not that he shall yet fall beneath God's wrath in the day of judgment, but that he is under it *now*, for he is under the curse of the divine Law. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against *all* ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom 1:18). Yea, more: by virtue of their federal relationship to Adam, all his descendants are "by nature the children of wrath" (Eph 2:3), entering this world as the objects of God's judicial displeasure. So far from being "the God of peace" to those who are out of Christ, "The LORD is a man of war" (Exo 15:3). "He is terrible to the kings of the earth" (Psa 76:12).

Fourth, this title "the God of peace" is therefore an *evangelical* one. The good news which His servants are commissioned to preach to every creature are designated "the gospel of peace" (Rom 10:15). Most appropriately is it so named, for it sets forth the glorious person of the Prince of peace, and His all-sufficient work whereby He "made peace through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20). It is the business of the evangelist to explain how Christ did so, namely, by His entering the awful breach which sin had made between God and men, having transferred to Him the iniquities of all who should believe on Him, suffering the full penalty for the same. When the Sinless One was made sin for His people, He came under the curse of the Law and the wrath of God, and therefore did He give orders, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zec 13:7). Justice having been satisfied, God is pacified, and all who are justified by faith "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1).

Fifth, it is therefore a *covenant* title, for all that was transacted between God and Christ was according to everlasting stipulation: "And the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zec 6:13). It had been eternally agreed that the Good Shepherd should make complete satisfaction for the sins of His flock, reconciling God to them and them to God. That compact between God and the Surety of His elect is expressly denominated a "covenant of peace," and the inviolability of the same appears in that blessed declaration, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee" (Isa 54:10). The shedding of Christ's blood was the sealing or ratifying of that covenant, as Hebrews 13:20 goes on to intimate. In consequence thereof, the face of the Supreme Judge is wreathed in smiles of benignity as He beholds His people in His Anointed One.

Sixth, this title "the God of peace" is also a *dispensational* one; and as such, it had a special appeal for the one who so frequently employed the same. Though a Jew by birth, and a Hebrew of the Hebrews by training, he was called of God to "preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8). That suggests what may be the reason why this appellation of Deity is peculiar to himself, for whereas the other apostles ministered and wrote principally to the Circumcision, Paul was pre-eminently the apostle to the Uncircumcision; therefore, he more than any would adore God, that peace was now to be preached unto those who were afar off, as well as to them that were nigh. A special revelation was made to him concerning Christ, that "he is our peace, who hath made both [believing Jews and Gentiles] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition [which under Judaism had divided them]...for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace [between them]; And that he might reconcile both unto God" (Eph 2:14-16). Thus, there was a particular propriety in the apostle of the Gentiles addressing God by this title when making supplication for the Hebrews—as he had done when praying for the former.

Seventh, this is a *relative* title: by which we mean it is closely connected with Christian experience. The saints are not only the subjects of that judicial peace which Christ made with God on their behalf, but they are also the partakers of divine peace experientially. The measure which they enjoy the same is determined by the extent to which they are obedient to God, for piety and peace are inseparable. The intimate connection there is between the peace of God and the sanctifying of believers, which appears both from 1 Thessalonians 5:23, and here in Hebrews 13:20-21; for in each, request is made for the promotion of practical holiness, and in each, the "God of peace" is supplicated. When holiness reigned over the whole universe, peace prevailed also. There was no war in heaven until one of the chief of the angels became a devil, and fomented a rebellion against the thrice holy God. As sin brings strife and misery, so holiness begets peace of conscience. Holiness is well pleasing to God; and when He is well

pleased, all is peace. The more this prayer be pondered in detail, and as a whole, the more the appropriateness of its address will appear.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb 13:20). This reference unto the deliverance of Christ from the tomb we regard as *the plea* on which the apostle based the request that follows. Since we consider this to be one of the most important verses in the New Testament, we shall give our best attention to every word in it; that more so, as part of its wondrous contents is so little apprehended today. We should observe, first, the character in which the Saviour is here viewed. Second, the act of God in bringing Him forth from the dead. Third, the connection between the act and His office as “the God of peace.” Fourth, how that the meritorious cause of the same was “the blood of the everlasting covenant.” Fifth, the powerful motive which the same provides for the saint to “come boldly to the throne of grace,” there to “obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). May the Holy Spirit deign to be our Guide as we prayerfully ponder this portion of the truth.

“That great shepherd of the sheep.” This title was most pertinent and appropriate in an epistle to Jewish converts, for the Old Testament had taught them to look for the Messiah in that specific relation. Moses and David, eminent types of Him, were shepherds. Of the one it is said, “Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron” (Psa 77:20); and under the name of the other, God promised the Messiah unto them: “And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant [the antitypical] David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd” (Eze 34:23). That Paul here made reference to that particular prophecy is clear from what it went on to say: “And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods” (Eze 34:25). Here in Hebrews 13:20, the same three things are brought together: the God of peace, the great Shepherd, and the everlasting covenant—and in a manner (in perfect accord with the theme of the epistle) which refuted the erroneous conception which the Jews had formed of their Messiah. They imagined He would secure for them an external deliverance as Moses had, and a prosperous national state as David set up; having no idea that He would shed His precious blood and be brought down into the grave. Yet they should have done so.

When Christ appeared in their midst, He definitely presented Himself unto the Jews in this character. He not only affirmed, “I am the good shepherd,” but added, “the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (Joh 10:11), even that “Lamb of God” as His forerunner had hailed Him (Joh 1:29). In that dual character, or under that twofold revelation, the Lord Jesus had been prophesied in Isaiah 53:6: “All we like sheep have gone astray...and the LORD hath laid on him [i.e. the Shepherd, whose the sheep are!] the iniquity of us all.” Then in the next verse, it was foreannounced, “he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” Note that word, “*brought* as a lamb,” and behold the Holy Spirit guiding the apostle to say that God—not “raised,” but—“brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep.” His being brought back again from the dead necessarily imported His having first been brought into death. How minutely accurate is the language of Holy Writ and how perfect the harmony—their *verbal* harmony—of the Old and New Testaments!

Peter, in his first epistle, under the Spirit, appropriated the same wonderful prophecy to the Lord Jesus, for after terming Him the “lamb without blemish and without spot,” by whom we are redeemed (1Pe 1:18-19), went on to cite some of the predictive expressions of Isaiah 53—namely, that which spoke of us “as sheep going astray,” and that which referred to Christ “by whose stripes [we are] healed”; and that in bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, it was as “the Shepherd and Bishop of [our] souls” (1Pe 2:24-25). He there transacted. Thus he was led to expound Isaiah portraying the Saviour as a Lamb in death and a Shepherd in resurrection. The excuselessness of the Jews’ ignorance of Christ in this particular office appears still further in that through yet another of their prophets, it had been announced that God would say, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd” (Zec 13:7). There, God is viewed in His judicial character as being angry with the Shepherd for our sakes: that since He bore our sins, justice must take satisfaction from Him. Thus was “the chastisement of our peace” (Isa 53:5) laid upon Him, and the Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep (Joh 10:11) as a satisfaction unto the righteous claims of God.

“That great shepherd.” From what has been pointed out above, we may the better perceive why the apostle designated Him thus, rather than “*the* great shepherd.” “*That* great shepherd”: the One not only foreshadowed by Abel, by the patriarchal shepherds, by David, but also as portrayed in the Messianic predictions. We should note that both of His *natures* were contemplated under this appellation: “My shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD” (Zec 13:7). As the profound Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) pointed out centuries ago, this title also implies all of Christ’s *offices*. His prophetic “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd” (Isa 40:11, and compare

Psa 23:1-2); His priestly—"the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (Joh 10:11); His royal, for the same passage which announced that He should be Shepherd over God's people also denominated Him a "prince" (Eze 34:23-25). So also in the New Testament: "When the Son of man shall...sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (Mat 25:31-32). He is indeed that "great shepherd," all-sufficient for His flock.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep." See there the relation of the Redeemer to the redeemed. Shepherd and sheep are correlative terms: one cannot properly term any man a "shepherd" if he has no sheep. The idea of Christ as Shepherd necessarily implies the chosen flock. Christ is the Shepherd of the *sheep*, and not of the wolves (Luk 10:3), nor even the goats (Mat 25:32), for He has received no charge from God to save them—how the basic truth of particular redemption stares us in the face on almost every page of Scripture! "He did not lay down His life for the whole herd of mankind, but for the flock of the elect which was given to Him by the Father as He declared: John 10:14-16, 26"—John Owen (1616-1683). Observe, too, how this title intimates His *Mediatorship*: as the Shepherd, He is not the Lord of the flock, but the Father's Servant to take charge of and care for it: "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me" (Joh 17:6). Christ's relation to us is seen again in "*our* [not *the*] Lord Jesus" (Heb 13:20), and therefore, our Shepherd—*ours* in His pastoral office, which He is still discharging; ours, as brought from the dead, for we rose in Him (Col 3:1).

"That great shepherd of the sheep" emphasizes His immeasurable superiority over all the typical and ministerial shepherds of Israel: just as "a great high priest" (Heb 4:14) stresses His eminency over Aaron and the Levitical priests. In like manner, it denotes His authority over the pastor which He sets over His churches, for He is "the chief Shepherd" (1Pe 5:4) in relation to all the under-shepherds. He is Shepherd of souls; and one of them is worth far more than the whole world, which is the value He sets upon them by redeeming them with His own blood. This adjective also looks at the excellence of His flock: He is the great Shepherd over all—both Jews and Gentiles. As He declared, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this [Jewish] fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (Joh 10:16)—"one flock" comprising the whole of the Old Testament and the New Testament saints. "That *great* shepherd" also respects His abilities: a particular knowledge of all His sheep, skill to heal and minister to them (Eze 24:16), power to effectually preserve them: "And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (Joh 10:28). Then how greatly should He be loved, trusted, honoured, and magnified!

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

39. Defeat, Part 2 (7:5-7)

The sad failure of Israel before Ai is one which calls for the most careful and prayerful study. Not only because it points, in a general way, a warning which needs to be taken to heart by all of God's people, especially so by His servants, but more particularly because of the book in which it is recorded and the grand truth which is there illustrated. As we proceed from chapter to chapter, it needs to be definitely borne in mind that the theme of Joshua is Israel's entry into and conquest of Canaan, and that this typified the Christian's occupation by faith of *his* heavenly heritage. In the earlier articles of this series, we emphasized that fact considerably, frequently pointing out the principles which must regulate the saints if they are to actually "possess their possessions" (Oba :17) in *this* life. Alas that so few of them *do* enjoy their inheritance—because of their failure to act by the same. We need not now enumerate and describe these principles: suffice it to say that they are all summed up in unremitting submission to the revealed will of God. While Israel followed that course, all went well for them; but as soon as they departed therefrom, disastrous was the consequence. And that is written for *our* learning (Rom 15:4). O that a teachable spirit may be granted both writer and reader.

"The upright shall have good things in possession" (Pro 28:10). The upright are they who walk with their eyes fixed on God, in subjection to His authority, and in dependence on His grace. While they maintain that character, they have the "good things" purchased by Christ not merely in promise and prospect, but in present "possession," enjoying real and blessed foretastes of their eternal portion. But when self-will and self-pleasing obtrude, they are made to eat the bitter fruits of their folly. And hence, it is that in the book we are now studying we are shown, both

in the crossing of the Jordan and the capture of Jericho, the blessed effects of Israel's obedience unto the Lord; and on the other hand, we have faithfully set before us—in the shameful defeat at Ai—the evil results which inevitably followed Israel's disobedience. In the one we are taught some of the secrets of *success*, or the things which must be attended to by us if we are to have the mighty power of God working in our behalf; while in the other is made known what are the certain precursors of the Lord's displeasure and of our being overcome by our enemies. The one is as necessary for our instruction as is the other.

It would be stating the same thing in a slightly different form and from another angle if we said, The principal subject developed in the book of Joshua is a showing unto God's people *how their enemies are to be conquered*, for Israel had to vanquish and dispossess the Canaanites before they could occupy their land. In like manner, the Christian must overcome the devil, the world, and the flesh before he can experimentally enjoy his heavenly heritage. Israel's warfare against the seven nations of the land was a figure of the believer's conflict with his spiritual foes. The grand lesson which is set before us in the type is that our foes can be subdued by none but the Lord, and that He will fight for us only so long as we are in complete subjection to Him and maintain entire dependence upon Him. "For *if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him; Then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you*" (Deu 11:22-23). Blessedly was that exemplified at Jericho; but the converse was demonstrated at Ai: the former is chronicled for our encouragement; the latter is narrated as a solemn warning for us to take to heart.

The first thing for us to heed—as we observe that the defeat of Ai followed immediately after the victory at Jericho—is the startling fact that the people of God are never in greater danger of giving place to pride and presumption than when God has signally blessed and prospered them. Never does a believer need to act more warily and in full dependence upon the Lord than when his graces are in lively exercise and his heart in an exhilarated frame. Unless he does so, self-confidence will creep in, and more reliance will be placed upon inherent grace than upon the One from whose fullness we need to be continually receiving "grace for grace" (Joh 1:16). No matter how strong be our faith, joyful our heart, energetic our grace, we must still look up for fresh supplies and renewings in the inner man; for without such, our graces will no longer act, no, not for a single hour. Only as we remain in the place of conscious weakness are we really strong. Only as the empty hand of a beggar continues to be extended, shall we receive "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phi 1:19). Alas, how often do we give the Lord occasion to complain, "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst [by thy self-sufficient attitude], I will not hear" (Jer 22:21).

The hidden cause of Israel's defeat at Ai was the sin of Achan, who had secretly committed a grievous trespass against the Lord (Jos 7:1); and as the sequel shows, it is a very solemn and serious matter to provoke Him. In this case, His displeasure was evinced by His leaving Israel to act in their own wisdom and strength, and that could issue in nought but disaster. Here we have illustrated the important truth that so long as there be an ungrieved Spirit in the midst of an assembly, He directs its counsels and moves its officers and members to work in a wise and becoming manner; but when He is slighted, then His gracious operations are suspended, and they are left to act in the energy of the flesh—to the dishonour of the Lord, and to their own undoing and sorrow. Thus it was here. Out of the hidden root of Achan's offence grew the more obvious causes of the Ai defeat. Pride and presumption were at work. Ai was regarded with contempt, as an easy prey (Jos 7:3); but to their own overthrow. Learn from this, my reader, that it is a fatal mistake to underestimate the strength of our enemies! It is only as we truly realize that our spiritual foes are too powerful for us to vanquish that we shall really seek help and strength from the Lord.

Alas, Joshua accepted the counsel of those who belittled Ai: "So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men" (Jos 7:4). And what was the inevitable outcome of such carnal self-confidence? This: "They fled before the men of Ai." What a spectacle! Behold attentively the consequence of leaving the place of humble dependency! Mark well what happens when we follow our own devices. Left to themselves, the courage of these men of war wholly deserted them. It is only as we take unto us "the whole armour of God," that we "may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Eph 6:13). If instead we lean upon the arm of flesh, it is certain to fail us. Sad it is to see those three thousand Israelites panic-stricken before the heathen, especially as the record of the same follows right after the final statement of chapter 6: "So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country" (Jos 6:27). How the ignominious defeat of his soldiers would reflect upon the name and fame of Israel's commander! Sadder still is it to know that *our* sinful failures not only injure ourselves and those people of God with whom we are connected, but that they also bring dishonour upon our Redeemer. Should not the realization of *that* make us "work out" our salvation "with fear and trembling" (Phi 2:12)?

"And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down" (Jos 7:5). How forcibly does this incident illustrate what was

repeatedly pointed out in the earlier articles. Israel's success in conquering Canaan depended entirely upon the Lord's showing Himself strong in their behalf, and that turned upon their unqualified obedience to Him. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) rightly pointed out, the check which they here received "served to let them know they were still upon their good behaviour." Success was to come from God and not their own valour, yet that success was bestowed only so long as they adhered to the pattern which He had given them. One essential feature in that pattern was that the unity of Israel must be preserved—a united front was to be presented to the enemy; consequently, "*all* the men of war" and "*all* the people" of Israel were bidden to march against Jericho (Jos 6:3, 5). But in connection with Ai, the spies counselled Joshua quite otherwise: "Make *not all* the people to labour thither" (Jos 7:3). He acceded: "So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men"; and now we see them in flight, some of them slain, and the remainder chased to "Shebarim" (Jos 7:4-5), which most significantly means "*breaches*"!

Next we are shown the effects which this disgrace had upon the congregation. When they learned of the retreat and heard that some of their brethren had been slain, "the hearts of the people melted, and became as water" (Jos 7:5). And well they might. Had not Joshua previously assured the nation, "Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites" (Jos 3:10)? Now that He was no longer leading them to victory, but suffering them to be overcome by their foes, they had reason to be thoroughly dejected. As M. Henry well remarked, "True Israelites tremble when God is angry." Here again we may note yet another striking contrast. When Jehovah had put forth His mighty power on Israel's behalf in the drying up of the Jordan, we are told that "all the kings of the Canaanites," when they heard of it, "their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more" (Jos 5:1). But here, the hearts of *Israel* "melted, and became as water" (Jos 7:5)! Nevertheless, even then, God was working in mercy unto Israel. By that painful and humiliating providence, He was about to bring to light the hidden things of darkness, give His people an opportunity to dissociate themselves from the trespass of Achan, and punish the culprit.

"And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads" (Jos 7:6). It is to be duly noted that nothing is here said of Joshua berating the soldiers for their cowardice, or of his expostulating with the people for their faint-heartedness. He did not prate about "the fortunes of war" and tell them there was no need to be dismayed, nor did he make any effort to raise their spirits. Rather did he realize the exceeding gravity of the situation and refuse to say, "Peace, peace" when he knew that something was radically wrong. The "elders"—the responsible heads of the nation—also recognized that the defeat was owing to the Lord's being provoked, and they too abased themselves before Him. The rending of their clothes was symbol of perturbation and lamentation (Gen 37:23-24; 2Sa 1:11), the putting of dust on their heads betokened distress and grief (1Sa 4:12; Job 2:12). How very different was *their* conduct from the foolish and fatal "optimism" that is now so rife, and which is nothing else than declining to face realities, a refusing to recognize the fact that the Lord is displeased and is withholding His blessing.

When things go seriously wrong, either with the individual Christian or with the local church, diligent and solemn examination is called for. When the providential frown of God be upon us, and we ignore the same or "seek to make the best of a bad job," we are only inviting still heavier chastisements. We are bidden to "hear ye the rod" (Mic 6:9), and not to disregard or steel our hearts against it; and the first thing required for us in order to ascertain its message is to humble ourselves before the One who wields it, for "*the meek* will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way" (Ps 25:9). When God afflicts us, we ought to afflict ourselves. "The day of the LORD [any season when He displays His displeasure and acts in judgment] is great and very terrible; and who can abide it? Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping...for he is gracious and merciful" (Joe 2:11-13). For thirty years past, that is what God has been saying—by His providences—to the whole of Christendom, and particularly to our nation. But alas, it has to be said of us, as Israel of old, "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved...have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock" (Jer 5:3).

"And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD" (7:6). It is to be carefully observed that not only did he now humbly take his place in the dust, but he did so before that sacred coffer which was the symbol of the Lord's throne and presence in Israel. Most suitably was that posture and position selected, for the holy ark had been grievously slighted! Both in the crossing of the Jordan and the march around Jericho, the ark had, by divine orders, been accorded the place of honour, as it was borne aloft by the priests, signifying unto Israel thereby that victory for them depended upon their covenant God being duly magnified and counted upon. His glory shone forth unmistakably as, by His almighty power, He had made a way for Himself and His people. It was Joshua's sad failure in not giving the ark its proper place, which was the immediate cause of Israel's humiliation at Ai. Not only had Israel's unity been broken by his heeding the boastful suggestion of the spies, but the guid-

ance and help of the ark was dispensed with, and thereby Jehovah had been affronted! It was, we believe, in the conscious realization of this, that Joshua now lay on his face before it.

Once before—and only once—had Israel suffered defeat at the hands of the heathen; and it is by comparing the two together that fuller light is obtained upon the incident now before us. Both that reverse in the wilderness and this one in the land issued from the same cause: the pride of self-confidence. The earlier defeat occurred just after the crisis at Kadeh-barnea when the nation succumbed to unbelief, refusing to follow the counsel of Caleb and Joshua, and listening to the God-dishonouring report of the ten spies. After hearing the divine sentence that all of them should perish in the wilderness, mourning and confessing their sin, they went to the opposite extreme, and in blatant self-sufficiency declared, “We...will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised” (Num 14:40). Moses at once rebuked them: “And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper. Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you. But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless *the ark* of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, *departed not* out of the camp. Then the Amalekites came down...and smote them” (Num 14:41-45). Thus, history repeated itself: in their mad assurance, the three thousand went to Ai without the ark and suffered defeat.

“And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD.” That act and attitude of his not only expressed an humbling of himself beneath the mighty hand of God, an unsparing self-judgment of his failure, but it also betokened a spirit of *hope*. Does the reader ask, How so? Because that which formed the lid of the ark was the “mercy-seat,” where forgiveness could be obtained on the ground of propitiation. Nor do we regard it as a straining of the verse to introduce this idea here: rather does it appear to us to be required by the Spirit’s having informed us that Joshua continued thus “until the eventide” (Jos 7:6). Very blessed indeed is that if it be remembered that the God of Israel had appointed “thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at *even*” (Exo 29:38-39). Then does not Joshua remaining before the ark until the time of the evening sacrifice confirm that thought that he did so in the expectation of receiving “an answer of peace” (Gen 41:16) of obtaining mercy through the Lamb! Let the reader compare 1 Kings 18:36; Ezra 9:4-5; Daniel 9:21!

Ere passing from this verse, its central figure needs to be contemplated from yet another angle. Does not Joshua’s falling “to the earth upon his face” (Jos 7:6) *foreshadow* once more the divine Saviour! When we remember that the root cause of the Ai calamity, which Joshua was here lamenting, was the trespass of Achan in “the accursed thing” (Jos 7:1) must we not recognize in Joshua’s humiliation thereat a striking and solemn prefiguration of the Redeemer’s anguish in Gethsemane? When entering upon the climax of His sufferings and the Surety of His people was about to be “made a curse”(Gal 3:13) for them before God, we are told that He “fell on his face, and prayed” (Mat 26:39). And the very next thing which Joshua here did was *to pray* (Jos 7:7). If it be objected that Joshua was acknowledging his own sad failure, we answer, That only brings out more pointedly the type, for in Gethsemane, the Holy One is seen as the Sinbearer, the iniquities of His people being laid upon Him. Yet in all things, He has the pre-eminence: very different indeed was *His* prayer in the Garden from that of Joshua’s on this occasion, for the types instruct us not only by comparison, but also by way of contrast—as in Israel’s eating of the manna, and later dying; not so with those who eat the Bread of Life (Joh 6:49-50).

“And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us?” (Jos 7:7). Here begins one of the prayers of the Old Testament, which, like those contained in the New, vary considerably both in tenor and tone. It is therefore well for us to inquire, What is prayer? That question may be answered in many ways, according as it be considered from various angles. Thus, prayer is communing with God, an adoring of Him. Prayer is offering praise to Him, a thanking Him for all His mercies. Prayer is also the making known of our needs unto God, and a looking to Him for the supply of the same. Likewise, it is an acknowledging of our sins before Him, and seeking His forgiveness and restoration. Further, it is a taking on our spirits the burdens of others and making intercession on their behalf. But here in Joshua 7, we have something quite different from any of those aspects of prayer, which, though an humbling one, is nevertheless one which all saints at some time or other in their lives need to avail themselves of. On this occasion, we behold Joshua overwhelmed, heavily burdened, deeply perturbed, and we hear him pouring out his heart before God without restraint. It is *our* privilege and duty to do so in similar seasons, though endeavouring to avoid his faults. It will bring relief to an oppressed spirit.

There was no eloquent phrasing, no pleading of the divine promises, no expressing of any definite petition in Joshua's prayer; but instead, an unstudied and spontaneous unburdening of himself before the Lord. If it be examined in a critical and carping spirit, it will be easy to detect its faults and condemn it for its incoherency and inconsistency. But whatever defects this prayer possessed, it must not be overlooked that it obtained a hearing from God! It will therefore be well for each of us to ponder Joshua 7:7-9, in the light of the title of Psalm 102: "A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD." Upon these words, an exceptionally favoured and honoured servant of God wrote: "You and I may be in various cases of affliction, [and] we may at times be overwhelmed with the same—it will be well with us if we act as the Psalmist here doth. I never in the whole of my life got any good by carrying my affliction, or speaking when overwhelmed with sorrow to anyone else; no, let it be with a saint of ever so great a degree in the school of Christ. When I have poured out my complaint before the Lord, I have. Blessed be His name for it."

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

23. In the Soul

We should be woefully unfaithful to our calling and fail lamentably in the exercise of our present task, did we not here issue a plain and solemn warning—one which we beg each reader, and especially the young preacher seriously to take to heart, namely, that something more than an intellectual belief in the existence of God and the inspiration of His Word is necessary to the soul's recovery. There are multitudes now in Hell who died and died in a firm belief that God *is* and that the Bible is a communication from Himself unto the children of men. It is one thing for the mind to be assured that creation must have a divine Creator, and quite another for the heart to be yielded up to Him. There is a radical difference between mental assent to the evidences of God's existence, and a wholehearted consent to take Him as *my God*: my only Lord, my chief Good, my supreme End—subject to Him delighting in Him, seeking His glory. So too with His Word. It is one thing to be thoroughly persuaded of the uniqueness and excellence of its content, it is quite another to submit to its authority and be regulated by its precepts. One may greatly admire the plan of redemption revealed therein, and yet have no acquaintance with its saving power!

The evidence adduced in the previous articles for the existence of God and the arguments produced in demonstration of the divine Authorship in the Bible, are amply sufficient for that purpose, yet they are incapable regenerating a single person or of producing saving faith in him. Though they be such as no infidel can refute, though they thoroughly expose the utter irrationality of scepticism, yet they will not be effectual in bringing one soul from spiritual death unto spiritual life. They are indeed sufficient to intellectually convince anyone who will impartially weigh the same, but they are unable to accomplish a spiritual transformation in the soul. Though they are strong enough to produce an historical faith, they are not to work saving faith. Something more is necessary for *that*. However desirable and valuable be a mental assent to the Bible's being the Word of God, we must not rest satisfied therewith. There is a vital difference between perceiving the transcendency of its teaching, its immeasurable superiority to all the writings of men, and for us to have a personal experience in our own soul of their sanctifying virtue. That can be acquired by no study or pains on our part, nor can it be imparted by the ablest reasoner or most searching preacher.

In the introductory article of this series, we stated that after treating of the manifestations which God has made of Himself in creation, in the moral nature of man, in His shaping of human history, in His incarnate Son, and in the sacred Scriptures, we would consider that saving revelation which He makes of Himself in the souls of His people. In each of the others, it was an *objective* revelation of God which engaged our attention; but this now concerns a subjective or inward revelation of Himself. This is a much more difficult branch of our subject, and one which requires to be handled with great care and reverence; yet it is the most vital of all so far as the eternal interests of the soul are concerned, and therefore, one which it behoves each of us to give our best attention unto. Yet there are few duties to which professing Christians are so reluctant to apply themselves. They would not think of crossing a river in a boat with insecure and leaky bottom, and yet will venture into the ocean of eternity on an *untested* (and, most probably, unsound) faith. All around us are those who mistake a theoretical knowledge of the Gospel for a saving acquaintance therewith.

There is a vast difference between being firmly persuaded that God is, and *knowing God* for myself, so as to have access to Him, communion with Him, delight in Him. Such a knowledge of Him cannot be obtained by any efforts on our part. It is impossible for a man by any exercise of his rational and reasoning powers, by acquired knowledge in the arts and sciences, or by philosophy or astronomy, to attain to the least spiritual knowledge of God. The existence of God may be known, His works seen and admired, His Word read and stored up in the mind, yet without any true and saving knowledge of the Triune Jehovah. No human study or learning can impart to us one spiritual idea of God and His Christ, or convey the slightest acquaintance with Him. The reader of these lines may acknowledge God, confess Him to be sovereign, holy, just, and good, and yet be entirely ignorant of Him to any good purpose. An infinite Being cannot be cognized by finite reason. “Canst thou by searching find out God?” (Job 11:7). We may indeed say of His wondrous works, “Lo, these are parts of his ways,” yet after the most exhaustive investigation and examination of them, we are obliged to add, “but how little a portion is heard of him?” (Job 26:14).

God can only be *known* as He is supernaturally revealed to the heart by the Spirit through the Word. None can be brought to a spiritual and saving knowledge of God apart from divine illumination and communication. Hear what Christ Himself declared on the subject: “Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will *reveal him*” (Mat 11:27). They may entertain correct opinions of Him, have Scriptural ideas of Him in their brains, but *know Him* they do not and cannot, unless Christ, by His Spirit, make Him manifest to the soul. To the Jews He averred, “It is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: Yet ye have not *known him*” (Joh 8:54-55). So it is today, with the vast majority of preachers and professing Christians: they mistake a notional knowledge of God for an experiential acquaintance with Him. The Lord Jesus said, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast *revealed them* unto babes” (Mat 11:25). “Unto babes,” unto those whom divine grace has made simple and teachable, little in their own eyes, conscious of their ignorance, and who cling to Him in their dependency.

When Peter owned the Saviour as “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” He answered, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not *revealed* it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Mat 16:16-17). Peter had long been in possession of the Old Testament, yet despite its prophecies so manifestly fulfilled in and by the Lord Jesus, it was not sufficient of itself to produce in him a saving conviction that He was the Messiah. Proof of that was supplied by the scribes and Pharisees in their rejection of Him. Nor were His wondrous miracles enough to bring spiritual assurance to Peter’s heart—they did not to the multitudes who witnessed them! Nor is the Word of God, even in its unadulterated purity, adequate of itself to save souls. This too was unmistakably and solemnly demonstrated by the preaching of Christ: the great majority of those who listened to Him remained unaffected, or else had their native enmity against Him fanned into a flame. Nothing *external* to man can impart to him a saving knowledge of God and His Christ. There must be a supernatural application of the truth made unto the heart by the special power of God before it can be spiritually apprehended.

Not without good reason did the most favoured of the Old Testament prophets exclaim, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD *revealed*? (Isaiah 53:1)—the second question answering the former. That evangelical prophet, like most of God’s servants in all ages, has many Gospel hearers, but few in whose hearts a supernatural work of divine grace was wrought. The “arm of the LORD” is a figurative expression for His invincible power (Psa 136:11-12). The Lord in His conquering might is revealed subjectively by inward manifestation, with life and efficacy to the soul. In 1 Corinthians 2:4, the same expression is termed, “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” Where there is not that powerful work of the Spirit in the heart, there is no genuine conversion. In order to do *that*, something more than faithful preaching is necessary—there must be a distinct personal, peculiar, immediate, miraculous, and effectual work of the Spirit: “And a certain woman named Lydia...whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto [‘took unto her’] the things which were spoken of Paul” (Act 16:14).

“You may listen to the preacher,
God’s own truth be clearly shown:
But you need a greater Teacher
From the everlasting Throne.
Application is the work of God alone.”

The most fearful and fatal delusion now so prevalent in most sections of so-called “evangelical” Christendom is, that a saving belief in Christ is within the power of the natural man, that by performing what is naively termed “a simple act of faith,” he becomes a new creature. That is to make the sinner the beginner of his own salvation! *He* takes “the first step,” and God does the rest; *he* believes, and then God renews him—which is a blatant denial of the imperative necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit. The fact is that, if there is one time more than another when a

man is absolutely dependent upon the Spirit's power, it is at *the beginning*, for the most formidable difficulty lies there. To savingly believe in Christ is a supernatural act and is the direct product of a supernatural work of grace in the soul. Fallen and depraved man has no more power to come to Christ evangelically than he has merit of his own to entitle him to God's favour. He is as completely dependent on the Spirit's gracious operation within him as he is upon Christ's worthiness without him. Fallen man is spiritually dead (Eph 2:1), and a dead soul cannot "co-operate," any more than a physical corpse can with an undertaker.

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1Co 2:14). The "things of the Spirit" signify contents of the Word of truth, for they were penned under His immediate inspiration. The "natural man" is man in his fallen and unrenewed state; while the sinner remains unregenerate, he "receiveth not" either the divine Law or the Gospel. That requires a word of explication: the natural man can, and often does, receive the things of the Spirit in *the letter of the Law* as so many propositions or statements, but he cannot apprehend them as does one who has been made the subject of a miracle of grace. They are "foolishness"—absurd, unattractive, distasteful—to him. Yea, he cannot "know them"—he is disqualified to perceive their verity and value; "because they are spiritually discerned," and spiritual discernment he has none. The sinner has to be transformed from a natural into a spiritual man before he has any spiritual perception. "Except a man be born again, he *cannot see* the kingdom of God" (Joh 3:3). Only in God's light can we see light (Psa 36:9), and in order to do *that*, we must be brought out of that darkness in which sin has enveloped the soul.

The natural man, by reading and hearing, is competent to receive the things of God in their grammatical sense and to acquire an accurate mental notion of them, but is quite incapable of receiving a spiritual image of them in his understanding, of taking them into his affections, of cordially accepting them with his will. They are neither discerned by him in their divine majesty and glory, delighted in by him, nor obeyed. The things of the Spirit are not only addressed to the intellect as true, but to the conscience as obligatory, to the affections as good and lovely, to the will to be yielded unto. The unregenerate are entirely unable to recognize by an inward experience their surpassing weight and worth. They may indeed receive the truth of God into their brains, but they never receive "*the love of the truth*" (2Th 2:10) in their affections. The natural man is insensible alike to the authority and the excellency of the things of the Spirit of God, because his whole inward state is antagonistic to them. There must be congeniality between the perceiver and the thing perceived: only the pure in heart can see God. We not only need the Spirit objectively to reveal unto us the things of God, but He must make us subjectively spiritual men before we can receive them into our hearts.

As the eye is fashioned to take in sights and the ear sounds, as the faculties of the mind are fitted to think, reason, and retain concepts, so God must make the heart of fallen man *suitable unto* spiritual things ere he can receive them. There must be a correspondency between the object apprehended and the subject apprehending, as there is between the qualities of matter and the senses of the body which cognize them. As I cannot truly appreciate an oratorio—no matter how acute my hearing—unless I have a musical ear and refined taste, neither can I delight in spiritual things until I be made spiritual. But between God and fallen man, there is no living relation, no answerableness. The "beauty of holiness" *cannot* be perceived by one who is in love with and blinded by sin. There is no harmony between the sinner's spirit and the Holy Spirit. No matter how simply and clearly the things of God be set before the natural man, nor how logically and accurately he may reason about them, he cannot receive them in their actuality and spirituality, for he has no spiritual sight to discern their wisdom and goodness, no taste to relish their loveliness and sweetness, no capacity to take in their desirability and glory.

"And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (Joh 1:5). Though "the light of the world" (Joh 8:12) stood before them, they saw in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. Something more than an external revelation of Him is necessary, even such as that described in: "For God, who [in the beginning] commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2Co 4:6). The unregenerate have their "understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph 4:18); and they have no more ability or power of their own to dispel the same than had the deep to dissipate the darkness which abode upon it (Gen 1:2). In the darkness of a heart which, in its native condition, is a chamber of spiritual death, God shines with a light that is none other than Himself. The One who is light irradiates the benighted soul, and in His light it now sees the fullness of truth and grace shining in the face of Jesus Christ. By Sovereign fiat and miraculous power, the soul is now enabled to discern the glory of the divine perfections manifested in and through the Redeemer.

For several generations past, there has been a woeful ignoring of what has been pointed out above. There has been little recognition of the fact, and still less acknowledgment of it, that all which the Father hath purposed and contrived, all that the Son hath done and suffered for the redemption of His people, is unavailable and ineffective to their souls until the Holy Spirit *applies* the same. The inestimable blessings of the Father's love, through the Son's mediation, are only brought home to the souls of the elect by the testimony, power, and operations of the Spirit. But during the last century, the majority of "evangelists" displayed a zeal which was "not according to knowledge" (Rom 10:2). In their efforts to show the *simplicity* of "the way of salvation" (Act 16:17), they ignored the *difficulties* of salvation (Luk 18:24; 1Pe 4:18); and in their pressing the responsibility of men to believe, repudiated the fact that none can do so savingly until the Spirit imparts faith. One of His titles is "the spirit of faith" (2Co 4:13), because He is the Author and Communicator of it. Faith is "the gift of God" (Eph 2:8): not offered for man's acceptance, but actually bestowed: "the faith of the operation [not of 'man's will,' but] of God" (Col 2:12)—"Who by *him* do believe in God" (1Pe 1:21).

The work of the Spirit in the heart is as indispensable as was the work of Christ on the cross. The necessity for the Spirit's inward and effectual operations are from the darkness, depravity, and spiritual emptiness of fallen human nature. He alone can discover to us our dire need of Christ, convince us of our lost and ruined condition, create within us a hatred and horror of sin, bring us to consent to Christ's scepter, and make us willing in the day of His power to take Christ's yoke upon us. By nature, we are totally averse to holiness, and from birth, have been accustomed to doing evil only. It is impossible for us to take into the arms of our affection a holy Christ until the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus first takes hold of us. Moreover, there is a transcendency in spiritual things which far exceeds the highest flight of natural reason. Nature stands in need of grace in order for the heart to be rightly *disposed* to receive the things of God, and no human culture or education can effect that. A Gospel which comes to us from heaven can only be savingly known by an inward revelation from heaven. The Gospel is a revelation by divine grace, such as had never entered the heart of man to conceive, so less is it capable of comprehending them—their Author must apply that to the heart.

The Gospel consists of supernatural truth, and it can only be perceived in a supernatural light. True, an unregenerate person may acquire a theoretical concept and notional knowledge of the Gospel, but that is a radically different thing from a spiritual and experiential knowledge thereof: the latter is possible only by the effectual application of the Spirit. The natural man lacks both will and power to turn unto Christ. Do some of our readers regard that as "dangerous teaching"? Then we would remind them of words of the Lord Jesus: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me *draw him*: and I will raise him up at the last day" (Joh 6:44). We who are "darkness" by nature must be made "light *in* the Lord" (Eph 5:8) ere we can enjoy the light *of* the Lord. As we cannot see the sun in the heavens but in its own light, neither can we see the Sun of righteousness but by the beams of His sacred illumination. "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To *reveal* his Son *in* me" (Gal 1:15-16). There Paul gives us an account of his conversion, ascribing it wholly unto God: unto His foreordination, His effectual call, His miraculous and inward illumination by the Spirit.

The Holy Scriptures, which are inspired of God, contain a clear and full revelation of His will concerning our faith and practice. They are able to make us "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus"; and having done so, by them the man of God is "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2Ti 3:15-17). Great things are ascribed to those Scriptures and the most blessed effects are declared to be produced by them. "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psa 19:7-8). In all ages, the child of God has acknowledged, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa 119:105). All of the Christian's peace and joy, assurance, and expectation, proceeds from the knowledge which he has of the love and grace of God as declared in His Word. Nevertheless, it remains that the operations of the Holy Spirit within our souls are imperative and indispensable: the Gospel needs to come to us—not only at first, but throughout our Christian lives—"not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost" (1Th 1:5). Our *reception* of the truth is due alone to the interposition and secret workings of an Almighty power in our hearts, making it effectual to our conviction, conversion, and consolation.

THE WORK OF THE LORD

Part One

Our present design is twofold: to censure a misuse, and to explain the meaning of the following verse: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1Co 15:58). In the heedless hurry of this slipshod age, not a few have taken those words as though they read, “Work *for* the Lord,” and have used them as a slogan for what is now styled “Christian service,” most of which is quite unscriptural—the energy of the flesh finding an outlet in certain forms of religious activities. In this day of pride and presumption, it has been quite general to speak of engaging in work for the Lord, and to entertain the idea that He is beholden to such people for the same, that were their labours to cease, His cause would not prosper. To such an extent has this conceit been fostered that it is now a common thing to bear and read of our being “co-workers with God” and “co-operators” with Him. It is but another manifestation of the self-complacent and egotistical spirit of Laodicea (Rev 3:17), and which has become so rife.

But, it is likely to be asked, Does not Scripture itself speak of the saints, or at least ministers of the Gospel, being “co-workers with God”? The emphatic answer is No, certainly not. Two passages have been appealed to in support of this carnal and blatant notion, but neither of them when rightly rendered teach any such thing. The first is 1 Corinthians 3:9, which in the Authorized Version is strangely translated, “For we are labourers together with God.” Literally the Greek reads, “For God’s we are: fellow-workers; God’s husbandry, God’s building, ye are.” The apostle had just rebuked the Corinthians (1Co 3:1-3), particularly for exalting some of the servants of God above others (1Co 3:4). He reminded them, first, that the apostles were but ministers or “servants,” mere instruments who were nothings, unless God blessed their labours and “gave the increase” (1Co 3:6-7). Then, he pointed out that one instrument ought not to be esteemed above another, for “he that planteth and he that watereth are one” (1Co 3:8) and shall each “receive his own reward.” While in verse 9, he sums up by saying those instruments are “God’s”—of His appointing and equipping; “labourers together [fellow-workers],” partners in the Gospel field.

The second passage appealed to lends still less colour to the conceit we are here rebutting: “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you” (2Co 6:1), for the words, “with him” are in italics, which means they are not contained in the original, but have been supplied by the translators. This verse simply means that the instruments God employed in the ministry of the Gospel were joint-labourers in beseeching sinners not to receive His grace in vain. There is no thought whatever of “co-operating” with God. Why should there be? What assistance does the Almighty need! Nor does He ever voluntarily *receive* any (Job 22:2-3; Luk 17:10). What an absurdity to suppose the finite could be of any help to the Infinite! At most, we can but concur with His appointments, and humbly present ourselves before Him as empty vessels to be filled by Him. It is wondrous condescension on His part if He deigns to employ us as His agents; the honour is ours, we confer no favour on Him. The Lord is the sole Operator; His servants the channel through which He often—though by no means always—operates. Ministers are not co-ordinates with God, but subordinates to Him.

There is something particularly repulsive to a spiritual mind in the concept of worms of the earth “co-operating” with the Most High, for it is virtual deifying of the creature, a placing of him on a par with the Creator. Surely it is enough simply to point out that fact for all humble and Spirit-taught souls to reject with abhorrence such a grotesque fiction. Far different was the spirit which possessed the chief of the apostles. Said he, “I laboured more abundantly than they all: *yet not I*, but the grace of God which was with me” (1Co 15:10). When the Twelve responded to their Master’s commission, we are told that “they went forth, and preached every where, *the Lord* working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen” (Mar 16:20)—otherwise their labours had yielded naught. Paul placed the honour where it rightfully belonged when he declared, “For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which *Christ* hath not wrought by me” (Rom 15:18). How different was that from regarding himself as “co-operator” with Him! It is just such creature boasting which has driven the Lord outside the churches.

In view of what has been pointed out above, it is scarcely surprising that those possessed of more zeal than knowledge should eagerly lay hold of the clause in 1 Corinthians 15:58, and adopt it as their motto. Such activities as holding Gospel services in the streets, engaging in what is called “personal work,” taking part in meetings where young people are led to believe they are “giving their testimony for Christ,” and other enterprises for which there is no warrant whatever in the Epistles (where church members are more directly instructed and exhorted), are termed, “working for the Lord” or “serving Christ.” Very different indeed is the task which *He* has assigned His followers: a task far more difficult to perform, and one which is much less palatable to the flesh, namely, to keep their hearts

with all diligence: mortifying their lusts, and developing their graces (Col 3:5, 12), to cleanse themselves “from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1), and to witness for Christ by their *lives*, showing forth His praises (1Pe 2:9).

There is therefore a real need for the inquiry, Exactly what is meant by “the work of the Lord” in 1 Corinthians 15:58? It should at once be apparent that we do not have to go outside the verse itself for proof that the popular understanding which now obtains of it is thoroughly unwarrantable. First, it is not one which specially concerns ministers of the Gospel nor “Christian workers,” but instead, pertains to *all* the saints, for it is addressed to the “beloved brethren” at large. Second, the work of the Lord which it enjoins calls for us to be “stedfast [and] unmoveable,” which are scarcely the qualities to be associated with what the churches term “Christian service”—had *that* been in view, such adjectives as “zealous and untiring” had been far more pertinent. Third, the duty here exhorted unto is one which allows of no intermission, as the “always abounding in” expressly states—even the most enthusiastic “personal workers” would scarcely affirm that! Finally, the “knowing [not praying or hoping] that your labour is *not in vain* in the Lord” (RV) makes it clear that the well-meant but misguided efforts of the religious world today are not in view.

Grammatically, “the work of the Lord” may import either that work which He *performs*, or that which He *requires* from His people. The fact that it is one unto which He calls *them*, obliges us to understand it in the second sense. When Christ was asked, “What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?” (Joh 6:28), it should be obvious that they meant, What are those works which God requires of us? Our Lord answered: “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (Joh 6:29): *that* is what He has commanded (1Jo 3:23), and that is what will be acceptable unto Him. The same inquiry should proceed from the Christian: What is the all-inclusive work which God has assigned us? The summarized answer is given in 1 Corinthians 15:58: the “work of the Lord,” in which the saints are to be always abounding, is a general designation of the whole of Christian duty. As “the way of the LORD” (Gen 18:19) signifies the path of conduct which He has marked out for us, so “the work of the Lord” connotes that task He has prescribed us.

As is generally the case with erroneous interpretations, our moderns have taken this verse out of its setting and ignored its controlling context, paying no attention to its opening. Therefore, 1 Corinthians 15 is the great resurrection chapter, and may be outlined thus. First, the resurrection of Christ Himself (vv.1-11). Second, His rising from the dead secures the “resurrection of life” to all His people (vv.20-28). Third, the nature of their resurrection bodies (vv.42-54). In between those divisions, denials of the resurrection are refuted and objections thereto answered. Further indication is this: that to terminate the chapter with an injunction to engage in what is termed “Christian service” would be totally foreign to what precedes. Instead, the apostle closes his teaching on resurrection with a triumphant thanksgiving (vv.55-57) and an *ethical* inference drawn from the same. Therein is illustrated a fundamental characteristic of the Scriptures: that doctrinal declaration and moral exhortation are never to be severed, the former being the ground upon which the latter is based—first a statement of the Christian’s privileges, and then pointing out the corresponding obligation.

In the context, the Holy Spirit has set before us something of the glorious future awaiting the redeemed of Christ: in 1 Corinthians 15:55-58, He makes practical application of the whole to the immediate present. Doctrine and duty are never to be divorced. Neither in the promise nor the precept is “the life that now is” separated from “that which is to come” (1Ti 4:8). All truth is designed to have a sanctifying effect upon our daily walk. Something more than a mere head belief of the contents of Scriptures is required of us, namely an incorporating of them in the character and conduct. Truth so blessed as that set forth in 1 Corinthians 15:42-54 should fill the hearts of believers with joy (vv.55-57) and move them to the utmost diligence, and endeavour to please and glorify the Lord (v.58). The “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (v.57) is the language of *faith*, for faith gives a present subsistence to things which are yet future. The final verse announces the transforming effect which such a revelation and a hope so elevating should have upon us; or, stating it in other words, this injunction makes known the corresponding obligation which such a prospect entails: What that transforming effect should be, what that obligation consists of, we shall now seek to state.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” An analysis of this verse shows that it consists of two things: an exhortation and motives to enforce the same. The exhortation includes a threefold task: to be “steadfast” in the faith, in our convictions of the truth; to be “unmoveable” in our affections, in our expectation of the things promised; to be “always abounding in the work of the Lord,” in doing His will, in performing those good works which He has foreordained we should walk in (Eph 2:10). The “work of the Lord” may be regarded first as a general expression, comprehending all that He requires from us in the way of duty: in the exercise of every grace

and the practice of every virtue. “Always abounding in the work of the Lord” signifies ever engaged in obeying His Word, seeking His glory, and aiming at the advance of His kingdom. More specifically, it imports that lifelong task which He has set before us and which may be summed up in two words—mortification and sanctification: the denying of self and putting to death of our lusts; the developing of our graces and bringing forth the fruits of holiness.

Strictly speaking, it is “the work of the Lord” to which we are here called, and the steadfastness and immovability are prerequisites to our “always abounding” therein. But we shall consider them as separate duties. First, “be ye steadfast” in the faith and profession of the Gospel, and not “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:14). Be firmly fixed in your convictions: having bought the truth, sell it not (Pro 23:23). “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1Th 5:21). That by no means precludes further progress of attainment, for we are to press forward unto those things which are still before (Phi 3:13); yet in order thereto, there must be stability and resolution, a “holding fast the faithful word” (Ti 1:9), an eschewing of all false doctrine.

Second, “unmoveable,” which is a word implying testing and opposition. Suffer not the allurements of the world, nor the baits of Satan to unsettle you. Be not shaken by the trials of this life. Be patient and persevering whatever your lot. Seek grace to say of all troubles and afflictions, what Paul said are bonds and imprisonments—“none of these things move me” (Act 20:24). And why should they? None of them impugn God’s faithfulness. Moreover, they work for us “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen” (2Co 4:17-18). Then be unwavering in your expectations and “be not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (Col 1:23), no matter what opposition you encounter. Notwithstanding your discouraging failures, the backslidings of fellow Christians, the hypocrisy of graceless professors, “hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (Heb 3:6).

Third, “always abounding in the work of the Lord”: constantly occupied in doing those good works which honour God. More specifically: “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1Co 10:31). “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ...for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 1:5-11). *That* is “the work of the Lord,” *that* the task assigned us. Then let not the difficulty of such duties, nor the imperfections of your performances dishearten you; suffer not the hatred of your enemies, nor the severity of their opposition to deter you. “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal 6:9).

DECEMBER

A GOOD BEGINNING

New year’s message; read not before December 31

What a mercy it is to enter this world with a healthy body and sound constitution; how severely handicapped for this life where the opposite be the case! What a blessing to be born into a Christian home, to receive our earliest impressions from pious parents, to be trained from infancy to walk in “the way of the LORD” (Gen 18:19)! What a difference it makes in the marital life whether or not it opens with a consecration of the same to the Lord, and where the “family altar” is erected from the outset! It is sadly true that a good beginning will not of itself ensure a

good ending; yet if the former obtains not, it is unlikely that the latter will be attained. If the foundation be faulty, the superstructure erected thereon is insecure. Though it be not everything, a good beginning is much to be desired. The indolent youth rarely amounts to much subsequently. Certain it is that as we sow in our earlier days, we are made to reap later on. The same law holds good in the Christian life: the formation of good spiritual habits at an early stage does much to mould future character and conduct.

It is customary in the early days of January for our friends to wish us a happy New Year, but what ground have we to expect that such a hope will be realized unless we *begin the year aright*? Certainly we are not justified in looking for the smile of God upon us if its dawn be celebrated with carnal gluttony and worldly jollification. *That* is to act as the heathen do. Nor may we count upon the providential blessing of the Lord if He be not duly honoured by us. This is not to inculcate the doctrine of human merits, as though by any good deeds of ours, the Lord can be brought into debt to us. No indeed: rather is it a pointing out of our duty and an enforcing of God's rightful claims upon us. All of the Lord's dealings with His people are in grace, yet grace ever works "through righteousness" (Rom 5:21) and never at the expense of it. God has plainly declared, "them that honour me I will honour"; but on the other hand, "they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1Sa 2:30). Ponder well those words, my reader, at the opening of 1949, and remember that "the hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him" (Ezr 8:22). Earnestly seek *His* glory, and you will enjoy His blessing.

Let us point out two or three things which are essential if the Christian reader is to make "a good beginning" in the new year. First, he must *start it with a clean slate*. Alas, says the reader, that is impossible. I cannot undo the past. Obligated am I to say, "What I have written, I have written," and I cannot erase it. True, but God can! If your conversion was a genuine one, in the day of it, the Lord said, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions" (Isa 44:22). And what made such a miracle of grace legally possible? The atoning sacrifice of the Redeemer: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1Jo 1:7). And that precious blood is ever available for faith's appropriation. Then spend part of the closing hour of 1948 in putting your sins under the blood of Christ. Make a general confession, and then a particular one of every known sin, and make use of God's promise: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1Jo 1:9). Plead the efficacy of Christ's blood. Make full use of that Fountain which has been "opened to the house of David [i.e. 'the beloved'] and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem [and every believer belongs to the 'Jerusalem which is above' (Gal 4:26)] for sin and for uncleanness" (Zec 13:1).

By sincere and penitent confession, all sin may be purged from the conscience; and by a fresh application of the atoning blood of Christ, all sin will be cleansed before God. Thus, you may and should begin the new year with a clean slate. That is your holy privilege, Christian friend. Nor is that statement any invention of ours, for in substance, it is clearly taught in the Scriptures. See it illustrated in Exodus 12. When the Lord's time had come for the children of Israel to leave the land of Egypt and enter upon a new stage of their history, what did God require them to do? Three things: First, "ye shall put away leaven out of your houses" (Exo 12:15)—"leaven" is one of the Scriptural emblems of evil (1Co 5:6; Gal 5:9); and the Christian puts it away when he abhors, mourns over, and confesses his sins before God, for it is then cast out of his affections. Second, they placed themselves under the shed blood of the Lamb. Third, they fed upon it "with bitter herbs" (Exo 12:8). Christ is only truly appropriated by a contrite soul, to whom sin is a bitter thing. Then the Lord gave orders: "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months" (Exo 12:2). Was not *that* "a good beginning"—to start the year under the blood of the Lamb?

Second, *thankfulness for past mercies*. If we be not grateful for the blessings and bounties which God has already bestowed upon us, how can we look for a continuation of them? Is it likely that the Holy One will place a premium upon ingratitude? It becomes us to make hearty acknowledgement of the favours—both spiritual and temporal—which the Lord has lavished upon us. Alas that so many receive them as a matter of course and with hearts unaffected by the divine goodness. It is one of the foretold marks of graceless professors that in the "perilous times" they should be "unthankful," to which is immediately added, "unholy" (2Ti 3:1-2). It behoves us, then, as we enter upon another period of life, to render praise to the Lord for past supplies and deliverances. See that illustrated in the case of Noah. As soon as he and his family emerged on to the new earth, which had been swept clean by the besom of destruction, he "builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar" (Gen 8:20). Was not *that* "a good beginning": to express thanks for their gracious preservation from the flood? And we are told: "And the LORD smelled a sweet savour" (Gen 8:21): it was acceptable to Him. Then do *you* open 1949 by offering to Him a sacrifice of praise?

Third, *a renewal of his consecration to God*. The Christian life begins with a personal dedication to Him. They "first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us" (2Co 8:5), which means that they made a complete surrender of themselves to Him, as the only suitable response to that great debt which can never be fully paid. There was an

entire consecrating of themselves and all that they had to God in Christ, and a yielding of themselves to His accredited servants to be taught and directed by them—the latter being the evidence of the former. Nothing less than that would give proof that they were genuinely devoted to His cause and interests here on earth. But alas, how treacherous are our hearts! How soon is the “love of [our] espousals” (Jer 2:2) chilled! How quickly the things of this world draw us away from Christ, or the cares of this life unduly absorb us! How soon does the average Christian give the Lord cause to complain, “thou hast left thy first love”—the freshness and fervour which marked your conversion! And what is the remedy? “Repent [mourn over, confess, turn away from what has occasioned the sad failure], and do the first works” (Rev 2:4-5)—that is, renew your dedication, make a fresh surrender of yourself to the Lord. Do so at the dawn of 1949, and that will indeed be “a good beginning.” Definitely acknowledge afresh the everlasting claims which the love of Christ has upon you, and determine to spend and be spent for Him.

Fourth, *a renewed resolve to live wholly for the honour of your Master*. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1Co 10:31). Make *that* your motto, your constant aim, your earnest endeavour during 1949. That is the principal mark which distinguishes the Christian from the non-Christian: that he serves not self but Christ, seeks not the praise of men but the approbation of God, aims not at his own advancement but at the magnifying of the Lord and the promoting of His interests. His opportunity for so doing in this scene of His rejection will soon be over. The night swiftly hastens on when writer and reader will no longer have this privilege. Then let us seek grace to redeem the time (Eph 5:16) and enter the new year determined to do so. Our Master has left us an example so to do: “Christ pleased not himself” (Rom 15:3). “I seek not mine own glory” (Joh 8:50), He declared. Completely and constantly devoted was He to the One whom He delighted to serve. How that was evinced in His *first* recorded utterance: “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” (Luk 2:49). Was not *that* “a good beginning”? Then cry to Him for enablement to “follow his steps” (1Pe 2:21) more closely during 1949 than ever before.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

60. Hebrews 13:20-21, Part 2

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb 13:20). We must now carefully consider that act of God toward the Saviour which the apostle here used as his plea for the petition that follows. In the great mystery of redemption, God the Father sustains the office of supreme Judge (Heb 12:23). He it was who laid upon their Surety the sins of His people. He it was who called for the sword of vengeance to smite the Shepherd (Zec 13:7). He it was who richly rewarded and highly honoured Him (Phi 2:9). “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that *God* hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Act 2:36, and compare 10:36). So it is in the verse now before us: the restoring of Christ from the grave is there viewed not as an act of divine power, but of rectoral justice. God is there seen exercising His judicial authority, as is clear from the term used. We are ever the losers if, in our carelessness, we fail to note and duly weigh every single variation in the language of Holy Writ. Our text does not say that God “raised,” but “*brought* again from the dead our Lord Jesus,” which sets before us a very different yet most blessed aspect of truth, namely, the legal discharge of our Surety from prison.

There was a formal legal process against Christ. Jehovah laid upon Him all the iniquities of His elect; and thereby He was rendered guilty in the sight of the divine Law. Therefore, He was justly condemned by divine justice. Accordingly, He was cast into prison. God was wroth with Him as the Sinbearer: “It pleased the LORD to bruise him” (Isa 53:10) to exact full satisfaction from Him. But the debt being paid, the penalty of the Law inflicted, justice was satisfied, and God was pacified. In consequence, He became “the God of peace” both toward Christ and toward those whom He represented (Eph 2:15-17). God’s anger being assuaged and His Law magnified and made honourable (Isa 42:21), He then exonerated the Surety, set Him free, and justified Him (Isa 50:8; 1Ti 3:16). Thus it was foretold: “He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation?” (Isa 53:8). In his most excellent exposition of Isaiah 53 (1683)—virtually unobtainable today—James Durham (1622-1658) showed conclusively that verse 8 described Christ’s exaltation following upon His humiliation. He demonstrated that the term “generation” there has reference to His duration or continuance (as it does in Joshua 22:27):

“As His humiliation was low, so His exaltation was ineffable: it cannot be declared, nor adequately conceived—the continuance of it being for ever.”

Condensing it into a few words, J. Durham gave as his analysis of Isaiah 53:8: “1. Something is here asserted of Christ: ‘He was taken [or ‘lifted up’] from prison and from judgment.’ 2. Something hinted which cannot be expressed: ‘Who shall declare his generation’ [or ‘continuance’]? 3. A reason given in reference to both: ‘For he was cut off out of the land of the living.’” “He was taken from prison and from judgment” referred not only to the Saviour’s imprisonment and coming to judgment before men, but also and primarily to the straits He was brought into and arraignment before *God’s* tribunal, because His suffering “for the transgression of my people” was not the cause of His censure before men, but was the procuring cause of what He met with from and before God. The word “prison” may there be taken more largely for those straits and pressures of spirit which the Lord Jesus endured while suffering the curse of the Law, and “judgment” for the awful sentence inflicted upon Him. To the one Christ referred when He said: “But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” (Luk 12:50); and to the other is to be attributed His agony in the Garden and His cry of anguish on the Cross. Ultimately, the “prison” has reference to the grave.

The Hebrew word for “He was *taken* [laquash] from prison” sometimes signifies “to deliver” or “to free,” as a captive is liberated—Isaiah 49:24-25. From both prison and judgment, the Surety was taken or freed, so that “death hath no more dominion over him” (Rom 6:9). Christ received the sentence of divine absolution, as one who has paid his debt is discharged by the court. Christ not only received absolution, but was actually delivered from prison, having paid the utmost farthing demanded of Him. Though He was brought into prison and judgment, when the full demands of justice had been met, they could not detain Him: as the apostle declared, “Whom God hath raised up, having *loosed* the pains [or ‘cords’] of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it” (Act 2:24). As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) expressed it, “He was by an extraordinary order of heaven taken out of the prison of the grave; an angel was sent on purpose to roll away the stone and set Him at liberty, by which the judgment against Him was reversed, and taken off.” Likewise, Thomas Manton (1620-1677) insisted that the clause, “Who shall declare his generation?” (Isa 53:8) meant “declare the glory of His resurrection, as the previous words do His humiliation, suffering, and death.”

As T. Manton rightly pointed out, “While Christ was in the state of death, He was in effect a prisoner, under the arrest of divine vengeance; but when He rose again, then was our Surety let out of prison.” In a most helpful way, he went on to show that the peculiar force of the term, “*brought* again from the dead” is best explained by the dignified carriage of the apostles when they were unlawfully cast into prison. The next day, the magistrates sent serjeants to the prison, bidding their keeper let them go. But Paul refused to be “thrust...out privily” and remained there until the magistrates themselves formally “*brought* them out” (Act 16:35-39). So it was with Christ: He did not break prison. As God had “delivered him up” to death (Rom 8:32), so He “brought [Him] again from the dead.” It was as it were an acquittal from those debts of ours which He undertook to pay: as Simeon was dismissed when the conditions were performed, and Joseph was satisfied with a sight of his brother, he ‘brought Simeon out unto them’ (Gen 43:23)—T. Manton. It was God, in His official character as “the Judge of all” (Gen 18:25) who righteously freed our Sponsor.

Let us now briefly observe that it was *as* “the God of peace” He here acted when He “brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus.” The perfect obedience and atoning oblation of Christ had met every requirement of the Law, put away the iniquities of those for whom it was offered, had placated God and reconciled Him to them. While sin remained, there could be no peace, but blotted out by the blood of the Lamb, God was propitiated, and Christ had “made peace through the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20); but so long as He continued in the grave, there was no open proclamation thereof. It was by His bringing of Him forth from the dead that God made it known to the universe that His sacrifice had been accepted, and thereby, He publicly declared that enmity was at an end and peace established. *There* was the grand evidence and proof that God was pacified toward His people. Christ had made an honourable peace, so that God could be both “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). Take note also of *the relation* Christ sustained when God delivered Him from the dead: not as a private person, but as the federal Head of His people, as “that great shepherd of the sheep,” so that they were then legally delivered with Him (Eph 2:5-6).

It is very blessed to learn from the Psalms—where much light, not given in the New Testament, is cast upon the heart-exercises of the Mediator—that Christ supplicated God for deliverance from the tomb. In Psalm 88 (the sole subject-matter of which is the soul-suffering of the Lord Jesus), we find Him saying: “Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry; For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave” (Psa 88:2-3). Since the transgressions of His people had been imputed to Him, those “troubles” were the sorrows and

anguish which He experienced when what was due to sin was inflicted and executed upon Him. He went on to exclaim to God: “Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves” (Psa 88:6-7). There we are granted an insight of what the Saviour felt in His soul under the stroke of God, as He endured all that which was in His holy curse upon sin. He could not be in a lower state. He was in total darkness, the sun for a season refusing to shine upon Him, as God hid His face from Him. The sufferings of Christ’s soul were tantamount to “the second death” (Rev 20:14). He sustained the whole of what was equivalent to the same.

The smitten Redeemer went on to say: “I am shut up, and I cannot come forth” (Psa 88:8). None but the Judge could lawfully deliver Him. “Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee?” (Psa 88:10). In his remarkable exposition, Samuel E. Pierce (b. 1827) declared: “Those questions contain the most powerful plea Christ Himself could urge before the Father for His own emerging out of His present state of suffering and for His resurrection from the power of death. ‘Shall the dead arise and praise thee?’ (Psa 88:10). Yet in Me Thou *wilt* show wonders in raising My body from the grave, or the salvation of Thine elect cannot be completed, nor Thy glory in the same fully shine forth. Thy wonders cannot be declared: the elect dead cannot rise again and praise Thee, as they must, but on the footing of My being raised up.” “But unto thee have I cried, O LORD” (Psa 88:13). What light this Psalm casts on “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and *was heard*” (Heb 5:7)! As He was required to “ask of [God]” for His inheritance (Psa 2:8), so, first, for His deliverance from the prison of the tomb; and it was in answer thereto that God “brought him forth.”

In the last place, consider that the act of God is here said to be “through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” As to exactly what is connoted by those words, there has been no little confusion in the minds of different writers on this epistle, and while a full canvassing of this interesting question is really outside the scope of the present article, yet some of the more erudite of our readers would be displeased if we failed to make a few remarks thereon, so we will ask others kindly to bear with us while we treat of a somewhat technical detail. A careful reading through of the epistle shows that mention is made therein of “the covenant” (Heb 10:29), “a better covenant” (Heb 8:6), “a new covenant” (Heb 8:8), and here to “the everlasting covenant.” Not a few able men have concluded that reference is made to the same thing throughout, but with them, we cannot agree. It is quite clear from Hebrews 8:6-13, that the “new” and “better” covenant made with the *spiritual* “Israel” and “Judah” stands in opposition to the “first” (Heb 8:7) or “old” (Heb 8:13) covenant, which the Lord made with the nation of Israel at Sinai—with Israel “after the flesh”. In other words, the contrast is between Judaism and Christianity under two different covenants or economies, whereas “the everlasting covenant” is the antithesis of the covenant of works made with Adam as the federal head of his race.

Though the covenant of works was first in manifestation, the everlasting covenant or covenant of grace was first in origination. In all things, Christ must have the pre-eminence, and God entered into compact with Him before Adam was created. That compact has been variously designated as the “covenant of redemption” and the “covenant of grace.” In it God made full arrangements and provisions for the salvation of His elect. That everlasting covenant has been administered, under different economies, throughout human history, the blessings of the same being bestowed on favoured individuals all through the ages. During the “old covenant,” or Judaism, the requirements and provisions of the everlasting covenant were shadowed forth under the moral and ceremonial law; under the “new covenant,” or Christianity, its requirements and provisions are proclaimed by the Gospel. In every generation, repentance, faith, and obedience were required from those who should partake of its inestimable blessings (Isa 55:3). As a renowned theologian pointed out, “The phrase ‘Mediator of the covenant’ is applied to Christ three times in the New Testament (Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24), but as in each case, the term for covenant is qualified by either the adjective ‘new’ or ‘better.’ It evidently here is used to designate *not* the covenant of grace properly, but that new *dispensation* of that eternal covenant which Christ introduced in person, in contrast with the less perfect administration of it, which was instrumentally introduced by Moses”—*Outlines of Theology*, by Archibald A. Hodge (1823-1886).

Thus we take those words, “the blood of the everlasting covenant,” at their face value as referring to the eternal compact which God entered into with Christ. In the light of the preceding clauses of Hebrews 13:20, it is evident that “the blood of the everlasting covenant” has a threefold reference. First, the divine title here employed: God became “the God of peace” when Christ made propitiation and confirmed the eternal compact with His own blood (Col 1:20). From before the foundation of the world, God had purposed and planned that “peace” which Christ was to make: everything connected with the same had been eternally agreed upon between Them. Second, to the action there ascribed to Him: the shedding of His precious blood was the procuring cause of the restoration of our Lord Jesus from the grave by the Judge of all. Since the Surety had fully carried out His part of the contract, it behoved the Ruler of this world to deliver Him from prison as that which was righteously due to Him. Third, to Christ’s of-

fice: it was by the shedding of His blood for them, according to covenant agreement, that our Lord Jesus became “that great shepherd of the sheep”—the One who should seek out God’s elect, bring them into the fold, and there minister to, provide for, and protect them.

God’s bringing back of our Lord Jesus from the dead was not done simply by contract, but also by His merits; and therefore, it is attributed not barely to “the covenant” but to “the blood” of it. As God the Son, He merited or purchased it not, for honour and glory were His due; but as God-man Mediator, He earned His deliverance from the grave as a meet reward. Moreover, it was not as a private person, but as the Head of His people that He was delivered, and that ensured their deliverance also. If *He* was restored from the tomb “through the blood of the everlasting covenant,” equally so must *they* be. Scripture ascribes our deliverance from the grave to the death of Christ, as well as to His resurrection: “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1Th 4:14). Thus, assurance is given to the Church of its full and final redemption. God expressly made promise to the Shepherd of old: “As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water”—the grave (Zec 9:11). As it was “by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place” (Heb 9:12), so on the ground of the infinite value of the same do we (Heb 10:19); and as He declared, “because I live, ye shall live also” (Joh 14:19).

We turn now to the petition itself: “Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ” (Heb 13:21). This verse is intimately related to the whole of the preceding one, and the blessed connection between them inculcates a lesson of great practical importance. It may be stated, simply, thus: God’s wondrous working in the past should deepen our confidence in Him and make us to seek at His hand’s blessings and mercies for the present. Since He so graciously provided such a Shepherd for the sheep, since He has been pacified toward us and not a frown now remains upon His face, since He has so gloriously displayed both His power and His righteousness in bringing back Christ from the dead, a continuance of His favour may be safely counted upon, and we should expectantly look to Him day by day for all needed supplies of grace. The One who raised our Saviour is well able to quicken us and make us fruitful to every good work. Eye “the God of peace” and plead “the blood of the everlasting covenant” in every approach to the mercy seat.

More specifically: God’s bringing back Christ from the dead is our *security* that He will fulfil all His promises to the elect, even all the blessings of the everlasting covenant. This is clear from Acts 13:32-34: “And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again...And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead...he said [by that action], I will give you the sure mercies of David.” By restoring Christ from the dead, God fulfilled the grand promise made to the Old Testament saints (in which all His promises were virtually contained) and gave pledge for the performance and accomplishment of all future ones, thereby giving virtue to them. The “sure mercies of David” are the blessings which God swore to in the everlasting covenant (Isa 55:3). The shedding of Christ’s blood ratified, sealed, and established for ever every article in that covenant. By bringing Him back from the dead, God has ensured to His people that He will infallibly bestow upon them all those benefits which Christ obtained for them by His sacrifice. All those blessings of pardon, cleansing, reconciliation, sanctification, and preservation were given to Christ for His redeemed, and are safe in His hand.

By His mediatorial work, Christ has opened a way whereby God can consistently with all the glory of His perfections, bestow all the good thereof. As His death was necessary that believers might receive those “sure mercies” (Isa 55:3) according to the divine counsels, so His resurrection was equally indispensable, so that living in heaven He might impart them to us as the fruits of His travail and the reward of His victory. God has fulfilled to Christ every article which He engaged for in the everlasting covenant: He has brought Him from the dead, exalted Him to His own right hand, invested Him with honour and glory, seated Him upon the mediatorial throne, and given Him the name which is above every name. And what God has done for Christ, the Head is the guarantee that He *will perform* all that which He has promised to Christ’s members. It is a most glorious and blessed consideration that our all, both for time and eternity, depends wholly upon what passed between the Father and Jesus Christ: that He remembers and is faithful to His engagements to the Son, and that we are in His hand. When faith truly apprehended that grand fact, all fear and uncertainty is at an end; all legality and talking about our unworthiness silenced. “Worthy is the Lamb” (Rev 5:12) becomes our theme and song!

It is a most tranquilizing and stabilizing subject for the minds of Christians to dwell upon: that they are personally interested in all the eternal acts which passed between God the Father and Christ on our behalf ere man was made, as well as in all those acts which were transacted between the Father and the Son in and throughout the whole of His mediatorial work which He wrought and finished here below. It is this covenant-salvation, in its full blessedness and efficacy, apprehended by faith, which alone can lift us out of ourselves, above all our spiritual en-

emies, enable us to triumph over our present corruptions, sins, and miseries. It is wholly a subject for *faith* to be engaged with, for feelings have no place here. It is the objective side of the truth, the divine counsels of wisdom and grace made known in the Scriptures. As faith is exercised thereon, as the record of the eternal engagements of the Father and Son are received into the spiritual mind, peace and joy will be our experience. And the more faith feeds upon objective truth, the more are we strengthened subjectively. Faith regards every path in fulfilment of God's promises as a certain evidence of His fulfilling all the rest of His promises to us, in His own good time and way. Especially will faith regard God's fulfilment of His promise to bring back our Lord Jesus from the grave in this light: Has the Shepherd Himself been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father? As surely will all His sheep be delivered from death in sin and quickened into newness of life.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

40. Prayer (7:7-9)

In our last issue, we contemplated Joshua after Israel's humiliating defeat at Ai, on his face before the ark of the Lord. There he lay, with rent garments and dust upon his head, in a posture of self-judgment and abasement. Not until the hour of the evening sacrifice did he open his mouth to God, and then he might have said, "I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble" (Psa 142:2). Those words present to us an aspect of prayer all too little dwelt upon by preachers and writers. It is wrong to think that we should approach God only when our hearts are composed and in a spiritual frame. It is our privilege to come to the Throne of Grace for "*mercy*" and to sob out our griefs when deeply distressed. David tells us he did so "when my spirit was overwhelmed within me" (Psa 142:3). It is for our relief that we tell out our woes to One who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb 4:15). When none other can enter into our case or assuage our grief, we should present ourselves before the divine footstool as objects of compassion, remembering that "the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (Jam 5:11), and therefore, He will not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax (Isa 42:3; Mat 12:20).

When it lies in his line of duty for an expositor to comment upon a recorded instance of an outpouring of heart by a troubled soul, his task is neither an easy nor a pleasant one; for not a little scum rises to the surface when the spirit reaches boiling point. The Hebrew word for "complaint" in Psalm 142:2 does not mean fault-finding, but signifies, rather, that which causes pain and anguish, as in Job 7:13 and 9:27. We may indeed complain *to* God and unburden ourselves before Him, yet we ought never to complain *of* Him or murmur at any of His dealings. But where shall we find one clothed with flesh and blood who is guiltless in this respect? Where indeed! Only in Him who, amid "strong crying and tears" (Heb 5:7) said, "nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luk 22:42). If one of our "complaints" be examined, in a captious spirit, it will not be difficult for another to find in it expressions which are inadvisable. Let us not then scrutinize this prayer of Joshua's in a pharisaic spirit, but rather, let us approach it with that word before us, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone" (Joh 8:7). On the other hand, we must not gloss over the faults, nor deliberately condone what is reprehensible in it.

Not a little of human infirmity was discovered by Joshua's language on this occasion, and though that be easily accounted for, yet it must not be rendered an excuse for justifying *our* failures. As is so often the case with us, especially when deeply perturbed, there was a strange mingling of the flesh and the spirit seen in the prayer which is now to engage our attention. While some of its expressions cannot be approved, yet it should be borne in mind that Joshua was not here murmuring against any direct dealing of the Lord with himself, but was venting his sore distress over what had just befallen his nation, and was deeply grieved at the reproach which the same must bring upon the name of the Lord. While those considerations might modify his fault, yet they by no means absolve him. The truth is that Joshua too was a sinner saved by sovereign and amazing grace, and that fact was made to appear clearly in this incident. Let us then admire once more the impartiality and fidelity of the sacred historians in narrating this blemish in Joshua's conduct, and behold therein another proof of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, which painted each character in the colours of truth and reality, concealing not the defects of its greatest heroes.

The temporary breakdown of Joshua in heeding the presumptuous counsel of the spies, instead of seeking guidance from the LORD through the high priest (Num 27:21), and in slighting the ark instead of according it the place of honour, was not further betrayed by his mouth and the hard thoughts which he entertained against God. "And

Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!" (Jos 7:7). In this failure of so honoured a character as Joshua let both writer and reader see his own deep need of walking humbly before God and clinging to Him in conscious weakness. An object lesson is here set before us of how quickly faith fails its possessor when it be not sustained by its Author and Giver. The trouble was that Joshua's heart was no longer occupied with the plain and sure promises he had received from God. And why? Because he was walking by sight, viewing things with the eyes of carnal reason. He rashly concluded from the setback at Ai that it was the harbinger of total defeat. Unbelief is unable to see things in their proper perspective and proportions: thirty-six men and not the whole of the three thousand had been slain!

It was not without good reason that the apostle was moved by the Spirit to say to those who were partakers of the heavenly calling, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief" (Heb 3:12). There is a very real danger of our doing so, and we need to be ever on our guard against it, walking circumspectly (Eph 5:15). Even the faith of him who is designated "the father of all them that believe" (Rom 4:11) failed, for when there arose a famine in the land, instead of trusting God to supply all his need (as Elijah did), he "went down into Egypt to sojourn there" (Gen 12:10). That breakdown in Abraham's faith was due to the same cause as that of Joshua's! He was out of communion with God. First, he had left Bethel ("the house of God"), where he had built an altar to the LORD, and then he journeyed "toward the south" (Gen 12:7-9)—i.e. Egyptwards. And thus, as we have seen with Joshua, instead of inquiring of the LORD, he had hastily adopted the carnal policy of his underlings. Disaster followed, and now a spirit of unbelief possessed him. Learn, then, dear reader, that faith will only be preserved in a healthy condition as we maintain close communion with God through those means of grace which He has appointed.

"And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us?" (Jos 7:7) Very sad indeed is it to hear Joshua now using the very language which had been employed forty years previously by that generation of Israel whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. Of them it is recorded that they "murmured in [their] tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of *the Amorites, to destroy us*"; the explanation of such despondency being, as Moses charged them, "in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God" (Deu 1:27, 32). And now Joshua is guilty of expressing the same unbelief. This is the more lamentable since he (together with Caleb) had rebuked the scepticism of the congregation, saying, "Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not" (Num 14:9)—that was the language of confidence in God. But as faith in Him will make the weak and timid strong and courageous, so will unbelief fill the stoutest heart with terror.

Observe how inconsistent and incoherent is the language of unbelief. Joshua acknowledged that it was the LORD who had brought Israel over Jordan, and then asked if He had done so only for them to be destroyed at the hands of the heathen. It is ever thus. Though the wise of this world look upon the children of faith as a company of credulous simpletons, yet really, "the shoe is on the other foot." Nothing is so reasonable as to believe the Bible, for it is the Word of Him who cannot lie. But none so imposed upon and irrational as those who reject a revelation from heaven that is attested by "many infallible proofs" (Act 1:3): to scorn what is authenticated by unimpeachable evidence is a mark of madness and not intelligence. And when a child of God gives way to unbelief, his spiritual understanding becomes deranged, and the conclusions he then draws are faulty and absurd. Behold another example of this is in the case of David, when he "said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul" (1Sa 27:1). How could he possibly do so, when God Himself had assured him of the throne? He, too, had failed to ask counsel of the LORD, and now that he talks with his own deceitful heart, he utters the language of a fool.

What need is there for the Christian to cry, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mar 9:24). And if that prayer be sincere, so far from his excusing unbelief, he will mourn over it; so far from regarding it as an innocent infirmity for which he is to be more sympathized with than blamed, he will strive against its evil workings. We have no patience with those who well-nigh exalt the carnal fears and doubts of God's people into spiritual graces and evidences of humility and "deep experience." Any teaching which makes light of the distrust of God, or which causes His children to pity themselves for their failures and falls, is to be condemned and shunned. To call into question the divine promises is to make God a liar, and that is a heinous offence by whomsoever committed. As faith honours God, so does unbelief dishonour Him. Faith is said to glorify God (Rom 4:20); and therefore, unbelief is a failing to render to Him the glory which is His due. Unbelief in His people is the sin against which God has most proclaimed His displeasure. Moses and Aaron were excluded from Canaan because of their unbelief (Num 20:12). The father of John the Baptist was stricken dumb for not believing what God had revealed (Luk 1:20).

Christ chided His disciples for nothing so much as He did for their unbelief (Mat 8:26; Luk 24:25). “Lord, Increase our faith” (Luk 17:5) must be our daily request.

“Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!” (Jos 7:7). Surely this cannot be the language of one who was on his face before the ark of the Lord! Ah, my reader, no fictitious history had contained such an unthinkable anomaly as that. Nevertheless, it is true to life, as many a saint discovers by sad experience. Just previously, “So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country” (Jos 6:27); here disgracing himself, by complaining of the LORD’s dealings with Israel. Then in the posture of self-abasement, he is now uttering the language of self-will. For how many of God’s own people do those words of Jacob’s concerning Reuben apply: “Unstable as water” (Gen 49:4). Humbly seeking for light from the Word, and puffed up with conceit when it be granted. Praying for more patience, and then fretful when the divine providences are working it in us (Jam 1:2). Intrepidly contending, single-handed, against eight hundred and fifty false prophets (1Ki 18), and immediately after fleeing in terror from the threats of a woman (1Ki 19:2-3). Ephraim was not the only one like “a cake not turned” (Hos 7:8)—baked on one side, dough on the other. Oh, what a compound of inconsistencies and contradictions is the Christian as “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh” (Gal 5:17)! Oh, the long-suffering of the Lord!

The best of God’s children (if there be any best!) are frequently affected with fits of unbelief and chillings of love. Today, they find themselves earnestly proposing and resolving to do those things which are good, but tomorrow, they may discover their zeal has somewhat abated, so uncertain and inconstant are their affections. Now hopeful, anon despondent; now singing God’s praises, anon their harps upon the willows; now walking obediently in the path of the divine precepts, anon straying off into bypath meadow. None differ so much from them as they often differ from themselves! Nay, in the very graces for which they are eminent, how have they failed! Moses was the meekest man upon the earth, yet in what a froward passion was he when he struck the rock twice and spake unadvisedly with his lips! Peter was the most zealous and courageous of the apostles, yet he yielded to sinful fear in the presence of a maid. Some will glorify God in one condition, but dishonour Him in another. They may conduct themselves becomingly while God keeps them low, and then become fretful against Him when they are exalted. On the contrary, others who tread softly in a time of prosperity are filled with murmuring when the cold winds of adversity smite them.

“Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!” Alas, what is man? What is a saint when left to himself? What will not his inbred corruptions produce unless divine grace suppress them! How the evil leaven was working! How horribly Joshua himself was affected by Achan’s sin! Yet that in no wise excused his own unseemly language. Joshua was here taking direct issue with the Most High, openly quarrelling with His dispensations, complaining at His providential dealings. And has the writer and the reader, even after becoming a Christian, never been guilty of the same black offence? Ah, have we not cause to hang our heads in shame? And should not the remembrance of past risings up of a rebellious spirit cause us to beg God to subdue our iniquities and bring our will into fuller subjection to His? Instead of marveling at the sad language of Joshua, see in it a portrayal of our own wayward hearts and our deep need of crying, “Hold thou me up” (Psa 119:117).

“Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!” Most assuredly that was not the utterance of “a sound mind” (2Ti 1:7), least of all as now issuing from one who had recently passed through such an experience as Joshua’s: he had just witnessed a whole generation of his nation *discontented* with the wilderness, repeatedly lusting after the “flesh pots” of Egypt (Exo 16:3). It was the height of folly to express such a wish. Moreover, it was not at all a matter of “contentment” (1Ti 6:6): they had left the wilderness at the command of God, and not because they were dissatisfied with it. Mark well the sad process which preceded that frenzy. First, a severance of communion with God, then giving way to an evil heart of unbelief, then quarrelling with God’s providential dealings, and now bereft of spiritual sanity, for surely it was nothing less to prefer the wilderness to Canaan! But is it not ever thus when fellowship with the Lord is broken and unbelief actuates us? The barren wilderness is a figure of this perishing world, and when a Christian is out of touch with Christ and a spirit of distrust possesses him, he is infatuated with the things of earth and, unless divine grace restores him to his senses, becomes more attached to them than the things which are above.

“O LORD, what shall I say!” (7:8). It seems to us that these words mark return to sanity. The wild outburst of the preceding verse is checked. It is almost as though he now felt ashamed of his rash utterances as he began to realize to Whom he was speaking. Yet he is still quite disturbed and scarcely knows how to express himself. “O LORD, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies!” (Jos 7:8). Israel was beloved of him, yet he could think of nothing to say on their behalf which excused their cowardly defeat. Nevertheless he *should* have known how to answer his question. The Lord does not act capriciously, nor does He “afflict willingly nor

grieve the children of men” (Lam 3:33), but only as they give Him occasion; and therefore, Joshua ought to have humbly begged the Lord to make known to him the reason for His afflicting judgment. Should he not have asked, “O LORD, why doth Thine anger burn against Thy people? Wherein have we provoked Thee?” When they were defeated in battle by the Philistines, the elders of Israel inquired, “Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day?” (1Sa 4:3). When there was a famine in the land for three years, “David enquired of the LORD” (2Sa 21:1), and He at once made known the cause of the same.

What has just been pointed out presents a lesson which we do well to heed. “Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but [rather] that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Eze 33:11). Much less has the Lord any pleasure in smiting His own people. Yet He must maintain His own honour, and deal with them according to His holiness as well as His grace. And *they* must “hear...the rod” (Mic 6:9) if they would profit from it and “be partakers of his holiness” (Heb 12:10-11). Closing our eyes to the providential signs God gives us of His displeasure will not improve matters; nor will wringing our hands in despair when things go wrong get us anywhere. While on the one hand God has said, “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord,” yet on the other, He bids us, “nor faint when thou art rebuked of him” (Heb 12:5). What then should we do and say? Humble ourselves beneath His mighty hand and pray “cause me to understand wherein I have erred...shew me wherefore thou contendest with me” (Job 6:24; 10:2) that I may put right what is wrong, and once more that Thy smile upon me. Such an inquiry, if it be sincere and humble, will not be in vain.

“O LORD, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies!” Let us apply those words to ourselves. What should be the believer’s reaction to the sad state which the religious world is now in? As he beholds the awful declension of the outward cause of Christ on earth, and realizes that the Spirit has been quenched, what ought he to do and say? First, solemnly examine himself and his ways, and seek to ascertain how far his *own* sins have contributed to the present absence of the Lord’s blessing from the church. During “the desolations of Jerusalem,” Daniel sought the Lord, and he tells us, “I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said...We have sinned, and have committed iniquity” (Dan 9:2-5, etc.). Let each of us do likewise. Second, we should be deeply affected by the present situation and mourn before God because of the reproach which prevailing conditions in Christendom cast upon His name: see Psalm 119:53:136; Jeremiah 9:1. Third, we should turn the exhortation of Revelation 3:2 into earnest prayer, and beg the Lord to “strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die,” and revive His work in the midst of the years. Fourth, we should plead before Him the promise, “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him” (Isa 59:19). “Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?” (Jon 3:9).

“For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?” (Jos 7:9). Here the supplicant becomes more intelligible, for the first half of this verse is to be regarded as a plea, being tantamount to asking the Lord to remember that Israel were the sheep of His pasture, and therefore, to spare them from falling, a prey to the wolves. Then Joshua pointed out the danger Israel were now in, thereby taking the place of weakness; next, he looked to the love and pity of the LORD: Israel’s name, which is dear to Thee, will be blotted out if the heathen completely destroy them—which was an indirect appeal to the promises God had made to the fathers (Gen 15:18, etc.). Finally, he points out the reproach which would be cast upon God were the Canaanites to triumph completely. Thus, when we penetrate beneath the surface agitations of Joshua, we see that at heart, it was concern for the divine glory which had prompted this prayer! He could not endure a prospect which reflected upon the fidelity and power of their covenant God. Herein he foreshadowed the antitypical Joshua. He, too, when in deep trouble of soul, had asked, “What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour”? No, rather, “Father, glorify *thy name*” (Joh 12:27-28)! Let that be *our* plea, and it will prove a prevailing one.

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

24. In the Soul, Part 2

Our urgent need for something more than an *external* revelation from God, even though it be a written communication from Him, inspired and inerrant, was intimated in our last issue in a general way. Now to be more specific: Our need of an immediate and inward discovery of God in the soul, or for a supernatural work of grace to be wrought in the heart in order to fit us for a saving knowledge of Him and the receiving of His truth, arises from *the power which sin has* upon man. Sin has such a hold upon the affections of the unregenerate that no human arguments or persuasions can divorce their heart from it. Sin is born and bred in man (Psa 51:5), so that it is as natural for fallen man to sin as it is for him to breathe. Its power over him is constantly increased by long-continued custom, so that he can no more do that which is good than the Ethiopian can change his skin (Jer 13:23). It is his delight: “It is as sport to a fool to do mischief” (Pro 10:23). Sinners have no other pleasure in this world than to gratify their lusts, and therefore, they have no desire to mortify them. It has such a maddening effect upon them that their hearts are “fully set in them to do evil” (Ecc 8:11). Nothing but the might of God can change the bent of man’s nature and the inclination of his will.

The impossibility of a sinner’s coming to Christ without an effectual call from God, or His quickening application of the Word to his heart, appears again from the *indisposedness* of fallen man. “Three things must be wrought upon a man before he can come to Christ. His blind understanding must be enlightened, his hard and rocky heart must be broken and melted, his stiffly fixed and obstinate will must be conquered and subdued; but all these are effects of supernatural power. The illumination of the mind is the peculiar work of God (2Co 4:6). The breaking and melting of the heart is the Lord’s own work: it is He that giveth repentance (Act 5:31). It is the Lord that ‘takes away the heart of stone, and giveth an heart of flesh’ (Eze 36:26); it is He that poureth out the spirit of contrition upon man (Zec 12:10). The change of the natural bent and inclination of the will is the Lord’s sole prerogative (Phi 2:13)”—John Flavel (1627-1691). None but the Almighty can free sin’s slaves or deliver Satan’s captives. It is a work of infinite power to impart grace to graceless souls, to make those who are carnal and worldly to become spiritual and heavenly. The call of God is to *holiness* (1Th 4:7), and nothing but omnipotence can make the unholy respond thereto.

The like must be said of the nature of that *faith* by which the soul comes to Christ. Everything in faith is supernatural. Its implantation is so (Joh 1:12-13). “It is a flower that grows not in the field of nature. As the tree cannot grow without a root, neither can a man believe (savingly) without the new nature, whereof the principle of believing is a part”—Thomas Boston (1676-1732). No vital act of faith can be exercised by any man until a vital principle has been communicated to him. The objects of faith are supernatural—divine, heavenly, spiritual, eternal, invisible—and such cannot be apprehended by fallen man: his line is far too short to reach to them. The tasks allotted faith lie not within the compass of mere nature: to deny self (Mat 16:24), to prefer Christ before the dearest relations of flesh and blood (Mat 10:37-38), to adopt His Cross as the principle of our lives (Mar 8:34), to cut off the right hand and pluck out right-eye sins (Mat 5:29-30), are contrary to all the dictates of natural sense and reason. The victories of faith bespeak it to be supernatural: it overcomes the strongest oppositions from without (Heb 11:33-34), purges the most deep-seated corruptions within (Act 15:9), and resists the most charming allurements of a bewitching world (1Jo 5:4). Nothing short of that mighty power which raised Christ from the dead and exalted Him to the right hand of God can enable a depraved creature to savingly believe (Eph 1:19-20).

Divine teaching is absolutely essential for the reception and learning of divine things, and without it, all the teaching of men—even of God’s most faithful and eminent servants—is inefficacious. God Himself cannot be apprehended merely by the intellectual faculty, for He is Spirit (Joh 4:24), and therefore, can only be known *spiritually*. But fallen man is carnal and not spiritual, and unless he be supernaturally brought out of darkness into God’s marvellous light, he cannot see Him. This divine teaching is promised: “Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way” (Psa 25:8). Sinners are subjects on whom He works, elect sinners on whom He works savingly: “And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD” (Isa 54:13). In them God makes good His assurance, “And I will give them an heart *to know me*” (Jer 24:7), and until He does so, there is no saving acquaintance with Him. No book learning can acquire it: “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2Pe 1:3). That divine power communicates life to the soul, light to the understanding, sensitivity to the conscience, strength to the affections, a deathwound to our love of sin.

That “knowledge of him” (2Pe 1:3) consists of such a personal discovery of God to the heart as conveys a true, spiritual, affecting perception and recognition of His surpassing excellency. God is revealed to it as holy and gracious, clothed with majesty and authority, yet full of mercy and tender pity. Such a view of Him is obtained as causes its favoured subject, in filial and adoring language, to exclaim, “I *have* heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but *now* mine eye seeth thee” (Job 42:5). God Himself has become an awe-inspiring but blessed reality to the renewed soul. He is beheld by the eye of faith, and faith conveys both a demonstration and an inward subsistence of the objects beheld (Heb 11:1). The Father is now *revealed* to the heart (Mat 11:27). The word “reveal” means to remove a veil or covering, and so exhibit to view what before was hidden. The blessed Spirit, at regeneration, removes that film of enmity which sin has produced, that blinding veil which is upon the depraved mind (2Co 3:14), that “covering” which is “cast over all people” (Isa 25:7).

The saving revelation which is made to an elect sinner is not a creating of something which previously had no existence, nor is it *ab extra* to the Word: nothing is ever revealed to the soul by the Holy Spirit which is not in the Scriptures. It is most important that we should be quite clear on this point, or we shall be in danger of mysticism on the one hand or fanaticism on the other. “To expect that the Spirit will teach you without the Word is rank enthusiasm, as great as to hope to see without eyes: and to expect the Word will teach you without the Spirit is as great an absurdity as to pretend to see without light; and if any man says the Spirit teaches him to believe or do what is contrary to the written Word, he is a mad blasphemer. God has joined the Word and the Spirit, and what God has joined together, let no man put asunder”—Rev. William Romaine (1714-1795). “The Spirit of God teaches and enlightens by His Word as the instrument. There is no revelation from Him but what is (as to our perception of it) derived from the Scriptures. There may be supernatural illumination and strong impressions upon the mind in which the Word of God has no place or concern, but this alone is sufficient to *discountenance* them, and to prove they are not from the Holy Spirit”—John Newton (1725-1807).

There is real need to labour this point, for not a few highly strung people and those with vivid imaginations have been deceived thereon, supposing that strange dreams, extraordinary visions, and abnormal sights and sounds, are the means or manner in which the Holy Spirit is made manifest to the soul. Those who look for any suchlike experience are far more liable to be deluded by Satan than enlightened by the Spirit. The Spirit supplies no new and different revelation today from that which He has already made in the written Word. God indeed spoke to His servants of old by dreams and extraordinary means, and made known to them hidden mysteries and things to come; but all “vision and prophecy” is for ever sealed up (Dan 9:24). Through Paul, it was announced that prophecies should “fail” (be given no more) and tongue should “cease” (1Co 13:8), and they did so when the Canon of Scripture was completed. All of the divine will, so far as it can be of any use to us in the present life, is already clearly made known to us in the Old and New Testaments. The testimony of the Spirit in the Scriptures is “a more sure word” (2Pe 1:19) than any voice from heaven!

The most fearful curse is pronounced upon those who presume to add to or diminish from the testimony of God in the Scriptures (Rev 22:18-19). It is plain to the Christian that Abdullah Mohammed (c. 570-632), John Smith (1832-1911), and Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910) who pretended to be the recipients of special revelations from God, were lying impostors. Others who claim to have received any divine communications for their own souls, over and above what is contained in or may be rightly deduced from God’s infallible Word, are themselves deceived, and on highly dangerous ground. “God does not give the Spirit to His people on purpose to abolish His Word, but rather to render the Word effectual and profitable to them”—John Calvin (1509-1564) on Luke 24:45. The Holy Scriptures “are able to make...wise unto salvation” (2Ti 3:15), yet not apart from the Spirit; the Spirit illuminates, yet never apart from the Word. The Spirit has first to open our sin blinded understandings before the light of the Word (2Pe 1:19) can enter our souls. He alone can seal the truth upon the heart. The things revealed in the Bible are real and true, but the natural man cannot perceive their spiritual nature, nor is he vitally affected by them, for he has no inward experience of the realities of which they treat.

By means of religious education and personal application to the study of the same, the natural man can obtain a good understanding of the letter of Scripture, and discourse fluently and orthodoxy thereon; yet the light in which he discerns them is but a merely natural or mental light; and while that be the case, his experience is the same as that of those described in 2 Timothy 3:7— “Ever learning, and never able to come to the [spiritual, divine experiential] knowledge of the truth.” The religion of the vast majority in Christendom today is one of tradition, form, or sentiment—destitute of one particle of vital and transforming power. Unless the Spirit of God has regenerated and indwells the soul, not only the most pleasing ritual but the most orthodox creed is worthless to him. Reader, you may be an ardent “Calvinist,” subscribe heartily to the soundest “Articles of Faith,” assent sincerely to every sentence in the Westminster Confession and Catechism, and yet be dead in trespasses and sins. Yea, such *is* your sad

condition at this very moment, unless you have really been “born of the Spirit” (Joh 3:6-8) and God has revealed His Son *in* you (Gal 1:15-16).

“A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven” (Joh 3:27). How little is that statement understood by the majority of professing Christians! How unpalatable it is to the self-sufficient Laodiceans of this age, ignorant as they are of their wretchedness, poverty, and blindness (Rev 3:17). Though the wisdom and power of the Creator manifestly appear in every part of His creation, yet when the first Gospel preacher was sent to the Gentiles, he had to declare, “the world by wisdom knew not God” (1Co 1:21). Though the Jews had the Holy Scriptures in their hands and were thoroughly familiar with the letter of them, yet they knew neither the Father nor His Son when He appeared in their midst. Nor are things any better today. One may accept the Bible as God’s Word and assent to all that it teaches, and still be in his sins. He may believe that sin is a transgressing of God’s Law, that the Lord Jesus is alone the Saviour of sinners, and even be intellectually convinced that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, and yet be entirely ignorant of God to any good purpose. Until a miracle of grace is wrought within them, the state and experience of all men—spiritually speaking—is “Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive” (Act 28:26). They cannot do so until the veil of pride and prejudice, carnality and self-interest be removed from their hearts.

The soul must be divinely renovated before it is capable of apprehending spiritual things. The careful reader will have noticed that the marginal rendering of John 3:27 is: “A man *can take unto himself* nothing, except it be given him from heaven.” He must first be given a disposition in order to do so. What a word was that of Moses to the Israelites: “Ye *have seen* all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt...Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart *to perceive*, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day” Deu 29:2-4—they took not to them the implications of what God had done so as to profit therefrom. Many have “the *form* of knowledge and of the truth in the law” (Rom 2:20) in their heads, but are total strangers to the power of it in their hearts. Why is this the case? Because the Spirit has not made an effectual application of it to them: they have received no inward revelation of it in their souls. Let us furnish a specific illustration: “For I was alive [in my own esteem] without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died” (Rom 7:9). From earliest childhood, Saul of Tarsus had been thoroughly acquainted with the words of the tenth commandment, but until the hour of his spiritual quickening, they had never searched within and “pricked him in the heart” (Act 2:37).

Hitherto, that “Hebrew of the Hebrews” was proud of his orthodoxy, for had he not been “brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God” (Act 22:3)? Conscientious in the performing of duty, living an irreproachable life, “touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless” (Phi 3:6) in his outward walk, he was thoroughly pleased with himself. But when the Spirit of God applied to his conscience those words, “thou shalt not covet,” his complacency was rudely shattered. When God gave him to perceive and feel the spirituality and strictness of the divine Law, that it prohibited *inward* lustings, all unholy and irregular desires, he was convicted of his lost condition. He now saw and felt a sea of corruption within. He realized he stood condemned before the bar of a holy God, under the awful curse of His righteous Law, and he died to all self-esteem and self righteousness. When the Law was divinely brought home to his conscience in shattering power, it was like a bolt from the blue, smiting him with compunction: he became a dead man in his own convictions, a justly sentenced criminal.

Have *you*, my reader, experienced God’s Word to be “quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit”? Have you found it to be “a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb 4:12)—of *your* heart? You have not merely, by the reading of it, nor by the hearing of it. That Word must be applied by an Almighty hand before it cuts a soul to the quick: only then is it “the sword of the Spirit” (Eph 6:17)—when *He* directs it. It is only by the blessing and concurrence of the Spirit that the Word is made to produce its quickening, searching, illuminating, convicting, transforming, and comforting effects upon the soul of any man. Only by the Spirit is the supremacy of the Word established in the soul. It is by His teaching that there is conveyed a *real apprehension* of the truth, so that the heart is truly awed and solemnized, by being made to feel the authority and majesty of the Word. Only then does he realize the vast importance and infinite value of its contents. By the inward work and witness of the Spirit, the regenerate have a personal and infallible source of evidence for the divine inspiration and integrity of the Scriptures to which the unregenerate have no access.

Spiritual life is followed by divine light shining into the heart, so that its favoured subject perceives things to be with him exactly as they are represented in the Word. The Spirit makes use of His own Word as a vehicle for communicating instruction. The Word is the instrument, but He is the Agent. The holiness of God, the spirituality of His Law, the sinfulness of sin, his own imminent peril, are now discovered to the soul with a plainness; and certainly

which as far exceed that mental knowledge, which he previously had of them, as ocular demonstration exceeds a mere report of things. By the Spirit's teaching, he obtains radically different thoughts of God, of self, of the world, of eternity, than he ever had before. Things are no longer general and impersonal to him: "*Thou art the man*" has become the conviction of his conscience. He no longer challenges that awful indictment, "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom 8:7), for he is painfully aware of the awful fact that he has been a lifelong rebel against heaven. He no longer denies his total depravity, for the Spirit has given him to see there is "no soundness" (Psa 38:7; Isa 1:6) in him, that there is nothing in him by nature but deadness, darkness, corruption, unbelief, and self-will.

Those who are inwardly taught of God discover there is abundantly more of evil in their defiled natures and sinful actions than ever they realized before. There is as great and real a difference between that general notion which the natural man has of sin, and that experiential and intuitional knowledge of it which is possessed by the divinely quickened soul, as there is between the mere *picture* of a lion, and being confronted by a living lion as it meets us roaring in the way. In the light of the Spirit, sin is seen and felt to be something radically different from how the natural man conceives it. None knows what is in the heart of fallen man but God. He has delineated the same in His Word, and when the Spirit opens the eyes of the sinner's understanding, he sees himself in its mirror to be exactly as God has there portrayed him—with a heart which is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9). His secret imaginations are now discovered to him; his pride, his presumption, and his awful hypocrisy are beheld in all their hideousness. The sight and sense which the illumination of the Spirit gives him of his wickedness and wretchedness is overwhelming: he realizes he is a leprous wretch before a holy God—irreparably ruined, *lost*.

THE WORK OF THE LORD

Part Two

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1Co 15:58). In the November portion of this article, we did little more than give a topical treatment of this verse: let us now furnish a contextual exposition of it. In verses 55 and 56, the apostle asked, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"—to which he replied, "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." Then he exultantly cried: "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 57). The tense of the verb should be closely observed: it is not "hath given" nor "will give," but "giveth us the victory." It is also to be carefully noted that the "victory" here referred to is one over death and the grave viewed in connection with sin and the Law, and that it is shared by all saints and is not some peculiar experience which only a few fully consecrated souls enter into. Obviously, that victory will only be fully and historically realized on the resurrection morning; yet even now, it is apprehended by faith and enjoyed by hope, and, in proportion as it really *is* so, will the believer know practically something of "the power of Christ's resurrection."

"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" is the language of joyful *faith*, in response to the revelation given in the previous fifty-six verses. Christ's triumph over death as the wages of sin and the penalty of the Law ensures the resurrection of all His sleeping saints, for it was as their federal Head (verses 20-22) that He suffered for their sins and bore the Law's curse, as it was that as "the last Adam" (verse 45), He was victorious over the tomb. As faith lays hold of that blessed truth, and its possessor appropriates a personal interest therein, he realizes that he *himself* has (judicially) passed from death to life—that sin cannot slay, nor the Law curse him, and that he is justified by God "from all things" (Act 13:39). Such a realization cannot but move him to exclaim, "Thanks be to God." By virtue of his union with Christ, for him, death's sting has been extracted, and therefore, it has been robbed of all terror. It is sin which gives power and horror to death, but since Christ has made full atonement for the believer's sin and obtained remission for him, death can no more harm him than could a wasp whose venomous sting had been removed—though it might still buzz and hiss and attempt to disturb him.

"The strength of sin is the law" (1Co 15:56): its power to condemn was supplied by the transgressing of it. But since Christ was made a curse for us, we are released therefrom. The entire threatening and penalty of the Law was

executed upon the Surety, and therefore, those in whose stead He bore it are exempted from the same. But more: because in Eden, sin violated the holy commandment of the Lawgiver, the Law received a *commanding power* over the sinner, making sin to rage and reign in him, compelling him to serve it as a slave. That was but just. Since man preferred the exercise of self-will to submission to the authority of his Maker, the Law was given both a condemning and commanding power over him. In other words, the enthralling power or strength which sin exerts over its subjects is an intrinsic part of the Law's curse. The Law commands holiness, but by reason of man's depravity, its very precepts exasperate his corruptions—as the sun shining on a dunghill stirs up its filthy vapours. God punishes sin with sin: since the commission of sin was man's choice, the strength of sin shall be his doom. But Christ has not only delivered His people from the penalty of sin, but from its reigning power, too, so that His promise is, "For sin shall not have dominion over you" (Rom 6:14).

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord": let *that* be your response to mercies so great. Manifestly, the apostle is here drawing a conclusion from all that precedes, particularly from what is said in verses 56 and 57. Divine grace, through the death and resurrection of Christ, has *judicially* delivered the believer from both the guilt and dominion of sin, and from the whole curse of the Law. How then shall he answer to such blessings? Why, by seeing to it that those mercies are now made good by him in a practical way. And how is he to set about the same? First, by complying with Romans 6:11: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord"; which in the light of the previous verse signifies: By the exercise of faith in what the Word declares, regard yourselves as having legally passed from death to life in the person of your Surety. Second, by heeding Romans 6:12: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof"; which means, Suffer not indwelling sin to lord it over you. Since you be absolved from all you did in the past, yield obedience to God and not to your corruptions.

We cannot rightly interpret 1 Corinthians 15:58, unless its connection with verses 56 and 57 be duly noted. Its opening "Therefore" is as logical and necessary as the one in Romans 6:12, and what follows that passage enables us to understand our present one. "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God": that is, conduct yourselves *practically* in harmony with what is true of you (in Christ) *legally*. Another parallel passage, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind" (1Pe 4:1), where the doctrinal fact is first stated and then the practical duty enjoined. Legally, "victory" is ours *now*, as our justification by God demonstrates. Experientially, we have been freed from the dominion of sin, and are delivered, in measure, from its enticing power, for there is now that in us which hates and opposes it. At death, sin is completely eradicated from the soul; and at resurrection, its last trace will have disappeared from the body. From his exposition of the grand truth of resurrection, the apostle made practical application, exhorting the saints to "walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4).

In view of our participation in Christ's victory, we are here informed of the particular duty which is incumbent upon us, namely, to strive against sin, resist temptation, overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb, and bring forth the fruits of holiness to Him. But, in order thereto, we must be "stedfast" in the conviction of our oneness with Christ in His death and resurrection, and "unmovable" in our love and gratitude to Him. The Greek for "*always abounding in the work of the Lord*" conveys the idea of quality more than quantity, progressive improvement rather than multiplicity of works: "Continually making advance in true piety"—Matthew Henry (1662-1714). *Excel in it* is the thought: rest not satisfied with present progress and attainments, but each fresh day, endeavour to perform your duty better than on the previous one. This lifelong task of mortification and sanctification is called "the work of the Lord," because it is the one which He has assigned us, because it can be performed only in His strength, and because it is that which is peculiarly well pleasing in His sight.

That duty can only be discharged in a right spirit as faith apprehends the Christian's union with Christ, and then thankfully acts accordingly. There cannot be any Gospel holiness without such a realization. There can be no evangelical obedience until the heart is really assured that Christ has removed death's "sting" for us and has taken away from the Law the "strength of sin" (verse 56). Only then can the believer serve God in "newness of spirit" (Rom 7:6): that is, in loving gratitude, and not from dread or to earn something. Only then will he truly realize that as in the Lord he has "righteousness" for his justification, so in Him he has "strength" (Isa 45:24) for his walk and warfare. Thus the opening, "Therefore" of our verse not only draws a conclusion which states the obligation entailed by the inestimable blessings enumerated in the context, but also supplies powerful *motive* for the performance of that obligation—a performance which is to be regarded as a great privilege. Since "Christ died for our sins" (1Co 15:3), since He be "risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (verse 20), since we shall be "raised

in glory” (verse 43) and “bear the image of the heavenly” (verse 49), let our gratitude be expressed in a life of practical holiness.

A second motive to inspire the performance of this duty is contained in the closing clause of our verse: “Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” He will be no man’s Debtor: every sincere effort of gratitude—however faulty its execution—is valued by Him and shall be recompensed. “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name” (Heb 6:10). The Christian should be fully assured that a genuine endeavour to do God’s will and promote His glory will receive His smile, produce peace of conscience and joy of heart here, and His “well done” (Mat 25:21-23) hereafter. In the keeping of His commandments, “there is great reward” (Psa 19:7-11). This was the motive which animated Moses in his great renunciation (Heb 11:24-26): “He had respect unto the recompense of the reward.”

“Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” “Labour” is a stronger word than “work,” signifying effort to the point of fatigue. “In the Lord” means in union with and dependence upon Him. Such labour shall not be strength spent for naught. Yet *that* is exactly what it appears to be to the Christian. To him, it seems his efforts to mortify his lusts and develop his graces are utterly futile. He feels that his best endeavours to resist sin and bring forth the fruits of holiness are a total failure. That is because he judges by sight and sense! God, who looks at the heart and accepts the sincere will for the deed, reckons otherwise. “Ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”: such an assurance is ours in exact proportion to the measure of faith. The more confident our hope of reward, the more determined will be our efforts to mortify sin and practise holiness—the only “labour” God has assured us “is not in vain”!

OUR ANNUAL LETTER

“In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good” (Ecc 11:6). We have now entered upon what must be at least the beginning of “the evening” of our life, for forty years have passed since the editor preached his first sermon. It was on the words, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (Rom 1:16), etc., and to a congregation of over seven hundred people. Though it was not the first time we had spoken in public, yet it was quite an ordeal, especially as it was in our home-town—Nottingham. Since then, without any break, it has been our holy privilege, yet solemn responsibility, to sow the good seed, either orally or by the pen—the latter exclusively the last twelve years. Let the preacher observe that in the verse with which we have opened, it is not “sow the seed,” but “sow *thy* seed”—that which we have, by grace, made our own, and verified by personal experience. *That* enables us to sow it with greater confidence, and often to better effect!

The discriminating hearer (and reader) can usually perceive whether the message is spoken from the heart or mechanically delivered like a gramophone; whether its author can say, “That which...we have seen with our eyes, which *we* have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life...declare we unto you” (1Jo 1:1-3), or whether he be merely discussing something with which he has only a theoretical acquaintance. The figure of “sowing seed” is a very suggestive one—among other things, implying the exercise of *faith*, for to outward sight, so far as immediate results are concerned, it seems to be love’s labour lost. For the same reason, it is an act of *hope*, performed with the expectation of a future yield. So it should ever be with the servant of God. After making sure he has a message from the Lord and has first taken it unto and preached it to himself, he is to deliver the same in humble dependence upon his Master, and in the unshakable assurance that His Word will not return unto Him void, but shall indeed accomplish that which He pleases (Isa 55:11).

“Thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good” (Ecc 11:6). Sometimes the servant of God is permitted to see fruits from his labours at an early date; at others, he may toil all through a long night and take nothing. That may be ascribed to the sovereignty of God, though we are persuaded that “according to your faith be it unto you” (Mat 9:29) has not a little to do with it—“without faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb 11:6) applies as much to preaching as to anything else. Sometimes a message upon which extra pains were taken, and which was delivered with unusual earnestness and liberty, appears to be lost on the air; while another which seemed far more commonplace is made a definite blessing to souls—which may be God’s way of humbling the pride of His servant. In our experience with this magazine, we have been particularly

favoured by God, for during the course of the year, scarcely an article appears when some write in to say it has been blessed to them. Even the one on “Counsels re Marriage” in the August issue was found especially timely by one reader about to wed—though when inserting it, we knew that not.

Though this year has not been without testings and anxieties—for as Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) well said, “Joy and trial go hand in hand”—yet it has been a most encouraging one. An increasing number are kindly making this written ministry a matter of more definite prayer. *That* should be the chief recourse of all God’s people in these evil days. The Lord changes not, and nothing is too hard for Him. We greatly fear that conditions both in the churches and in the world will still further deteriorate, and that the spiritual and moral darkness upon Christendom will become denser. Yet, while that is cause for grief and exercise of heart, it is no reason why we should panic or lose hope. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Psa 46:1). “Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed [the most stable forms of government] and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea [kings and emperors deposed]; the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge” (Psa 46:2,7).

During 1948, several old friends, both personal and of this magazine, have been called Home. On the other hand, we have good reason to believe that more than one of our readers who were “church members” have passed from death unto life while taking unto themselves some of the more searching parts of our articles; while others have been influenced to withdraw from places where error is taught, going forth unto Christ outside the apostate camp. The number of our ministerial readers is being maintained, and we feel increasingly desirous of seeking to help them and strengthen their hands—especially the younger ones. Though we had to drop well over two hundred from our 1947 mailing list (and shall have to do the same this time!), the Lord graciously gave us new ones to take their places, and some fifty more for “good measure.” The smallness of its circulation is still our acutest problem. Had it not been that more than one hundred sent an annual donation which permits us to mail them an extra copy, we had been obliged to cease publishing years ago. Will U.S.A. readers take note that \$5 fully covers a bound volume and *two* of the loose monthly issues for next year.

So many have written to tell of the help and blessing received from the “Prayers of the Apostles” articles that we have decided to prolong them throughout 1949, D.V. It had been our intention to take up a verse-by-verse exposition of the first epistle of John, and thus meet the wish of scores who read our work on John’s Gospel, but that must be postponed for another year. Under the “Doctrine of Revelation,” after two or three more on the saving discovery which God makes of Himself in the soul, we hope to write several articles on the beatific vision of the revelation of the Lord unto His saints *in glory*, which is, of course, the climax of the subject; after which we expect to turn to the more technical side and take up the “verbal inspiration” of the Scriptures, their interpretation, and application: much grace will be required for the former, and wisdom for the latter. In addition to those on Joshua, a new but shorter series will begin in the January issue, entitled “Glorious Sinai,” which, though somewhat controversial, is most blessed and deeply important: we beg for them a prayerful and unprejudiced perusal.

If we are preserved in health, such a program, in addition to writing many letters every week, will keep us constantly busy—far busier than many realize. Our articles consist not of the first things which come to mind, but each one is the outcome of many hours’ hard work. It is only by adhering strictly to a systematic schedule the editor is able (by grace) to produce so much month by month from his own pen. Such intense and prolonged application makes it impracticable for us to do any visiting or receive any visitors: the hour we might spend in conversing with a single person is spent in seeking to help a thousand by our pen; so friends will understand why we cannot see any callers. One reason why we remain in this secluded isle is that we can prosecute our labours in undisturbed privacy.

Notwithstanding our having had no break—not so much as a single day’s holiday the past eight years—we are thankful to say that (except for slight colds) we have both been preserved in health and strength through another year. In spite of a further ten per cent increase in costs of production, we close 1948 with a small credit balance. We were ashamed of the “workmanship” on the 1947 bound volume, but were unable to secure better. This year, our printers have kindly agreed to do the job, and we hope for a more satisfactory one. Through the generosity of a few friends, the 1948 volume will be available to regular readers for 7s.6d. (\$1.75), but we reserve the right to select customers at that price. Please read the December cover-page article on December 31, and pray that it may be made good in both writer and reader. *Prayer for us, for God’s blessing on this magazine, and an increased circulation is earnestly solicited.*

With Christian greetings, yours by divine mercy,

—A. W. and V. E. Pink

APPENDICES

About Studies in the Scriptures

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952) wrote and published his monthly 28 page expository digest, *Studies in the Scriptures*, from 1922 to 1953. He mailed it worldwide by paid subscription to whomever desired the deeper truths of God. Each issue contained continuing serialized articles on six to eight subjects. When one subject was “completed” to the author’s satisfaction, another subject series began in its place in the next issue. In total, the 380 issues comprise a treasure of immense proportions.

By God’s grace, Chapel Library republishes the *Studies* beginning with the year 1934, available for download worldwide, and mailing three issues each quarter by free subscription in North America. We also print many books and booklets gleaned from articles in the *Studies*. These may be ordered in print in North America, or downloaded from our website worldwide without charge:

Studies: www.chapellibrary.org/studies

Other literature: www.chapellibrary.org/literature/title-catalog

Today the various subjects are being gathered together by topic, and republished in paperbacks by several sources. *Chapel Library* offers the following at the time of this printing:

- The Sovereignty of God	176 pages
- Comfort for Christians	79 pages
- Profiting from the Word	96 pages
- Seven Sayings of the Savior	94 pages
- Spiritual Union and Communion	175 pages
- The Attributes of God	105 pages
- The Doctrine of Human Depravity	241 pages
- The Doctrine of Revelation	214 pages
- 1 John – An Exposition, Part 1	190 pages
- 1 John – An Exposition, Part 2	173 pages
- The Holy Spirit	196 pages

Biography of A.W. Pink

by Erroll Hulse

Concerning Calvinism⁸ and Arminianism⁹ during the first half of the Twentieth Century, a most interesting case study is the experience of Arthur W. Pink. He was a preacher and writer of outstanding talent who ministered in

⁸ **Calvinism** – the doctrinal system developed from the teachings of the French-born Swiss Reformer John Calvin (1509-1664), holding that the Bible teaches the supreme authority of the Scriptures, the sovereignty of God, predestination, and the “doctrines of grace”; these doctrines were the response of the Synod of Dort (1618-19) to the Arminians’ remonstrance (protest) and are commonly known by the acronym TULIP.

⁹ **Arminianism** – (from Jacobus Arminius, 1560-1609, Dutch theologian) the doctrinal system that rejects the Reformers’ understanding of predestination, teaching instead that God’s predestination of individuals was based on His foreknowledge of their accepting or rejecting Christ by their own free will.

Britain, America, and Australia. When he died in 1952 in isolation on the Island of Lewis in north eastern Scotland, he was hardly known outside a small list of subscribers to his magazine, *Studies in the Scriptures*. Yet, by the 1970s, his books were in wide demand and his name was widely known among publishers and ministers. In fact, for that period it would be difficult to find a reformed author whose books were more widely read.

The preaching ministry of A. W. Pink had been remarkably blessed in the USA, but it was in Australia that he seemed to reach the apex of his public ministry, and there in particular that his preaching ministry reached great heights. He was then faced with accreditation by the Baptist Union and was rejected on account of his Calvinistic views. He then ministered in a Baptist church of Strict Baptist pedigree. There he came unstuck since they esteemed him an Arminian! A considerable group, however, appreciated Pink, recognised his worth, and seceded from that Strict Baptist Church to form a new church of 27 members. Then suddenly, in 1934, Pink resigned and returned to Britain. It is widely held that one rejection is enough to cripple a minister for life, but two in quick succession can destroy a pastor completely. So it proved for Arthur Pink. He never again found meaningful entrance into the ministry, though he tried his utmost. He sought openings in both the UK and the USA without success. He became increasingly isolated. He ended his days as an evangelical recluse in the Island of Stornoway off the coast of Scotland. It was rumoured that not more than ten souls attended his funeral.

There is much that we can learn from the life of A. W. Pink. Firstly, we will trace out his early life in broad outline. Secondly, we will describe his experience in Australia, and trace out the adverse effects of this on his life. Thirdly, we will the impact of his writing ministry.

1. Early Life

Arthur Pink was born in Nottingham, England, in 1886. His parents were godly. They lived by the Bible and kept the Lord's Day holy. Arthur was the first of three children brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. To the grief of their parents, all three children drifted into lives of unbelief. Worse was to come: Arthur embraced *Theosophy*, an esoteric cult that claimed powers of the occult! "Lucifer" was the name of the leading theosophy magazine. A natural feature of Arthur's character was wholeheartedness, and he entered theosophy with zeal. A leadership role was offered him, which meant that he would visit India. At the same time a friend who was an opera singer, noted that Arthur possessed a fine baritone voice; he urged him to study for a career in opera. Then suddenly on a night during 1908, Arthur was converted. His first action was to preach the Gospel to the theosophist group.

Simultaneous with Pink's conversion was a call to the Christian ministry. But the colleges were in the hands of liberals bent on the destruction of the Scriptures. Arthur, however, heard of the Moody Bible Institute, which had been founded by D. L. Moody¹⁰ in 1889. In 1910, aged 24, Pink left for Chicago to begin a two-year course. His time at Moody lasted only six weeks, however. He decided that he was wasting his time, and that he should enter directly into a pastorate—and his professors agreed! He was not disgruntled, but rather frustrated, that the teaching was pitched at such a primary level that it did nothing for him.

During 1910, he began in his first pastorate in Silverton, Colorado, a mining camp in the San Juan Mountains. We possess little detail of this period, but we know that from Silverton, Pink moved to Los Angeles. He was always a hard worker, and this is illustrated by the fact that at one point in Oakland he was engaged in tent evangelism six nights a week for eighteen weeks!

From Los Angeles, he moved to Kentucky. It was here that he met and married Vera E. Russell. There could not have been a better gift from heaven. Vera was entirely committed to the Lord. She was hard working, gifted, intelligent, and persevering. She died just ten years after Arthur's decease on the island of Stornoway.

The next move was to Spartanburg, South Carolina, from 1917 to 1920. This church building consisted of a small and frail wooden structure, while he and Vera lived in a small wooden house standing on wooden columns. Heating was inadequate, and in the freezing winter it was like an ice box.

It was during this time Pink began writing books. There were two of significance: one with the title *Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, and the second *The Sovereignty of God*, the foreword of which is dated June 1918. It was this book that was later taken up by The Banner of Truth publishers. The first edition, according to I. C. Herendeen, his first publisher at that time, was only 500 copies, and it was a struggle to sell that number. When the book came to Banner, it was edited by Iain Murray and vastly improved. It became one of the most popular of The Banner of Truth paperbacks. By 1980, 92,000 copies had sold.

After about a year at Spartanburg, Pink almost came to grief. He felt a strong conviction to give up the ministry and devote himself to writing only, and at one point was disconsolate. Vera wrote to a friend saying that her hus-

¹⁰ **D. L. Moody** (1837-1899) – American evangelist and publisher who founded the Moody Church, Northfield School and Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts (now the Northfield Mount Hermon School), the Moody Bible Institute, and Moody Publishers.

band was even thinking of leaving the ministry and going into business, to make money for the Kingdom as a better way of serving God. In 1920, Arthur resigned the pastorate at Spartanburg. He and Vera moved and settled at Swengel, Pennsylvania, in order to be near the publisher I. C. Herendeen.

In the middle of July, 1920, he left to take a series of meetings in California. Large crowds gathered and numbers were saved. At one point 1,200 gathered to hear the Gospel. Other crusades and conferences followed; it was evident that Pink was eminently suited to this kind of ministry. Looking back over his life, it is apparent that he experienced more blessing in the itinerant ministry than he did in a total of twelve years in pastoring churches. This had to do with his temperament; he preferred being in his study to visiting.

In 1921, Arthur and Vera were back in Pennsylvania. The monthly digest, the *Studies in the Scriptures*, first appeared in 1922. It ran continuously without interruption for 32 years, until Arthur's death in 1952. Initially, this was a 24 page magazine, with four to six articles as instalments in a series. To write expository material at a high standard at this rate every month is a tremendous testimony to his insight into the Scriptures, and to the Lord's blessing and enabling. All his articles had to be written by hand and finished for the printer at least two months before the date of publication. *Studies in the Scriptures* had about 1,000 circulation at the beginning, but for most of its existence the subscription level hovered at about 500. The financial side was always precarious, with only just enough to cover printing costs from one month to the next. Pink corresponded with some of his subscribers; eventually this formed his pastoral work. Throughout he was assisted by his very hard working wife, who acted as secretary. They never had a family, always lived very humbly, and managed always to make ends meet. This was made possible through a modest inheritance left to him by his parents and through gifts that he received from his readers.

During 1923, Arthur fell into a deep depression, which turned out to be a nervous breakdown. At this juncture a young couple that had been greatly blessed by Pink's ministry came to the rescue, and Arthur was nursed through a period of several months enforced rest, which brought him back to normal health.

In 1924, a major new direction came by way of letters of invitation from a publisher in Sydney, Australia. Before departing for Australia, no less than four months preparation had to be made for the *Studies*. On his way to Australia, Pink engaged in more Bible conference preaching in Colorado, then in Oakland, California, and also San Francisco—from where he and Vera took ship across the Pacific to Sydney.

2. *Pink's Experience in Australia*

The Pinks spent a total of three and half years in Australia. These times were for them the best, but also turned out to be the worst. Upon arrival Arthur had more invitations than he possibly fill. Initially his ministry in Australia was a great success. Crowds gathered; churches were filled; believers were revived; and souls were brought to the Saviour.

Attendance swelled in every place he preached. In the first year in Australia Arthur preached 250 times. He would often work until 2:00 in the morning to keep *Studies in the Scriptures* going. The Pinks truly must have felt that at last they had found the place of permanent fulfilment. There was an evident power in his ministry. One mature believer declared that he drew people "like a magnet," and that he preached the "whole counsel of God's Word," and was capable of preaching a sermon "from every word of the text."

This period proved to be one of great joy. Pink was now 40 years old. He was preaching almost daily for well over an hour. He would get home at 10:00 PM and then work until 2:00 AM. He wrote, "never before during our 16 years in the ministry, have we experienced such blessing and joy in our souls, such liberty of utterance, and such an encouraging response as we have done in this highly favoured portion of Christ's vineyard."¹¹

We can be sure that a thrilling and powerful soul-saving ministry will arouse the fury of Satan. And so it proved to be in this case when that old serpent, the devil, mounted a cunning counterattack. The Baptist Union leaders were fundamentally opposed to Calvinism. These leaders invited Arthur Pink to read a paper on "Human Responsibility." Sadly, Pink did not realise that this was a plot to demote him in the eyes of the public—and in his sincere earnestness he fell into the trap. Instead of declining this invitation, he presented the paper and then answered questions for over an hour. The result of this was that the BU of New South Wales published a statement that they agreed unanimously *not* to endorse his ministry. What they really meant (for they did not themselves clarify any doctrine) is that they did not agree with Pink's Reformed doctrine. They were fundamentally Arminian. The effect of all this was that invitations dried up, and Pink's wider effective ministry in Australia was drastically reduced.

It was at this juncture that one of three Strict and Particular Baptist Churches invited Pink to become its pastor. This church was known as the Belvoir Street Church. Here Pink was as busy as he had ever been in his life. He had

¹¹ *The Life of Arthur W. Pink*, by Iain H. Murray, *The Banner of Truth Trust*, p 49

preached 300 times in the year ending 1926. In addition to preaching three times a week at Belvoir Street, he preached in three different places in Sydney each week to an average of 200 at each meeting. He still managed to maintain *Studies in the Scriptures* by burning midnight oil.

Trouble however was in store. The early part of the Twentieth Century was a time of lack of clarity in doctrine. One of the evidences of this was confusion over Calvinism, Arminianism, and hyper-Calvinism.¹² Many churches polarized. The Baptist Union was Arminian, and the Strict and Particular Baptists tended to be hyper-Calvinist. This proved to be the case at Belvoir Street. Until about May 1927, the Pinks believed that they had found a permanent church home.

3. *Impact of Pink's Writing Ministry*

If history had progressed normally, Arthur Pink would have been forgotten. There are several leaders in each generation who are well known, but it is unlikely that their names will be remembered for very long. When Arthur Pink died, he was known to a small circle of readers—about 500—who read his monthly periodical *Studies in the Scriptures*, which he had faithfully produced with the help of his wife Vera for 31 years. Yet, after his decease, as his writings were collected and published as books, his name became very well known in the English-speaking evangelical world. During the 1960s and '70s, there was a dearth of reliable expository writing; Pink's writings filled an important need. His expositions are God-centred, theologically compelling, and reliable—as well as practical and experimental. That was precisely what was needed during a period of spiritual drought. Publishers discovered the value of his writings. The outcome was dramatic.

For instance, Baker Book House published twenty-two different titles by Pink, with a combined total sales by 1980 of 350,000. By the same date just three books (*Sovereignty of God*, *Life of Elijah*, and *Profiting from the Word*) totaled 211,000. Yet as contemporary reformed authors have multiplied, so the demand for Pink's books has lessened.

We must remember that with the dawning of the twentieth century, the mainline denominations had already suffered extensive losses to higher criticism and modernism. Such was the advance of modernism in the late nineteenth century and through the first half of the twentieth century, most Bible colleges and seminaries were lost to an agenda of unbelief and anti-Christianity. Instead of producing preacher/pastors for the churches, men were sent out who emptied the churches. The most striking example is Methodism. The aggregate membership in Methodism grew to be the highest of the non-conformist churches. Yet this denomination has been virtually annihilated by modernism.

The writings of Pink provided not only food for the spiritually hungry, but as Iain Murray asserts, “Pink has been immensely important in reviving and stimulating doctrinal reading at the popular level. The same can be said of few other authors of the twentieth century.”¹³

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¹² **hyper-Calvinism** – the doctrinal error that holds men need not evangelize, since God will save His elect children with or without the means of preaching the Word. This represents only one side of biblical truth; the other is that God is pleased to use human instruments as means to His work, and the preaching of the Word is uniquely marked out for this purpose (2Ti 4:2; 2Ti 3:16; Mat 28:19).

¹³ *ibid.*

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You can subscribe to **two free quarterly magazines**: (1) *Free Grace Broadcaster*, which presents a biblical theme each quarter, filled with Christ-centered articles from previous centuries; and (2) *Studies in the Scriptures*, A.W. Pink's expository digest from the 1930s and 40s. In North America, please write or email for a free subscription. Inmates should use our Prison Order Form instead.

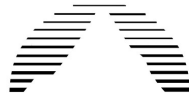
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