

Volume 17—Studies in the Scriptures—No. 8**August, 1938****The Lord's Prayer—Part 6**

"Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). We turn now unto those petitions which more immediately concern ourselves: we must labour to promote the manifestative glory of God, advance His kingdom, and do His will before we are permitted to supplicate for our *own* needs. These petitions which more immediately concern ourselves are four in number, and in them we may clearly discern an implied reference unto each of the Persons in the blessed Trinity. Our temporal needs are supplied by the kindness of the Father, our sins are forgiven through the mediation of the Son. We are preserved from temptation and delivered from evil by the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit. Let us carefully note the *proportion* which is observed between these last four petitions; one of them concerns our bodily needs; three relate to the concerns of the soul—teaching us that in prayer, too, temporal things are to be subordinated unto spiritual.

"Give us this day our daily bread." Perhaps it will be helpful if we begin by raising a number of questions. First, why does this request for the supply of bodily needs come *before* those petitions which concern the soul's? Second, what is signified by and included in the term "bread"? Third, in what sense may we suitably beg God for our daily bread when we already have a supply on hand? Fourth, how can bread be a Divine gift if we earn the same by our own labours? Fifth, what is inculcated by the request being restricted to our "daily bread"? Before attempting to answer these queries let us say that, with almost all of the best of the commentators, we regard the prime reference as being unto material "bread," rather than unto spiritual.

Matthew Henry has pertinently pointed out that the reason why this request for the supply of our temporal needs *heads* the last four petitions is, "because our natural being is necessary in order to our spiritual well-being in this world." In other words, God grants to us the outward things of this life as *helps* unto the discharge of our spiritual duties: because given by Him, they are to be employed in His service. What gracious consideration does God here show unto our weakness: we are unapt and unfit to perform our higher duties if deprived of the things needed for the sustenance of our bodily existence. May we not also suggest that this petition comes first in order to promote the growth of faith from strength to strength: perceiving the goodness and faithfulness of God in supplying our temporal needs, we are encouraged and stimulated to ask for higher blessings—compare Acts 17:26-28.

"Our daily bread" refers, primarily to the supply of our temporal needs. With the Hebrews, "bread" was a generic term signifying the necessities and conveniences of this life (Gen. 3:19; 28:20), such as food, raiment, and housing. Yet there is an emphasis in the specific term "bread," rather than the more general "food," teaching us to ask not for dainties or for riches, but for that which is wholesome and needful. "Bread" here includes health and appetite, apart from which food serves us not. It also takes into account our *nourishment*, for this is not from the food alone, nor does it lie within the power of man's will: hence God's *blessing* on it is to be sought. "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. 4:4, 5).

In begging God to give us our daily bread, we ask that He would graciously provide us with such a portion of outward things as He sees will be best suited to our calling and sta-

tion: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal" (Prov. 30:8, 9). If God grants us the superfluities of life, we are to be thankful, and must endeavour to use them to His glory; but we must not ask for them: "Having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:8). "*Our* daily bread": not by theft, not by taking by force or fraud what belongs to another—but by our personal labour and industry. "Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread" (Prov. 20:13); "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness" (Prov. 31:27).

How can I sincerely ask God for this day's bread when I already have a goodly supply on hand? First, because our present temporal portion may speedily be taken from us, and that without any warning: a striking and solemn illustration of this is found in 1 Samuel 30:16, 17. Fire may burn down your house and everything in it: so by asking God for the daily supply of our temporal needs, we acknowledge our complete dependency upon His bounty. Second, because what we have will profit us nothing unless God designs to also *bless* the same unto us. Third, because this petition is more comprehensive than my own personal needs: it is not simply "give me," but *us*, thereby inculcating charity and compassion to others. God requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves; to be as solicitous about our fellow-Christians as we are of our own needs.

How can God be said to *give* us our daily bread if we ourselves have earned it? Surely such a quibble scarcely needs reply. First, because our right to the creature was forfeited when we fell in Adam. Second, because everything belongs to God: "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psa. 24:1); "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, saith the LORD of hosts" (Hag. 2:8); "Therefore will I return, and take away *My* corn in the time thereof, and *My* wine in the season thereof" (Hosea 2:9). Therefore we hold in fee from Him the portion which He bestows. We are but *stewards*: God grants us both possession and title. Third, because all we have comes *from God*: "These wait all upon Thee, that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That Thou givest them they gather: Thou openest Thine hand, they are filled with good" (Psa. 104:27, 28 and cf. Acts 14:17). Although by labour and purchase things may (relatively) be said to be "ours," yet it is God who gives us strength *to* labour.

What is inculcated by the request being restricted to our "*daily* bread"? First, it reminds us of our *frailty*: we are unable to continue in health for twenty-four hours and are unfit for its duties unless constantly fed from on High. Second, it emphasises the *brevity* of our mundane existence: none of us knows what a day may bring forth, and therefore we are forbidden to boast ourselves of the morrow (Prov. 27:1). Third, it teaches us to suppress all anxious concern for the future: to live a day at a time—"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:34). Fourth, it inculcates the lesson of *moderation*: we are to stifle the spirit of covetousness by forming the habit of being contented with a slender portion. Finally, observe that "give us *this* day" is to be prayed each morning, whereas "give us *day by day*" (Luke 11:3) is to be our request every night.

This petition, then, teaches us, first, that it is permissible and lawful to supplicate God for temporal mercies. Second, that we are completely dependent upon God's bounty for everything. Third, that our confidence is to be in Him alone: and not in secondary causes. Fourth, that we should be grateful and return thanks for material blessings as well as for

spiritual ones. Fifth, that we should practice frugality and discourage covetousness. Sixth, that we should have family worship every morning and evening. Seventh, that we should be equally solicitous of others as of ourselves: "Give us."—A.W.P.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

1. Introduction.

Matthew's Gospel breaks the long silence which followed the ministry of Malachi, the last of the Old Testament Prophets. The silence extended for four hundred years, and during that time God was withdrawn from Israel. Throughout this period there were no angelic manifestations, no Prophet spoke for Jehovah, and though the Chosen People were sorely pressed, yet were there no Divine interpositions on their behalf. For four centuries God shut His people up to His written Word. Again and again had He promised to send the Messiah, and from Malachi onwards there was a believing remnant who anxiously awaited the appearing of the predicted One. It is at this point that Matthew picks up the thread dropped by the last of the Old Testament Prophets. The first purpose of Matthew's Gospel is to present Christ as the *Fulfiller* of the promises made to Israel and the prophecies which related to their Messiah. This is why the word "fulfilled" occurs in Matthew fifteen times, and why there are more quotations from the Old Testament in his Gospel than in the remaining three added together.

The *position* which Matthew's Gospel occupies in the Sacred Canon indicates its character and scope. Standing immediately after the Old Testament and at the beginning of the New, it is therefore the connecting link between them. Hence it is *transitional*, and also more Jewish than any other book in the New Testament. Matthew reveals God appealing to and dealing with His Old Testament people. The numerical place of Matthew in the Divine library confirms this, for being the *fortieth* book it shows us the nation of Israel in the place of *probation*, being tested by the presence of Jehovah in their midst. Matthew presents the Lord Jesus as Israel's Messiah and King, as well as the One who shall save His people from their sins. The opening sentence gives the key to its contents: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." Seven times over Christ is addressed as "the Son of David" in this Gospel, and ten times altogether is this title found there. "Son of David" connects Christ with the *throne*, while "Son of Abraham" associates Him with the *altar*.

This opening Gospel explains how it is that in the later books of the New Testament Israel is viewed as cast off by God, why it is Christendom has superceded the Jewish theocracy—the result of rejecting their Messiah. A striking foreshadowment of this is found in the second chapter, where a significant incident—passed over by the other Evangelists—is recorded, namely, the visit of the wise men who came from the East to worship the Christ Child. In the attendant circumstances we may perceive prophetic anticipation of what is recorded throughout this Gospel, and the New Testament. First, Christ is seen *outside* of Jerusalem. Then we have the *blindness* and indifference of the Jews to the presence of their Messiah: unaware that He was now among them, undesirous of accompanying the magi. Next there are the *strangers* from a far country with a heart for the Saviour, seeking Him out and worshipping Him. Finally, we behold the civil head, so filled with hatred, determined to put Him to death—presaging His crucifixion by the Jews.

Not until the middle of his fourth chapter does Matthew tell us, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (v. 17). The time-mark here is, in the light of its context, most significant, emphasizing the same solemn aspect of truth as was adumbrated in chapter 2. First, we are told that our Lord's forerunner had been "cast into prison" (v. 12). Second, we are informed that Christ "leav-

ing Nazareth” came “and dwelt in Capernaum” (v. 13), for Nazareth (where He had dwelt so long: 2:23) had openly rejected Him (see Luke 4:28-30). Third, it is here emphasized that the Saviour had gone “beyond Jordan” into “Galilee of the Gentiles,” where “the people which sat in darkness saw great light” (v. 16)—another illustrative anticipation of His rejection by the Jews and His turning to the Gentiles.

The 4th chapter closes by telling us, “And His fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with demons, and those which were lunatic, and those which had the palsy: and there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis,” etc., (vv. 24, 25). Some have wondered why our Lord performed these miracles of healing upon the bodies of the people *before* He delivered His great Sermon on the Mount for the nourishing of their souls. First, it should be noted that these miracles of healing *followed* His “teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom” (4:23). Second, these miracles of healing were an essential part of His Messianic credentials: Isaiah 35:4-6. Third, these miracles of healing made way for His fuller preaching, by disposing the people to listen unto One who manifested such Divine power and mercy.

The preface to the Sermon is a very short one: “And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain, and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him; and He opened His mouth, and taught them” (Matt. 5:1, 2). Yet brief as these verses be, there are several things in them which call for careful consideration. First, we must notice the *place* from which this Sermon was Preached. “As in other things, so in this, our Lord Jesus was but ill-accommodated: He had no convenient place to preach in, any more than to lay His head on. While the scribes and Pharisees had Moses’ chair to sit in, with all possible ease, honour, and state, and there corrupted the Law; our Lord Jesus, the great Teacher of Truth, is driven out to the desert, and finds no better place than a “mountain” can afford.

“Nor was it one of the *holy* mountains, nor one of the mountains of *Zion*, but a common mountain—by which Christ would intimate that there is no distinguishing holiness of places now, under the Gospel, as there was under the Law—but that it is the will of God that men should pray and praise everywhere, anywhere, provided it be decent and convenient. Christ preached this Sermon, which was an exposition of the Law, upon a mountain, because upon a mountain the Law was given: and this was also a solemn promulgation of the Christian Law. But observe the difference: when the Law was given the Lord came down upon the mountain, now the Lord “went up” into one. Then He spoke in thunder and lightning, now in a still small voice. Then the people were ordered to keep their distance, now they are invited to draw near—a blessed change!” (Matthew Henry).

We believe there is a yet deeper significance in the fact that Christ delivered this Sermon from a mountain. Very often the noting of *the place where* a particular utterance was made, supplies a key to its interpretation. For example in Matthew 13:36, Christ is seen entering “into the house,” where He made known unto His own the inner secrets of His kingdom. In Luke’s Gospel Christ is seen as man (the perfect Man) among men, and there He delivers a sermon “in the plain” (6:17)—descending as it were to a common level. But in Matthew His royal authority is in view, and consequently He is seen again and again in an elevated place. In the seventeenth chapter we behold Him transfigured on the mount. In 24:3 He delivers His great prophetic discourse from a mount. Then in

28:18-20 we see the Conqueror of Death commissioning His disciples from the mount. So here in 5:1, He ascends the mount when about to give forth the manifesto of His kingdom.

Next we would notice that our Lord was *seated* when He preached this Sermon. It seems to have been His usual manner to preach sitting: "I *sat* daily with you teaching in the temple" (Matt. 26:55). This was the custom of the Jewish teachers: "The scribes and the Pharisees *sit* in Moses' seat" (Matt. 23:2). Nevertheless, we are persuaded that the Spirit's notice of our Lord's posture on this occasion intimates something more important and significant than that He accommodated Himself to the prevailing mode of the day. In this Sermon Christ enunciated the laws of His kingdom and spoke with an authority infinitely transcending that of the Jewish leaders; and therefore His posture here is to be regarded as emblematic of a King sitting upon His throne, or a Judge upon the bench.

"And He opened His mouth and taught them." Here the Spirit of God has noted the great Prophet's *manner of speaking*. First, it is to be understood naturally, and carefully emulated by all His servants. The first essential of any public speaker is that he open his mouth and articulate clearly, otherwise, no matter how good may be his subject matter, much will be lost on his hearers. Alas, how many preachers mutter and mumble their words, or employ a pious whine which elderly people cannot catch. It is most desirable that the young preacher should spare no pains to acquire a free and clear delivery: avoiding shouting and yelling on the one hand, and sinking his voice too much on the other.

Second, we may also behold here the perfections of our blessed Redeemer. So far as Scripture informs us, from the age of twelve till He reached thirty, Christ maintained a steady silence, for the time appointed by His Father to deliver His great message had not then arrived. In perfect submission to the One who sent Him, the Lord Jesus *waited* the hour which had been set Him—"There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Eccl. 3:7). To one of His prophets of old God said, "I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover" (Ezek. 3:26). Later, He said, "now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening . . . and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb: then the Word of the LORD came unto me" (Ezek. 33:22, 23). So it was here with the supreme Prophet: the time had come for Him to enunciate the laws of His kingdom: the hand of God was upon Him, and He "opened His month."

Third, as Scripture is compared with Scripture, this expression will be found to bear yet another meaning. "Supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may *open my mouth boldly*, to make known the mystery of the Gospel" (Eph. 6:19). The Apostle was referring to a special kind of speech, upon far more weighty matters than his ordinary conversation. So when we are here told that Christ "opened His mouth and taught them" we are to understand that He spoke with liberty and authority, with faithfulness and boldness, delivering Himself upon matters of the deepest weight and greatest importance. It means that, without fear or favour, Christ openly set forth the truth, regardless of consequences. That this is the meaning appears from what we read of at the finish of the Sermon: "The people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one *having authority*, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:28).

Let us now observe *the persons* to whom our Lord here addressed Himself. There has been considerable difference of opinion concerning the ones to whom this Sermon really applies: the saved or the unsaved. Extreme positions have been taken on both sides, with

a good deal of unnecessary dogmatism. Personally, we regard this Sermon as a forecast and an epitome of the entire oral ministry of Christ, that it summarizes the general tenor of His whole teaching. The older we grow, the less do we approve of drawing hard and fast lines through the Scriptures, limiting their application by insisting that certain parts belong only to such and such a class, and under the guise of “rightly dividing” the Word, apportioning segments of it to the Jews only, the Gentiles only, or the Church of God only. Man makes his canals rigidly straight, but God’s rivers wind in and out. God’s commandment is “exceeding broad” (Psa. 119:96), and we must be on our guard against placing restrictions thereon.

A careful study of the four Gospels reveals the fact that Christ’s ministry had, first, a special application to the afflicted people of God; second, it evidently had a peculiar reference to His own immediate disciples; and third, it had a general bearing upon the people at large. Such we take it was also the case with the Sermon on the Mount, embodying and illustrating these three distinctive features of Christ’s public ministry. First, its opening section (the “Beatitudes”) is most evidently addressed to those who were afflicted in their souls—those deeply exercised before God. Second, its next division referred directly to His public servants, as will be shown (D.V.), when we take it up in detail. Third, its larger part was a most searching exposition of the spirituality of the Law and the refutation of the false teachings of the elders, and was meant mainly for the people at large.

We do not think that W. Perkins went too far when he said of the Sermon on the Mount, “It may justly be called the key of the whole Bible, for here Christ openeth the sum of the Old and New Testaments.” It is the longest discourse of our Lord’s recorded in the Scriptures. He began His public ministry by insisting upon repentance (Matt. 4:17), and here He enlarges upon this vitally important subject in a variety of ways, showing us what repentance really is and what are its fruits. It is an intensely *practical* sermon throughout: as Matthew Henry tersely expressed it, “There is not much of the credenda of Christianity in it—the things to be believed; but it is wholly taken up with the agenda—the things to be done, for ‘if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine’ (John 7:17).”

Though we are told at the beginning of chapter 5 that it was His “disciples” whom Christ here taught, yet it is equally clear from the closing verses of chapter 7 that this Sermon was spoken in the hearing of the multitudes. This must be steadily borne in mind throughout, for while it contains much instruction for believers in connection with their living a good, honest, and blessed life, yet not a little in it is evidently designed for unbelievers, particularly those sections which contain a most searching setting forth of the spiritual nature of His kingdom and the character of those who enter and enjoy its privileges. Romish teachers have greatly erred, for they insist that Christ here propounded a *new* Law—far more perfect than the law of Moses—and that He delivered now entirely *new* counsel to His disciples, which was never given in the Law or the Prophets; whereas His intention was to clear the true meaning of the Law and the Prophets which had been greatly corrupted by the Jewish doctors. But we will not further anticipate what we shall (D.V.) contemplate more fully in the studies to follow.—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF DAVID.

80. *His Sacred Song.*

2 Samuel 22 opens with the word "And," which at once suggests there is a close connection between its contents and what has immediately preceded. The chapter which is now to be before us records David's grand Psalm of thanksgiving, and, as its opening verse intimates, it was sung by him in celebration of the signal deliverances which God had granted him from his many enemies. Last month we had an account of the execution of the sons of Saul, followed by a summary of Israel's victories over the Philistines and the slaying of a number of their giants. In our last article we sought to point out the spiritual application of these things, as they bear upon the lives of Christians today, and the same line of thought is to be followed as we enter the present chapter. It is this looking for the *practical bearing* of the Scriptures upon ourselves which is so sorely needed, and which, alas, is now so much neglected by the present generation; only thus do we make the Bible a *living* Book, suited to our present need.

The spiritual and practical link of connection between 2 Samuel 21 and 22 is not difficult to perceive. As was shown last month, the execution of the sons of Saul (seven in number, for the work must be done *completely*) is to be regarded as a figure of the believer's mortifying his lusts, and the conflicts which followed between Israel and the Philistines, David and the giants, symbolizes the fact that that warfare with sin which the saint is called upon to wage, continues till the end of his earthly course. Now the work of mortification is indeed a very painful one, nevertheless it issues in a joyful sequel. The plucking out of right eyes and the cutting off of right hands doubtless produces many a groan, yet will they be followed by melodious thanksgiving. Death figures prominently in 2 Samuel 21, but 2 Samuel 22 opens with a "Song"! Here, then, is the obvious connection: when *death* be written upon our lusts, music will fill the heart; when that which is displeasing to God has been put away, the Spirit will tune our souls to sing Jehovah's praise.

It is a most interesting and instructive study to trace out the sacred, "Songs" of Scripture, paying particular attention to their *setting*. The first one is recorded in Exodus 15. We read not of the Hebrews celebrating the Lord's praises while they were in Egypt, but only of their sighing and groaning, (Exo. 2:23, 24). But when they had been delivered from the house of bondage, and their foes had been drowned in the Red Sea, a peal of worship ascended from their heart. Again, we read of Israel singing when the Lord supplied them with water (Num. 21:17). Moses ended his wilderness wanderings with a song (Deut. 31:22). Upon Israel's victory over the Canaanites they sang a song (Judg. 5:1). Job speaks of God giving "songs in the night" (35:10)—a real, if a rare, experience, as many saints can testify. The Psalmist said, "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage" (119:54).

There is a most marked similarity between the Song of David in 2 Samuel 22 and the 18th Psalm (observe the latter's superscription), indeed so close is the resemblance that almost all of the commentators have regarded them as being one and the same, attempting to account for their verbal variations (which though incidental are by no means few in number) on the supposition that the latter is a revised edition of the former. But such an assumption does not seem at all satisfactory—to us it appears a serious slight upon Divine inspiration: surely the Holy Spirit never needs to make any amendments! We therefore greatly prefer the view of C. H. Spurgeon: "We have another form of this 18th Psalm

with slight variations in 2 Samuel 22, and this suggests the idea that it was sung by him on different occasions when he reviewed his own remarkable history, and observed the gracious hand of God in it all."

This particular Song of David is no exception to a general, if not an invariable feature which marked all his inspired minstrelsy, in that we may see in it both a surface and a deeper allusion, both an historical and a prophetic significance. All doubt upon this point is definitely removed by the testimony of the New Testament, for there we find two of its verses quoted from as being the very words of Christ Himself, thus making it plain that a greater than David is here. In its deeper meaning it is the utterance of the Spirit of Christ in David, making special reference to His triumph over death by the mighty power of God (Eph. 1:19). David thankfully recounts the glorious actings of God on his behalf, yet in such language as rises above himself, to his Son and Lord, against whom all the powers of darkness were concentrated.

"And David spake unto the LORD the words of this song, in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul" (2 Sam. 22:1). One of the outstanding features of the checkered career of David was the large number of his foes, both from the surrounding nations and among his own people, the chief of all being Saul—the most formidable, malicious, and inveterate. Nor should this unduly surprise us, even though, as Matthew Henry tersely expressed it, "David was a man after *God's* heart, but not after *man's* heart: many were those who hated him." Why was this? First, God so ordered it that he might be an eminent type of Christ, who, throughout the ages has been "despised and rejected of men." Second, that thereby God might display the more conspicuously His faithfulness and power in preserving His own. Third, because this is generally the experience of the saints.

"And David spake unto the LORD the words of this song, in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul." Therefore was he well qualified experimentally to declare, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivereth him out of them all" (Psa. 34:19). The Lord's "deliverance" of David from his many foes assumed a great variety of forms: sometimes in one way, sometimes in another, for the Almighty is not limited to any particular means or method. On occasions He employs human instruments; and again, He wrought without them. Let this encourage the tried and Satan-harassed believer. Though every avenue of escape seem fast shut to your eyes, yet remember that closed doors are no barrier to the Lord (John 20:26). When the long drought completely dried up the water which sustained Elijah at Kerith, God maintained him with oil at Zarephath.

This too is written for our learning and comfort. As we have traced the life of David through the two books of Samuel, we have seen him in some sore straits: again and again it looked as though his foes must surely prevail against him; yea, on one occasion, he himself dolefully declared, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul" (1 Sam. 27:1). Yet he did not! No, One infinitely mightier than Saul was watching over him. And this is equally the case with you and me, dear reader, if we belong to Christ: the combined forces of Hell shall never prevail against us; the united assaults of the flesh, the world, and the Devil cannot destroy us. Why? "Because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Then why should we be so fearful? Let us seek grace to rest on that sure promise, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psa. 46:1).

Observe well David's *response* to these Divine interpositions on his behalf: deliverance calls for thanksgiving. This is the very least we can render unto the Lord in return for all His benefits. Nor should there be any tardiness in discharging this delightful obligation: gratitude must issue promptly in praise. It did so with the sweet singer in Israel, and it should also with us. Then let us take to heart this word, "And David spake unto the LORD the words of this song *in the day* that the Lord had delivered him" (2 Sam. 22:1). We ought to present unto God a sacrifice of praise while His mercies are fresh and the heart is duly affected by them. We are not slow in crying to God when imminent danger threatens us: then let us be just as prompt in acknowledging His goodness when His delivering hand is extended to us.

Many of the commentators are of the opinion that this Sacred Song was composed by David at an *early* date in his life, but personally we fail to see anything in the Scriptures which supports such a view. The very fact that the Holy Spirit has expressly told us it was uttered by David when, "The Lord had delivered him out of the hand of *all* his enemies," is surely a plain intimation that it was uttered by him late in life—the added words "and out of the hand of Saul" do not modify this view when the mention of him is regarded as being intended for the purpose of *emphasis*, he being his predominant foe. The main divisions of the Song are fairly clearly defined. First, is the preface, in which David is occupied with extolling Jehovah's perfections: verses 1-4. Second, he magnifies the Lord for His delivering mercies: verses 5-20. Third, he expresses the testimony of a clear conscience: verses 21-28. Fourth, he concludes with a prophetic anticipation of the glorious triumphs of the Messiah: verses 29-45.

"And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer" (2 Sam. 22:2). David begins by adoring Jehovah. He does so on the ground of his personal relation to Him—for all the benefits he had received, he bases upon his relation to God. Observe that in verses 2, 3, he uses the personal pronoun no less than nine times. It is a grand thing when we have the assurance and can feelingly say, "The Lord is *my* rock." While our enemies are hot upon our heels wounding us sorely, threatening our very life, we sometimes do not have this blessed assurance; but when God's delivering grace is experienced afresh by us, new hope is kindled in the soul. "The Lord is my rock and my fortress." "Dwelling among the crags and mountains of Judea, David had escaped the malice of Saul, and here compares his God to such a place of concealment and security. Believers are often hidden in their God from the strife of tongues and the fury of the storm" (C. H. Spurgeon).

"And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer." Let us not miss *the connection* between this and the preceding verse: they that trust God in the path of duty, will ever find Him a very present help in the greatest of dangers. And David *had* trusted God, with a faith which wrought miracles. Recall, for example, His intrepidity in facing Goliath. All Israel was afraid of the Philistine giant, so that none—not even Saul—dared to accept his haughty challenge. Yet David, though then but a youth, hesitated not to engage him in mortal combat, going forth to meet him without any material armour, and with naught but a sling in his hand. And wherein lay his strength? what was the secret of his courage and of his success? It was at once revealed in the words with which he met the enemy's champion: "thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel" (1 Sam. 17:45)!

And is *that*, my reader, nothing more than a striking incident of ancient history? Has it no message for our hearts? Is not God the same today: ready to respond to a faith that dares! Is it not written, “if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark 9:23). Do we really believe this? If not, are we earnestly begging God to increase our faith? Faith is invincible, because it lays hold of One who is omnipotent. Faith is the hand which grasps the Almighty, and is anything too hard for Him?! Is it not also written, “according unto your faith be it unto you” (Matt. 9:29)? Ah, does not that explain why it is we so often meet with defeat, why it is that our enemies prevail against us? O for faith in the living God, faith in the efficacy of Christ’s mediation to vanquish our lusts.

Yes, most important is it that we should heed the connection between the first two verses of our chapter: the deliverances David had from his enemies, and his implicit confidence in God. Nor was he by any means alone in this experience. It was by the miracle-working power of God that the three Hebrews were delivered from Babylon’s fiery furnace. Yes, but that Divine power was put forth in response to their faith: “our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king” (Dan. 3:17). So again with Daniel himself, yet how often *this* particular is overlooked. From early childhood most of us have been familiar with that Divine marvel which preserved the prophet from the lions, but how many of us have noticed those words, “So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, *because he believed in his God*” (6:23).

“And he said, the LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer” (2 Sam. 22:2). When almost captured, the Lord’s people are rescued from the hand of the mighty by One who is mightier still. God never fails those who really exercise faith in Him: He may indeed severely test, but He will not suffer them to be “utterly cast down.” As our “Rock” God is the strength and support of His people, the One on whom they build their hopes, the One who affords shade from the burning heat of the desert. As our “Fortress” God gives His people shelter from their assailants, supplying protection and security—“The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Prov. 18:10). As our “Deliverer” God saves us from ourselves, redeems us from the damning power of sin, rescues us from the roaring lion, secures us against the second death.

“The God of my rock: in Him will I trust: He is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; Thou savest me from violence” (2 Sam. 22:3). This piling up of metaphors indicates the strong assurance which David had in the Lord, the realization of His sufficiency to meet his every emergency and supply his every need. He saw in God One who was infinitely worthy of his fullest confidence: no matter how critical his circumstances, how desperate his situation, how numerous or powerful his foes, and how great his own weakness, Jehovah was all-sufficient. Such, too, ought to be *our* confidence in God. Yea, we have more ground to rest *our* faith upon Him than ever David had. God is now revealed as the (penitent) sinner’s Friend, as He never was then. In Christ He is revealed as the Conqueror of sin, the Vanquisher of death, the Master of Satan. Then have we not cause to exclaim, “in Him will I *trust*”? O that this may become more and more of an actuality in the lives of both writer and reader.

“The God of my rock: in Him will I trust: He is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; Thou savest me from violence.” These energetic figures of speech, which rise above the level of ordinary prose, reveal what God is to His believing people, for only as *faith* is lively and vigorous is He viewed thus. He is

“my shield” with which to ward off every attack: faith interposes Him between our souls and the enemy. He is “the horn of my salvation,” enabling me to push down my foes, and to triumph over them with holy exultation. He is “my high tower”: a citadel placed upon a high eminence, beyond the reach of all enemies, from which I may look down on them without alarm. He is “my refuge” in which to shelter from every storm. He is “my Saviour” from every evil to which the believer is exposed. What more do we need! what more can we ask! O for faith’s realization of the same in our souls. “Thou savest me from violence”: again we would press the point that this is in response to faith—“He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, *because they trust in Him*” (Psa. 37:40).

“I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies” (2 Sam. 22:4). As an unknown writer has said, “The armour of a soldier does him no service except he put it on; so, no protection from God is to be expected unless we apply ourselves to prayer.” It is faith which girds on the spiritual armour: it is faith which finds all its resource in the Lord. “I will *call* on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: *so* shall I be saved from mine enemies”: note carefully the words which we have placed in italics. This affords abundant confirmation of all we have said above: to “call upon the Lord” is to exercise faith in Him, such faith as praises Him *before* the victory—SO shall we be saved from our enemies: by God’s mighty power in response to believing prayer and sincere praise.—A.W.P.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS.

7. *The Messianic.*

The Apostle's design in Hebrews 8 is to evidence the immeasurable superiority of Christ's priesthood above the Aaronic, and he does so by showing the far greater excellence of that *covenant* or dispensation of grace of which the Lord Jesus is the Mediator. When mentioning the "first covenant," he refers to that economy or order of things under which the Hebrew people were placed at Sinai, and of which the Levitical priests were the mediators, interposing between God and the people. The "second" or "new covenant" is that grand economy or order of things which has been introduced and established by Christ, of which He is the sole Mediator. In proof of this Paul quoted Jeremiah 31:31-33, and it is quite obvious that the passage would have no relevance whatever to his argument, if the Prophet were there referring to God's dealings with carnal Israel in a period which is yet future. That covenant is made with the Gospel Church, the "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:14), on which peace rests forever.

Let us next point out that *this* "new covenant," the Messianic, has assumed a form which no other covenant ever did or could, due to the death of its Covenanter, namely, a "*testament*." The same Greek term does duty for both English words, being rendered "covenant" in Hebrews 8:6, 8, 9, and "testament" in 9:15-17. No word is more familiar to the reader of the Scriptures, for their second main division is rightly termed "The New Testament," yet it had been just as accurate to designate it "The New Covenant." But let it be clearly understood that it is called "New" not because its contents differ from the Old, for it is simply a fulfillment and confirmation of all that went before, everything in the Old Testament containing the shadow and type of the substance of the New Testament. The peculiar reason for naming it the New Testament is because it was newly accomplished and sealed by the precious blood of Christ just before it was written.

The second grand division of God's Word sets forth the Gospel in all its unveiled fullness, and the Gospel (in contrast from the Law, which is the predominant revelation of the Old Testament) was called "the New Testament" because it contains those legacies and testamentary effects which Christ has bequeathed His people. How inexpressibly blessed, then, should be the very name of the New Testament unto everyone of the Lord's people, who by the regenerating operations of the Holy Spirit can establish his own personal interest in the contents of it. "This is My blood of the new testament" (Matt. 26:28). By His death Christ has ratified the new covenant and turned it into a "testament," making all its riches and legacies secure and payable to His people: "For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth" (Heb. 9:17). What has Christ left? to whom has He bequeathed His vast property? The answer is, every conceivable blessing: temporal, spiritual, eternal—the most durable treasure of all; unto "His own," which He loved with an unquenchable love.

Before His departure, Christ expressed Himself to His disciples on this blessed subject when He said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27). Thus we see that the Saviour's legacies are to His dear people, His beloved Spouse. As men, before they die, make their wills and give their property to their relatives and friends, so did the Redeemer: "Father, I *will* that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am" (John 17:24). O for grace to "prove" the Saviour's will, to personally "lay claim to" all the rich legacies it contains. Have I been brought out of nature's darkness and become a new creature in Christ? Has the Lord

given me a new heart and mind? Then I have an interest in Christ's will, and He died to make His testament valid, and ever lives to be the Executor and Administrator of it.

The Covenant (the "new," the "second," the Messianic) to which the Apostle alludes so often in his writings, particularly in the Hebrews' Epistle, is ratified by the death of Him who makes it, and therefore it is a "Testament" as well. This covenant was *confirmed* by Christ, both as that His death was the death of the Testator and as was accompanied by the blood of sacrifice. Hence it is *such* a "covenant" as that in it the Covenanter bequeaths His goods in the way of a legacy, and thus we find Him calling this very covenant "the new testament in My blood." It is in full accord with this that the believer's portion is designated an "inheritance" (Rom. 8:16, 17; Eph. 1:18; 1 Peter 1:4), for in a "will" or "testament" there is an absolute grant made of what is bequeathed: the title which the believer has to his portion is not in himself: it has been made over to him by the death of Christ, and nothing can possibly rob him of it.

We must next consider the substance or *contents* of the Messianic Covenant. Broadly speaking it is distinctly a covenant of *promise*, which gives security by pure grace for the sanctification of God's people and their preservation in a state and course of holiness, to their final salvation. In other words, their right of inheritance is not by the Law or their own works: "For if they which are of the Law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect . . . therefore it is of faith, that it might be *by grace*; to the end the promise might be *sure* to all the seed" (Rom. 4:14, 16). But is it not true that if the Christian should wholly and finally depart from God, that this would *deprive* him of all the benefits of grace? This hypothetical supposition is undoubted truth, yea, it is presupposed in the promise itself, which is likewise of certain and infallible truth: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good: but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall *not* depart from Me" (Jer. 32:40).

Considering the contents of this covenant we are fully in accord with John Owen that there is in it, "a recapitulation and confirmation of all the promises of grace that have been given unto the Church from the beginning, even all that was spoken by the mouth of the holy Prophets that had been since the world began (Luke 1:70)." The original promise (Gen. 3:15) contained in germ form the whole essence and substance of the new covenant: all promises given unto the Church afterwards being but expositions and confirmations of it. In the whole of them there was a full declaration of the wisdom and love of God in the sending of His Son, and of His grace unto men thereby. God solemnly confirmed those promises with an oath that they should be accomplished in their season. Thus the covenant promised by Jeremiah included the sending of Christ for the accomplishment thereof, all promises being there gathered together in one glorious constellation.

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people" (Heb. 8:10). In passing, be it duly noted that God did *not* here promise He would establish the Nation in any earthly land, or bestow upon them any material inheritance. No, indeed, the blessings of this covenant immeasurably transcend any mundane or fleshly portion. Briefly, its contents may be summed up in four words: regeneration, reconciliation, sanctification, and justification. We will explain and amplify in what follows.

“I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.” The “Law” here signifies that which enjoins supreme love to God, and, flowing out of it, love to our neighbour. Of this grand principle the whole round of duty is to be the fruit and expression, and from it each duty is to take its character. If love be not the animating spring, then our obedience is of little worth. When it is said God will put His Law in our inmost parts and write it in our hearts, it signifies that preparation of soul which is effected by Divine power so that the Law is cordially received into our affections. Elsewhere his miracle of grace is spoken of as, “I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh” (Ezek. 36:26). It implies an inward spiritual appreciation of its goodness and equity—the result of Divine illumination; an assimilation of the tastes or inclinations of the heart to it, and the conformity of the will to its righteous requirements.

There must be a true delight in the purity which the Law inculcates, for this is the only effectual preparation for obedience. So long as the Law of God utters its voice to us from *without only*, so long as there is no sympathy in the soul with its demands, so long as the heart is alienated from its spirituality, there can be no obedience worthy of the name. We may be awed by its peremptory utterances, alarmed at the consequences of its transgression, and driven to attempt what it requires, but the effort will be cold, partial, and insincere. We shall feel it a hard bondage, the pressure of which will certainly irritate, and against the restraints of which we shall inwardly rebel. Such is the real character of all graceless obedience, however it may be disguised. How can it be otherwise when, “the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7)—as true today as nineteen centuries ago, as the modern hatred of and outcry against the Law clearly manifests.

Concerning the Hebrew nation at Sinai who had stoutly affirmed, “all that the LORD hath said, will we do,” God declared “Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always” (Deut. 5:29). Ah, *that* explains their wilderness perverseness, and the whole subsequent history: they had *no heart* to serve God, their affections were divorced from Him. And it is just at *this* point that the new covenant differs so radically from the old. God has given no new law, but He *has* bestowed upon His people a heart—a heart in harmony with its holiness and righteous requirements. This it is which enables them to render unto Him that obedience, which, through the mediation of Christ, is accepted by Him. Each of them can say with the Apostle, “I *delight* in the Law of God after the inward man” (Rom. 7:22).

Once the law in all its spirituality and extent is not only intellectually apprehended, but wrought into the affections; once our inmost inclinations and tendencies are molded by it and brought into unison with it, genuine obedience will be the natural and necessary result. This is the import of the first great blessing here enumerated in the Messianic Covenant. It necessarily comes first, for the miracle of regeneration is the foundation of reconciliation, justification and sanctification. The one in whom this Divine work of grace is wrought finds enlargement of heart to run in the way of God’s commandments. He now serves in “newness of spirit.” What was before regarded as bondage, is now found to be the truest liberty. What was before an irksome task, is now a delight. Love for God inspires a desire to please Him: love for its Author produces a love for His Law.

“I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.” The terms in which this blessing is expressed indicate a designed *contrast* between the old and new

covenants. Under the former, the Law was written upon tables of stone—not only to denote its abiding character, but also to symbolize the hard-heartedness of those to whom it was then given; and publicly exhibited as a rule which they were under solemn obligations to observe. But it contained no provision to secure obedience. By the vast majority of the people, its design was misunderstood and its requirements practically disregarded. It proved to them the ministration of condemnation and death. Under the Messianic Covenant, the Law is written on the heart—incorporated with the living springs of action in the inward parts, thus bringing the whole man into harmony with the will of God.

A further contrast is implied in the second blessing here specified: “I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people” (Heb. 8:10). While the Hebrews were yet in Egypt the Lord announced, “I will take you to Me for a people and I will be to you a God” (Exo. 6:7). Later He declared, “I will set My tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you; and I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be My people” (Lev. 26:11, 12). But that was a vastly different thing from what now obtains under the new covenant: that was a natural relationship, this a spiritual; that was external, this internal; that was national, this is individual; that was temporal, this is eternal. Under the Theocracy, all of Abraham’s natural descendants were true subjects and properly qualified members of the Jewish Church—such only excepted as had not been circumcised according to the order of God, or were guilty of some capital crime. To be an obedient subject of the *civil* government and a full member of the *ecclesiastical* state was manifestly the same thing; because by treating Jehovah as their political Sovereign, they owned Him as the true God, and were entitled to all the blessings of the national covenant.

Under the Siniatic economy Jehovah acknowledged all those to be “His people” and Himself to be “their God” who performed an *external* obedience to His commands, even though their hearts were disaffected to Himself (Judg. 8:23; 1 Sam. 8:6, 7, etc.). Those prerogatives were enjoyed *irrespective of* sanctifying grace, or of any pretension to it. But the state of things under the Christian economy is entirely different. God will not now acknowledge any as “His people” who do not know and revere Him, love and obey Him, worship Him in spirit and in truth. Only those are now owned as His people who have His Law written on their hearts, and He is *their* “God” in a far higher and grander sense than ever He was of the nation of Israel. He is their enduring and satisfying portion. They are His people not by outward designation only, but by actual surrender of their hearts to Him. To be “their God” necessarily denotes they have been reconciled to Him, and have voluntarily accepted Him as such.

“I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people.” This is a distinct promise which comprises and comprehends all the blessings and privileges of the covenant. It is placed in the centre of the whole as that from whence all the grace of it does issue, wherein all the blessedness of it does consist, and whereby it is secured. This relationship necessarily implies mutual acquiescence in each other, for it could not exist if the hearts and minds of those who are taken into it were not renewed. God could not approve of, still less rest in His love towards them, while they were at enmity against Him; nor could they find satisfaction in Himself so long as they neither knew nor loved Him. Because they still have sin in them, this relationship is made possible through the infinite merits of the Mediator.—A.W.P.

DATE FIXING.

We have decided to write, or rather compile, this article, as an appendage to the recent ones on *Conditions in the Past*, that our readers may be furnished with a sample of the thoughts and opinions of men in previous generations respecting the coming of our Lord and the end of the age. Not only hysterical sensationalists, but some of the most sober minded and spiritual servants of God have attempted to draw conclusions and forecast the future from the "signs of the times" which appeared in *their* sky. The state of the world in their day, the corruption and apostasy of Christendom, and the calamitous judgments sent by God on an evil and adulterous generation, convinced them that such things were most certainly the immediate prelude to the appearing of Christ in Person. Others averred that Divine Prophecy intimated the very year in which the Papacy would be overthrown or the Day of Judgment would occur.

"Towards the close of the tenth and at the beginning of the eleventh centuries the passion for pilgrimages was greatly increased by an opinion which prevailed all over Europe—that the thousand years mentioned by John in Revelation 20:2-4 were nearly accomplished, and the end of the world at hand. A general consternation seized the minds of men. Numbers relinquished their possessions, deserted their families and friends, and hastened to the Holy Land, where they imagined Christ would suddenly appear to judge the living and the dead" (From "A History of the Church" by Charles Goodrich, 1835, p. 104). Perhaps some of our readers are inclined to smile at the credulity of those who lived a thousand years ago, but we can assure them that human nature is still the same. The writer is personally acquainted with a lawyer of considerable repute, who thirty years ago was so convinced by "the signs of the times" that the coming of Christ was at the very doors, that he abandoned all thoughts of provision for old age and gave away his fortune to the promotion of missionary work. Recently, when past three score and ten, he has been obliged to take up again the practice of law to provide for his daily needs. Nor is this by any means an isolated case.

In his work on the Thessalonian Epistles, John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury, (1583 A.D.), in his comments on 1 Thessalonians 5:1 said, "What may we think then, of them that write books and almanacs, and say such a year and at such a time Christ shall come; and with their fine speeches tray [frighten] and mock the world? These two hundred years past, there have ever been some which have adventured to tell such news. They have appointed many such years, and days; only to give witness to their folly" (p. 123). William Perkins informs us (Vol. 3, p. 473), "A Jew prophesied that in the year 1364 Messiah should come and deliver his own nation," and that a celebrated astrologer, by the name of Albumazar, "prophesied that in the year of our Lord 1460 an end should be made of the Christian religion." In his piece on "The End of the World" (which the printer in 1604 says "was written many years ago") Perkins represents one saying, "All the signs of the coming of Christ are fulfilled: O what terrible earthquakes have there been! what famine! what wars and revolutions among men! what signs in the sun and moon! what flashing in the air! what blasting stars! Surely, surely the world cannot last long" (Vol. 3, p. 470).

In the same piece Perkins went on to quote the following, as something which deeply stirred many in his early days:

"When after Christ's birth there be expired,
of hundreds fifteen, years eighty and eight,
Then comes the time of dangers to be feared,

and all mankind with terrors it shall freight:
 For if the world in that year do not fall,
 if sea and land then perish nor decay:
 Yet empires all, and kingdoms alter shall,
 and man to ease himself shall have no way.”

Again we say, such silly doggerel may now raise a smile (but for many years thousands were terrified by it), yet we well recall that in our early boyhood many in this country were rendered uneasy by the prophecies of “Mother Shipston,” two of which were: “Carriages without horses shall go, and accidents fill the world with woe,” and “The world to an end shall come, in eighteen hundred and ninety one.”

“If any age had cause to think Christ would come, certainly we have. It was not far off in the Apostles’ days—they were called ‘the last days’; but ours are the very dregs of time. When we see an old man weak and feeble, aches and diseases of the present life increasing upon him, we say, Certainly he cannot live long: so if we look upon the temper of the world, surely it cannot endure long; Christ will come to set all things at rights” (Thomas Manton, Vol. 16, p. 215). Yet almost three hundred years have passed since that able expositor drew his conclusion: and for all we know another three *thousand* years may yet run their course before human history expires.

After referring to a number of different ones who had prophesied the exact year in which Popery was to be totally destroyed, Thomas Goodwin went on to say, “I find also Mr. Mede in his *Clavis*, to pitch upon 1656, though tacitly and implicitly, yet clearly enough, as the time he is most inclined unto for the expiration of Antichrist’s kingdom. For in his ‘Synchronisms,’ he makes the first trumpet and the Pope’s 1260 days to begin together; and in his ‘comment’ he makes the beginning of the first trumpet to be in the year 395. So that if the reign of Antichrist begins at the year 395 A.D., then his 1260 days or years will end in 1655. And thus there will be so many years from Christ unto the beginning of the new world, as there was from the beginning of the world until the days of Noah, unto which Christ compares His coming, even 1656 years” (Vol. 3, p. 196).

In 1655 the Church of France thus addressed itself to brethren abroad: “Inasmuch as by these overturnings of the world, ‘tis visible that its last end *cannot be far off*, and that our long-looked and long-hoped for redemption, and the coming of the eternal kingdom of the Son of God draweth nigh” (J. G. Lorimer, “Protestant Church of France,” 1842, p. 199). In a letter to General Fleetwood, Oliver Cromwell said (August 22, 1653): “If the Day of the Lord be so near, as some say, how should our moderation appear!” (from J. H. D’Aubigne’s “Vindication of the Protector,” p. 159).

Well did John Owen (v. 17, p. 552) warn people of his day, “But in the meantime what things may come, I know not. Those who pretend to a clearer inspection into future things may not do amiss to strictly examine the grounds whereon they proceed. For many have been ashamed of their predictions, that within such or such a time the yoke of Babylon (Rome) should be broken.” The only difference in our day is that modern prophets (?) are devoid of shame, for when the flight of time refutes their fancies, instead of acknowledging they were wrong, they manipulate their premises and draw new conclusions, always fixing their dates just a few years in the future, thus keeping their dupes continually on the tiptoe of expectation.

“But this same revelation informs us that it shall not always be so: the time is coming, and *is now just at hand*, when God will destroy the face of the covering cast over all peo-

ple, and the veil that is spread over all nations, by causing the Gospel to be preached to them all, in giving them a heart to discern and understand the truth. Then 'the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days.' And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear, shall hearken. The heart also of the rash or foolish shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly, and the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (S. Hopkins, 1772, a contemporary and intimate friend of Jonathan Edwards in New England, Vol. 1, p. 56).

"There are certain very memorable events, the dates of which are peremptorily fixed: as the treading of the Holy City forty-two months, the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth and under discouragements a thousand two hundred and three-score days; during which term of days also the Church is to be nourished in the wilderness even for a time, and times, and half a time; and power is given to the beast, or Antichrist, to continue forty and two months (Rev. 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5). All which began, and will end together; for these dates are exactly the same; and could we be certain when these dates begin, we should have no difficulty about the expiration of them, or how long it is to be. Good men have been mistaken in their calculations for want of this: however, though we can come at no certainty as to the precise time these things shall be, yet some degree of understanding of these times may be come at; and from the circumstances of things it may be concluded that these dates cannot reach beyond an hundred and fifty years more, and it may be they may expire much sooner" (John Gill's sermon on Isa. 21:11, 12, preached December, 1750).

"Why cannot you pray along with the faithful for Christ's *speedy* coming? Surely you do not doubt of the fact that He will come to judge the world is as certain as that He did come at the first time to judge the Jewish nation: 'For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.' The matter of fact upon Scriptural principles is undeniably clear and certain. Why then are you not so prepared for it as to make it the subject of your prayers? Is it because you put it at a great distance, and therefore think yourselves safe? Consider attentively what the Scripture says upon this point. Our Lord has given us several marks or *signs* of His coming, by which we might know *as certainly* when it was at hand, as we could know when the fig-tree puts forth her green figs that summer is nigh. There were to be wars and rumours of wars, pestilences, earthquakes in divers places, very little true faith left upon the earth, and yet as great security among careless sinners as there was in the days of Noah, when the flood came and swept them all away.

"Do you think these cannot be the forerunners of our Lord's *speedy coming* because there always have been such things in the world? But when all these signs are at once upon the earth, and in a manner they never were before, then they become loud calls to an immediate preparation. Were there ever greater wars, or more rumours of war? Has not an uncommon pestilence raged among the cattle for several years, in this and in other countries? Were there ever such earthquakes, so universal, and of so long continuance, as have been for some years past? And does not the present state of the world as to religion greatly resemble our Lord's description of the men upon whom that day shall come unawares as a thief in the night? And when could the account which St. Paul gives us in several of his Epistles, of the men of the latter times be more true, than it is at present? Have they not the name and form of Christianity without the power of it? Are they not

worldly minded, sunk into carnal security, and so entirely influenced by the love of pleasure, that the love of God and of the things of God is not only waxed cold, but quite frozen up?

“Was there ever any age wherein our Lord’s words could be more strictly fulfilled, ‘When the Son of man cometh shall He find faith on the earth?’ By these signs our Lord is alarming a sinful world with notices of His *speedy* coming, and if sinners are not at all alarmed, but continue still secure in their sins, this is a Scripture proof that He will *soon* come as a thief in the night and surprise them: for when they shall say Peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them, and they shall not escape” (W. Romaine, Discourses on Solomon’s Song, 1771, p. 368 to 370). Note well, dear reader, that this most godly man spoke repeatedly of the “speedy coming of Christ” a hundred and fifty years ago!

At the end of his “Notes on the New Testament” (about 1780) John Wesley fixed the following dates for the fulfillment of prophecies in the Revelation: “1614: an everlasting Gospel promulgated (14:6). 1810: the end of the forty-two months of the Beast; after which and the pouring out of the vials, he is not, and Babylon reigns queen (15 and 16). 1832: the Beast ascends from the bottomless pit (17 and 18). 1836: the end of the non-chronos, and of the many kings; the fulfilling of the Word and of the mystery of God; the repentance of the survivors in this great city; the end of the ‘little time’ and of the three times and a half; the destruction of the Beast; the imprisonment of Satan (19 and 20).”

There seems no need for us to make citations from those who have lived nearer our own times and give quotations from such men as Edward Irving, Richard Baxter, Gratton Guinness and others, who set dates for the destruction of the Papacy, the end of the age, and the appearing of Christ. We could quote from the early writings of the Plymouth Brethren and show that eighty and ninety years ago they were just as convinced that Christ would return in their *own* lifetimes, as many of their followers are today. Nor will we burden the reader by exposing the date-fixing fallacies of the “Seventh Day Adventists,” Russellites, and Christadelphians. Sufficient has been advanced to indicate that throughout the centuries one and another has arisen posing as prophets by forecasting coming events, only for the passage of time to make evident their folly, and to exemplify the fact that “thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Prov. 27:1).

And what is the moral to be drawn from all of this? What is the practical lesson—for it is a *practical end* we have had in view, and not the amusing of the curious or the entertaining of those who have an idle hour to pass away. Surely it is this, “For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass’s colt” (Job 11:12): yes, wise in his own conceits, wise above that which God has revealed, wise in the esteem of his fellows. He would pose before others as possessing a spiritual light and discernment which lifts him above the rank and file; he pretends unto light received from the Word which is denied those who walk not so closely with God as *he* does. The Spirit has shown *him* “things to come,” only for the passing of time to demonstrate it was some other spirit than the Spirit of God.

When the disciples asked Christ, “Wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6), He did not say whether He would or would not, neither did He tell them that they entertained an erroneous conception of “the kingdom.” No, He struck more deeply, and made answer which applies to *all* His followers till the end of time: “It is not

for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power” (v. 7). That is definite and it is final. Shun, then, my reader, those who controvert the Son of God by seeking to persuade that you *may*, “know the times and the seasons,” that if you will accept their interpretations (?) of Prophecy you will be granted a spiritual insight into those things of which the world is ignorant. “The coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 3:8): it is ever drawing nearer, but for any man to affirm that the coming of the Lord is *now* at the very doors, is to affirm what Scripture nowhere warrants, and is a piece of bombastic impertinence.

Our pressing duty is to set bounds to an unholy curiosity, and rest content with the blessed fact that the future is entirely in the hands of the Most High. It is the present which limits the boundaries of our responsibility. God is working all things after the counsel of His own will, so that there is no cause for alarm or fear. Not only cannot the forces of evil go one inch farther than what has been Divinely ordained, but, even now, God is making them to subserve His own wise and holy purpose. Nothing we do, or fail to do, will either hasten or retard by a single hour the consummation of God’s counsels. “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28) provides a sure resting-place for the renewed heart.

Speculations about future history are not only futile, but impious. An itching mind that craves information about coming events is a hindrance and not a help to present godliness. Leave the future with God, and seek grace to discharge your *present* duty. Part of our present duty, as well as our precious privilege, is to be “looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13), but that is a vastly different thing from occupying our minds with the *evil* that is at work in the world. To be “looking for that blessed Hope” is entirely an attitude of *the heart*—the soul being engaged with the person of Christ Himself, anticipating that glad moment when He will perfectly conform us to His image. But as to *when* He will appear, the angels in Heaven know not, much less can we on earth ascertain it. To be *prepared for* His coming is the great thing, and not to be curiously prying into the how and when of it.—A.W.P.

A FOURFOLD SALVATION.

If on the one hand the unbeliever hotly denies that he is in love with sin, many a believer is often hard put to it to persuade himself that he *has been* saved from the love thereof. With an understanding that has been in part enlightened by the Holy Spirit, he is the better able to discern things in their true colours. With a heart that has been made honest by grace, he refuses to call sweet bitter. With a conscience that has been sensitized by the new birth, he the more quickly feels the workings of sin and the hankering of his affections for that which is forbidden. Moreover, the flesh remains in him, unchanged, and as the raven constantly craves carrion, so this corrupt principle in which our mothers conceived us lusts after and delights in that which is the opposite of holiness. These things are they which occasion and give rise to the disturbing questions that clamour for answers within the genuine believer.

The sincere Christian is often made to seriously doubt if he *has been* delivered from the love of sin. Such questions as these painfully agitate his mind: Why do I so readily yield to temptation? Why do some of the vanities and pleasures of the world still possess so much attraction for me? Why do I chafe so much against any restraints being placed upon my lusts? Why do I find the work of mortification so difficult and distasteful? Could such things as these be if I were a new creature in Christ? Could such horrible experiences as these happen if God had saved me from taking pleasure in sin? Well do we know that we are here giving expression to the very doubts which exercise the minds of many of our readers, and those who are strangers thereto are to be pitied. But what shall we say in reply? How is this distressing problem to be resolved?

How may one be assured that he has been saved from the love of sin? Let us point out first that the presence of that within us which still lusts after and takes delight in some evil things is *not incompatible* with our having been saved from the love of sin, paradoxical as that may sound. It is part of the mystery of the Gospel that those who are saved are yet *sinners* in themselves. The point we are here dealing with is similar to and parallel with faith. The Divine principle of faith in the heart does *not cast out unbelief*. Faith and doubts exist side by side within a quickened soul, which is evident from those words, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24). In like manner the Christian may exclaim and pray, "Lord, I long after holiness, help Thou my lustings after sin." And why is this? Because of the existence of two separate natures, the one at complete variance with the other within the Christian.

How, then, is the presence of faith to be ascertained? Not by the ceasing of unbelief, but by discovering *its own* fruits and works. Fruit may grow amid thorns—as flowers among weeds—yet it is fruit, nevertheless. Faith exists amid many doubts and fears. Notwithstanding opposing forces from within as well as from without us, faith still reaches out after God. Notwithstanding innumerable discouragements and defeats, faith continues to fight. Notwithstanding many refusals from God, it yet clings to Him, and says, "Except Thou bless me I will not let Thee go." Faith may be fearfully weak and fitful, often eclipsed by the clouds of unbelief, nevertheless the Devil himself cannot persuade its possessor to repudiate God's Word, despise His Son, or abandon all hope. The presence of faith, then, may be ascertained in that it causes its possessor to come before God as an empty-handed beggar beseeching Him for mercy and blessing.

Now just as the presence of faith may be known amid all the workings of unbelief, so our salvation from the love of sin may be ascertained notwithstanding all the lustings of

the flesh after that which is evil. But in what way? How is this initial aspect of salvation to be identified? We have already anticipated this question in an earlier paragraph, wherein we stated that God saved us from delighting in sin by imparting a nature that hates evil and loves holiness which takes place at the new birth. Consequently, the real question to be settled is how may the Christian positively determine whether that new and holy nature has been imparted to him? The answer is by observing its activities, particularly the opposition it makes (under the energizing of the Holy Spirit) unto indwelling sin. Not only does the flesh (the principle of sin) lust against the spirit, but the spirit (the principle of holiness) lusts and wars against the flesh.

First, our salvation from the pleasure or love of sin may be recognized by sin's becoming a *burden* to us. This is truly a spiritual experience. Many souls are loaded with worldly anxieties who know nothing of what it means to be bowed down with a sense of guilt. But when God takes us in hand, the iniquities and transgressions of our past life are made to lie as an intolerable load upon the conscience. When we are given a sight of ourselves as we appear before the eyes of the thrice holy God, we will exclaim with the Psalmist, "For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me" (40:12). So far from sin being pleasant, it is now felt as a cruel incubus, a crushing weight, an unendurable load. The soul is "heavy laden" (Matt. 11:28) and bowed down. A sense of guilt oppresses and the conscience cannot bear the weight upon it. Nor is this experience restricted to our first conviction: it continues with more or less acuteness throughout the Christian's life.

Second, our salvation from the pleasure of sin may be recognized by sin's becoming *bitter* to us. True, there are millions of the unregenerate who are filled with remorse over the harvest reaped from their sowing of wild oats. Yet that is not hatred of *sin*, but dislike of its *consequences*—ruined health, squandered opportunities, financial straitness, or social disgrace. No, what we have reference to is that anguish of heart which ever marks the one the Spirit takes in hand. When the veil of delusion is removed and we see sin in the light of God's countenance; when we are given a discovery of the depravity of our very nature, then we perceive that we are sunk in carnality and death. When sin is opened to us in all its secret workings, we are made to feel the vileness of our hypocrisy, self-righteousness, unbelief, impatience, and the utter filthiness of our hearts. And when the penitent soul views the sufferings of Christ, he can say with Job, "God maketh my heart soft" (23:16).

Ah, my reader, it is *this* experience which prepares the heart to go out after Christ: those that are whole need not a physician, but they that are quickened and convicted by the Spirit are anxious to be relieved by the great Physician. "The LORD killeth, and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich; He bringeth low, and lifteth up" (1 Sam. 2:6, 7). It is in this way that God slays our self-righteousness, makes poor, and brings low—by making sin to be an intolerable burden and as bitter as wormwood to us. There can be no saving faith till the soul is filled with evangelical repentance, and repentance is a godly sorrow for sin, a holy detestation of sin, a sincere purpose to forsake it. The Gospel calls upon men to repent of their sins, forsake their idols, and mortify their lusts, and thus it is utterly impossible for the Gospel to be a message of glad tidings to those who are in love with sin and madly determined to perish rather than part with their idols.

Nor is this experience of sin's becoming bitter to us limited unto our first awakening—it continues, in varying degrees, to the end of our earthly pilgrimage. The Christian suffers under temptations, is pained by Satan's fiery assaults, and bleeds from the wounds inflicted by the evils he commits. It grieves him deeply that he makes such a wretched return unto God for His goodness, that he requites Christ so evilly for His dying love, that he responds so fitfully to the promptings of the Spirit. The wanderings of his mind when he desires to meditate upon the Word, the dullness of his heart when he seeks to pray, the worldly thoughts which invade his mind on the holy Sabbath, the coldness of his affections toward the Redeemer cause him to groan daily; all of which goes to evidence that sin has been made bitter to him. He no longer welcomes those intruding thoughts which take his mind off God: rather does he sorrow over them. But "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4).

Third, our salvation from the pleasure of sin may be recognized by the felt *bondage* which sin produces. As it is not until a Divine faith is planted in the heart that we become aware of our native and inveterate unbelief, so it is not until God saves us from the love of sin that we are conscious of the fetters it has placed around us. Then it is that we discover we are "without strength," unable to do anything pleasing to God, incapable of running the race set before us. A Divinely-drawn picture of the saved soul's felt bondage is to be found in Romans 7: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin" (vv. 18, 19, 22, 23). And what is the sequel? This, the agonizing cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death." If *that* be the sincere lamentation of your heart, then God has saved *you* from the pleasure of sin.

Let it be pointed out, though, that salvation from the love of sin is felt and evidenced in varying degrees by different Christians, and at different periods in the life of the same Christian, according to the measure of grace which God bestows, and according as that grace is active and operative. Some seem to have a more intense hatred of sin in all its forms than do others, yet the principle of hating sin is found in all real Christians. Some Christians rarely, if ever commit any deliberate and premeditated sins: more often they are tripped up, suddenly tempted (to be angry or to tell a lie) and are overcome. But with others the case is quite otherwise: they—fearful to say—actually plan evil acts. If anyone indignantly denies that such a thing is possible in a saint, and insists that such a character is a stranger to saving grace, we would remind him of David: was not the murder of Uriah definitely planned? This second class of Christians find it doubly hard to believe they have been saved from the love of sin.

II. *Salvation from the Penalty of Sin.*

This follows upon our regeneration which is evidenced by evangelical repentance and unfeigned faith. Every soul that truly puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ is then and there saved from the penalty—the guilt, the wages, the punishment—of sin. When the Apostles said to the penitent jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," they signified that all his sins would be remitted by God; just as when the Lord said to the poor woman, "thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace" (Luke 7:50). He meant

that all her sins were now forgiven her, for forgiveness has to do with the criminality and punishment of sin. To the same effect when we read, “by grace are ye saved through faith” (Eph. 2:8), it is to be understood that the Lord has actually “delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:10).

This aspect of our salvation is to be contemplated from two separate viewpoints: the Divine and the human. The Divine side of it is found in the Mediatorial office and work of Christ, who as the Sponsor and Surety of His people met the requirements of the Law on their behalf, working out for them a perfect righteousness and enduring Himself the curse and condemnation which was due them, consummated at the Cross. It was there that He was, “wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities” (Isa. 53:5). It was there that He, judicially, “His own self bear our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24). It was there that He was, “smitten of God and afflicted” while He was making atonement for the offenses of His people. Because Christ suffered in my place, I go free; because He died, I live; because He was forsaken of God, I am reconciled to Him. This is the great marvel of grace, which will evoke ceaseless praise from the redeemed throughout eternity!

The human side of our salvation from the penalty of sin respects our repentance and faith. Though these possess no merits whatever, and though they in no sense purchase our pardon, yet according to the order which God has appointed, they are (instrumentally) essential, for salvation does not become ours experimentally until they are exercised. Repentance is the hand releasing those filthy objects it had previously clung to so tenaciously—faith is extending an *empty hand* to God to receive the *gift* of His grace. Repentance is a godly sorrow for sin; faith is accepting God’s pardon thereof. Repentance is a crying, “God be merciful to me the sinner.” Faith is receiving the sinner’s Saviour. Repentance is a revulsion of the filth and pollution of sin. Faith is a seeking of cleansing therefrom. Repentance is the sinner covering his mouth and crying, “Unclean, unclean!” Faith is the leper coming to Christ and saying, “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.”

So far from repentance and faith being meritorious graces, they are self-emptying ones. The one who truly repents takes his place as a lost sinner before God, confessing himself to be a guilty wretch deserving nothing but unsparing judgment at the hands of Divine justice. Faith looks away from corrupt and ruined self, and views the amazing provision which God has made for such a Hell-deserving creature. Faith lays hold of the Son of God’s love, as a drowning man clutches at a passing oar. Faith surrenders to the Lordship of Christ and gladly owns His rights to reign over him. Faith rests upon the promises of God, setting to its seal that He is true. The moment the soul surrenders itself to the Lordship of Christ and rests upon the merits and efficacy of His sacrifice, his sins are removed from God’s sight “as far as the east is from the west”: he is now eternally saved from the wrath to come.

We cannot do better here than quote those sublime lines of Augustus Toplady:

“From whence this fear and unbelief?
Hast Thou, O Father, put to grief
Thy spotless Son for me?
And will the righteous Judge of men
Condemn me for that debt of sin

Which, Lord, was laid on Thee?

If Thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my place endured
The whole of wrath Divine;
Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine.

Complete atonement Thou hast made,
And to the utmost farthing paid,
Whate'er Thy people owed;
How then can wrath on me take place,
If sheltered in Thy righteousness,
And sprinkled with Thy blood?

Turn, then, my soul, unto thy rest,
The merits of thy great High Priest
Speak peace and liberty:
Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee."

While deliverance from the love of sin has to do entirely with the experimental side of our salvation, remission of the penalty of sin concerns the legal aspect only, or in other words, the believer's *justification*. Justification is a forensic term and has to do with the law-courts, for it is the decision or verdict of the judge. Justification is the opposite of condemnation. Condemnation means that a man has been charged with a crime, his guilt is established, and accordingly the law pronounces upon him sentence of punishment. On the contrary, justification means that the accused is found to be guiltless, the Law has nothing against him, and therefore he is acquitted and exonerated, leaving the court without a stain upon his character. When we read in Scripture that believers are, "justified from all things" (Acts 13:39), it signifies that their case has been tried in the high court of Heaven and that God, the Judge of all the earth, has acquitted them: "There is therefore now *no* condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

But to be without condemnation is only the negative side: justification means to declare or pronounce righteous, up to the Law's requirements. Justification implies that the Law has been fulfilled, obeyed, magnified, for nothing short of this would meet the just demands of God. Hence, as His people, fallen in Adam, were unable to measure up to the Divine standard, God appointed that His own Son should become incarnate, be the Surety of His people, and answer the demands of the Law in their stead. Here, then, is the sufficient answer which may be made to the two objections which unbelief is ready to raise: how can God acquit the guilty? how can He declare righteous one who is devoid of righteousness? Bring in the Lord Jesus and all difficulty disappears! The guilt of our sins was imputed or legally transferred to *Him*, so that He suffered the full penalty of what was due them; the merits of His obedience is imputed or legally transferred to *us*, so that we

stand before God in all the acceptableness of our Sponsor: Romans 5:18, 19; 2 Corinthians 5:21, etc. Not only has the Law nothing against us, but we are entitled to its *reward*.—A.W.P.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

5. *Its Justice—Part 2.*

In last month's article we pointed out, first, that Divine justice is of an entirely different order and character than human justice. Second, that Divine justice is grounded upon God's sovereign dominion over all the works of His hands, being the exercise of His own imperial will. Third, that nothing whatever is due the creature from the Creator, not even what He is pleased to give, and that so far from God's being under any obligation to it, it is under lasting obligations to Him. Fourth, that whatever God wills and works is right and must be reverently submitted to, yea, adored by us. Fifth, that it is impossible to charge God with injustice in His electing certain ones to be the objects of His amazing grace, since that apart from it, *all* had eternally perished. Let us now descend to a lower and simpler level, and contemplate God's election in connection with the human race fallen in Adam.

If there were no injustice in God's making a choice of some unto special favour and eternal blessing as He viewed His creatures in the glass of His purpose to *create*, then certainly there could be no injustice in His determining to show them mercy as He fore-viewed them among the mass of Adam's *ruined* race; for if a single creature has no claim whatever upon its Maker, being entirely dependent upon His charity, then most assuredly a fallen creature is entitled to nothing good at the hands of its offended Judge. And this is the angle from which we must now view our subject. Fallen man is a criminal, an outlaw, and if bare justice is to be meted out to him, then he must be left to receive the due reward of his iniquities, and *that* can mean nothing less than eternal punishment, for his transgressions have incurred infinite guilt.

Before enlarging upon what has just been said, it also needs to be pointed out that if the only hope for a *holy* creature lies in God's electing grace, then doubly is this the case with one that is *unholy*, totally depraved. If an holy angel was in constant danger, incapable of maintaining his purity, because of the mutability of his nature and the fickleness of his will, what shall be said of an *unholy* creature? Why, nothing less than this: fallen man has a nature that is confirmed in evil, and therefore his will no longer has any power to turn unto that which is spiritual, yea, it is inveterately steeled against God, hence, his case is utterly and eternally hopeless unless God, in His sovereign grace, is pleased to save him from *himself*.

Preachers may prate all they please about man's inherent powers, the freedom of his will, and his capacity for good, yet it is useless and madness to ignore the solemn fact of the Fall. The difference and disadvantage between our case and that of unfallen Adam's can scarcely be conceived. Instead of a perfect holiness possessing and inclining our minds and wills, as it did his, there is no such vital principle left in our hearts. Instead, there is a thorough disability unto what is spiritual and holy, yea, contrary enmity and opposition thereto. "Men err, not knowing the power of original sin, nor the depth of corruption that is in their own hearts. The will of man now is the prime and proper seat of sin: the throne thereof is seated therein" (Thomas Goodwin). Outward helps and aids are of no account, for nothing short of a new creation is of any avail.

No matter what instruction fallen men receive, what inducements be offered them, the Ethiopian cannot change his skin. Neither light, conviction, nor the general operations of the Holy Spirit, are of any avail, unless God over and above them imparts a new principle of holiness to the heart. This has been clearly and fully demonstrated under both Law and

Gospel. Read Exodus 19 and Deuteronomy 5 and see the wondrous and awe-inspiring manifestation of Himself which God granted unto Israel at Sinai: did *that* change their hearts and incline their wills to obey Him? Then read through the four Gospels and behold the incarnate Son of God dwelling in the midst of men, not as a judge, but as a Benefactor—going about doing good, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, proclaiming the Gospel: did *that* melt their hearts and win them to God? No, they hated and crucified Him.

Behold, then, the case of fallen mankind: alienated from the life of God, dead in trespasses and sins, with no heart, no will for spiritual things. In themselves their case is desperate, irretrievable, hopeless. Apart from Divine election none would, none could, ever be saved. Election means that God was pleased to reserve a remnant, so that the entire race of Adam should not eternally perish. And *what thanks* does He receive for this? None at all, save from those who have their sin-blinded eyes opened to perceive the inexpressible blessedness of such a fact. Thanks, no; instead, the vast majority even of those in professing Christendom, when they hear of this truth, ignorant of their own interests and of the ways of God, quarrel at His election, revile Him for the same, charge Him with gross injustice, and accuse Him of being a merciless Tyrant.

Now the great God stands in no need of any defense from us: in due time He will effectually close the mouth of every rebel. But we must address a few more remarks to those believers who are disturbed by such as insist so loudly that God is guilty of injustice if He has made a sovereign election. First, then, we ask these slanderers of Jehovah to *make good* their charge. The burden of proof falls upon them to do so. They affirm that an electing God is unjust, then let them demonstrate *how* such be the case. They cannot. In order to do so they must show that lawbreakers merit something good at the hands of the Lawgiver. They must show that the King of kings is morally obliged to smile upon those who have blasphemed His name, desecrated His Sabbaths, slighted His Word, reviled His servants, and above all, despised and rejected His Son.

“Is there one man in the whole world who would have the impertinence to say that he merits anything of his Maker? If so, be it known unto you that He shall have all the merits; and *your* reward will be the flames of Hell forever, for *that* is the utmost that any man ever *merited* of God. God is in debt to no man, and at the last great day every man shall have as much love, as much pity, and as much goodness, as he deserves. Even the lost in Hell shall have all they deserve; ay, and woe be the day for them when they shall have the wrath of God, which will be the summit of their deserving. If God gives to every man as much as he merits, is He therefore to be accused of injustice because He gives to some infinitely more than they merit?” (C. H. Spurgeon). How many who now speak of him, and refer to him as “beloved Spurgeon,” would gnash their teeth and execrate him were they to hear his faithful and plain-spoken preaching.

Second, we would inform these detractors of God that His *salvation* is not a matter of justice, but of *pure grace*, and grace is something that can be claimed by none. Where is the injustice if anyone does as he wills with his own? If I am free to disburse my charity as I see fit, shall God be conceded less freedom to bestow His gifts upon whom He pleases?! God is indebted to none, and therefore if He grants His favours in a sovereign way who can complain? If God passes you by, He has not injured you; but if He enriches you, then are you a debtor to His grace, and then will you cease prating about His justice and injustice, and gladly join with those who astonishingly exclaim, “He hath not dealt

with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psa. 103:10)? Salvation is God’s free gift, and therefore He bestows it on whom He pleases.

Third, we would ask these haughty creatures, to whom has God ever *refused* His mercy when it was sincerely and penitently sought? Does He not freely proclaim the Gospel to every creature? Does not His Word bid *all* men to throw down the weapons of their warfare against Him and come to Christ for pardon? Does He not promise to blot out your iniquities if you will turn unto Him in the way of His appointing? If you refuse to do so you are so thoroughly in love with sin, so wedded to your lusts, that you are determined to destroy your own soul, then who is to blame? Most certainly God is not. His Gospel promises are reliable, and anyone is at liberty to prove them for himself. If he does so, if he renounces sin and puts his trust in Christ, then he will discover for himself that he is one of God’s chosen ones. On the other hand, if he deliberately spurns the Gospel and rejects the Saviour, then his blood is on his own head.

This leads us to ask, fourth, You say it is unjust that some should be lost while others are saved: but *who* makes them to be lost that are lost. Whom has God ever caused to sin—rather does He warn and exhort against it. Whom has the Holy Spirit ever prompted to a wrong action?—rather does He uniformly incline against evil. Where do the Scriptures bolster up any in his wickedness?—rather do they constantly condemn it in all its forms. Then is God unjust if He condemns those who willfully disobey Him? Is He unrighteous if He punishes those who defiantly disregard His danger signals and exhortations? Assuredly not. To each such one God will yet say, “Thou hast destroyed thyself” (Hosea 13:9). It is the creature who commits moral suicide. It is the creature who breaks through every restraint and hurls himself into the precipice of eternal woe. In the last great day it will appear that God is *justified* when He speaks, and *clear* when He judges (Psa. 51:4).

Election is the taking of one and the leaving of another, and implies freedom on the part of the elector to choose or refuse. Hence the choosing of one does no injury to the other which is not chosen. If I select one out of a hundred men to a position of honour and profit, I do no injury to the ninety and nine not elected. If I take two from a score of ragged and hungry children, and adopt them as my son and daughter, feed and clothe, house and educate them, I do them an immense benefit; but while disbursing my bounty as I choose and making two happy, I do no injury to the eighteen who are left. True, they remain ragged, ill-fed, and uneducated, yet they are in no worse condition for my having shown favour to their late companions—they only continue precisely in the situation in which they were.

Again—if among ten convicts justly sentenced to death, the king of England was pleased to choose five to be the recipients of his sovereign mercy, pardoned and released them, they would owe their very lives to his royal favour; nevertheless, by extending kindness to them, no injury is done to the other five: they are left to suffer the righteous penalty of the law, due to them for their transgressions. They only suffer what they *would* have suffered if the king’s mercy had *not* been extended toward their fellows. Who, then, can fail to see that it would be a misuse of terms, a grievous slander of the king—to charge him with injustice, because he was pleased to exercise his royal prerogative and evidence his favour in this discriminating manner.

Our Saviour definitely expressed *this* idea of election when He said, “Then shall two be in the field: the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Matt. 24:40). If both had been

“left,” then both had perished: hence the “taking” of the one did no injury to his fellow. “Two women shall be grinding at the mill: the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Matt. 24:41). The taking of the one was a great favour to her, but the leaving of her companion did her no wrong. Divine election, then, is a choice to favour from among those who have *no claims* upon God. It therefore does no injustice to them that are passed by, for they only continue as and where they were, and as and where they would have been if none had been taken from among them. In the exercise of His electing grace God has mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and, in the bestowment of His favour He does what He wills with His own.

It is not difficult to perceive the ground upon which the false reasoning of God’s detractors rests: behind all the murmurings of objectors, against the Divine justice lies the concept that God is under *obligation* to provide salvation for all His fallen creatures. But such reasoning (?) fails to see that if such a contention were valid, then no *thanks* could be returned to God. How could we praise Him for redeeming those whom He was bound to redeem? If salvation be a debt which God owes man for allowing him to fall, then salvation cannot be a matter of *mercy*. But we must not expect that those whose eyes are blinded by pride should understand anything of the infinite demerits of sin, of their own utter unworthiness and vileness; and therefore it is impossible that they should form any true concept of Divine grace, and perceive that when *grace* is exercised it is necessarily exercised in a *sovereign* manner.

But after all that has been pointed out above some will be ready to sneeringly ask, Does not the Bible declare that God is “no respecter of persons”: how, then, can He make a selection from among men? The calumniators of Divine predestination suppose that either the Scriptures are inconsistent with themselves, or that in His election God has regard to merits. Let us first quote from Calvin: “The Scripture denies that God is a respecter of persons, in a different sense from that in which *they* understand it; for by the word *person* it signifies not a man, but those things in a man which, being conspicuous to the eyes, usually conciliate favour, honour, and dignity, or attract hatred, contempt, and disgrace. Such are riches, power, nobility, magistracy, country, elegance of form, on the one hand; and on the other hand, poverty, necessity, ignoble birth, slovenliness, contempt, and the like. Thus Peter and Paul declare that God is not a respecter of persons because He makes no difference between the Jew and Greek, to reject one and receive the other, merely on account of his nation (Acts 10:34, Rom. 2:11). So James uses the same language when he asserts that God in His judgment pays no regard to riches (2:5).

“There will, therefore, be no contradiction in our affirming, that according to the good pleasure of His will, God chooses whom He will as His children, irrespective of all merit, while He rejects and reprobates others. Yet, for the sake of further satisfaction, the matter may be explained in the following manner. They ask how it happens, that of two persons distinguished from each other by no merit, God, in His election, leaves one and takes another. I, on the other hand, ask them, whether they suppose him that is taken to possess anything that can *attract* the favour of God? If they confess that he has not, as indeed they must, it will follow that God looks not at man, but derives His motive to favour him from His own goodness. God’s election of one man, therefore, while He rejects another, proceeds not from any respect of man, but solely from His own mercy; which may freely display and exert itself wherever and whenever it pleases.”

To have “respect of persons” is to regard and treat them differently on account of some supposed or real difference in them or their circumstances, which is no warrantable ground or reason for such preferential regard and treatment. This character of a respecter of persons belongs rather to one who examines and rewards others according to their characters and works. For example, for a judge to justify and reward one rather than another because he is rich and the other poor, or because he has given him a bribe, or is a near relative or an intimate friend, while the character and conduct of the other is more upright and his cause more just. But such a denomination is inapplicable to a disburser of charity, who is granting his favours and bestowing freely undeserved gifts to one rather than to another, doing so without any consideration of personal merit. The benefactor has a perfect right to do what he will with his own, and those who are neglected by him have no valid ground for complaint.

Even if this expression be taken in its more popular acceptance, nothing so strikingly evidences that God *is* “no respecter of persons” than *the character* of the ones He has chosen. When the angels sinned and fell God provided no Saviour for them, yet when the human race sinned and fell a Saviour was provided for many of them. Let the unfriendly critic carefully weigh this fact: had God been a “respecter of persons” would He not have selected the angels and passed by men? The fact that He did the very reverse clears Him of this calumny. Take again that Nation which God chose to be the recipients of earthly and temporal favours above all others during the last two thousand years of Old Testament history. What sort of characters were they? Why, an unappreciative and murmuring, stiff-necked and hard-hearted, rebellious and impenitent people, from the beginning of their history until the end. Had God been a respecter of persons He surely had never singled out *the Jews* for such favour and blessing!

The very character, then, of those whom God chooses refutes this silly objection. The same is equally apparent in the New Testament. “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world” (James 2:5): blessed be His name, that it is so, for had He chosen the wealthy it had fared ill with many of us, had it not? God did not pick out magnates and millionaires, financiers and bankers, to be objects of His grace. Nor are those of royal blood or the peers of the realm, the wise, the gifted, the influential of this world, for few among *them* have their names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. No, it is the despised, the weak, the base, the non-entities of this world, whom God has chosen (1 Cor. 1:26-29), and this, in order that, “no flesh should glory in His presence.” Pharisees passed by and publicans and harlots brought in! “Jacob have I loved”: and what was there in him *to love*!—and echo still asks “what?” Had God been “a respecter of persons” He certainly had never chosen worthless me!—A.W.P.

HOLINESS.

“Behold I have longed after Thy precepts; quicken me in Thy righteousness” (Psa. 119:40). Desires set upon holiness are an affection properly exercised, and upon its due object. Desire is an earnest reaching forth of the soul after good absent and not yet attained. The object of it is something good, and the more truly good it is the more is our desire justified. There are certain bastard goods of a base and transitory nature, as pleasure, profit—we may easily overlash, and exceed in these things. But on *holiness*, which is more high and noble, and is truly good, and of great vicinity and nearness to our chiefest good than those others things are, we cannot exceed—there the faculty is rightly placed.

When we are hasty and passionate for those other things, the heart is corrupted, it is hard to escape sin: “He that makes haste to be rich cannot be innocent” (Prov. 28:20); and he that loves pleasure is in danger of not loving God (2 Tim. 3:4). But now in *holiness* there is no such snare: a man cannot be holy enough, nor like enough to God; and therefore here we may freely let out our affections to the full. When our desires are freely let out to other things, they are like a member out of joint, as when the arms hang backward, but here they are in their proper place; this is that which cannot be loved beyond what it doth deserve.

A Christian should set no manner of bounds to himself in holiness for he is to “be holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:15), and to be “perfect as our heavenly Father” (Matt. 5:48). And then desire is not only after that which is good, but after a good *absent*. Desire ariseth from a sense of vacuity and emptiness. Emptiness is the cause of appetite and therefore is compared to hunger and thirst: “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matt. 5:6). So it is in desiring holiness, we have not yet attained (Phil. 3:13). There is an indigence and emptiness; we are not already perfect—we want more than we have, and our enjoyments are little in comparison of our expectations, and therefore we should make a swifter progress towards the mark, and with more earnestness of soul should press after that sinless estate we expect.

That little we have doth but quicken us to inquire after more, not cloy but provide the appetite. As a man hath a better stomach sometimes when he doth begin to eat, so when we begin with God, and have tasted of holiness, and tasted of comfort, being brought into a sense of obedience and subjection to God, we should desire more; or certainly he is not good that doth not desire to be better. So that David might well say, “I have longed after Thy precepts.”—Thomas Manton