

Vol. XIII

June, 1934

No. 6

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

*“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39*

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EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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

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# STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

*“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39*

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EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### *18. The Spirit Quickening (Part 2)*

“For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will” (Joh 5:21). “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing” (Joh 6:63). All the divine operations in the economy of salvation proceed from the Father, are through the Son, and are executed by the Spirit. Quickening is His *initial* work in the elect. It is that supernatural act by which He brings them out of the grave of spiritual death on to resurrection ground. By it He imparts a principle of grace and habit of holiness. It is the communication of the life of God to the soul. It is an act of creation (2Co 5:17). It is a divine “workmanship” (Eph 2:10). All of these terms denote an act of omnipotency. The origination of life is utterly impossible to the creature. He can receive life. He can nourish life. He can use and exert it, but he cannot create life.

In this work the Spirit acts as *sovereign*. “The wind bloweth *where it listeth*, [or “pleaseth”]...so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (Joh 3:8). This does not mean that He acts capriciously or without reason and motive, but that He is above any obligation to the creature and is quite uninfluenced by us in what He does. The Spirit might justly have left every one of us in the hardness of our hearts to perish forever. In quickening one and not another, in bringing a few from death unto life, and leaving the mass still dead in trespasses and sins, the Spirit has mercy “on whom he will have mercy.” He is absolutely free to work in whom He pleases, for none of the fallen sons of Adam have the slightest claim upon Him.

The quickening of the spiritually dead into newness of life is therefore an act of *amazing grace*. It is an unsought and unmerited favour. The sinner, who is the chosen

subject of this divine operation and object of this inestimable blessing, is infinitely ill-deserving in himself, being thoroughly disposed to go on in wickedness till this change is wrought in him. He is rebellious and will not hearken to the divine command. He is obstinate and refuses to repent and embrace the Gospel. However terrified he may be with the fears of threatened doom, however earnest may be his desire to escape misery and be happy forever, no matter how many prayers he may make and things he may do, he has not the least inclination to repent and submit to God. His heart is defiant, full of enmity against God, and daily does he add iniquity unto iniquity. For the Spirit to give a new heart unto *such as one* is indeed an act of amazing and sovereign grace.

This quickening by the Spirit is *instantaneous*. It is a divine act and not a process. It is wrought at once and not gradually. In a moment of time the soul passes from death unto life. The soul, which before was dead toward God, is now alive to Him. The soul, which was completely under the domination of sin, is now set free, though the sinful nature itself is not removed nor rendered inoperative, yet the heart is no longer en rapport (in sympathy) with it. The Spirit of God finds the heart wholly corrupt and desperately wicked, but by a miracle of grace He changes its bent, and this by implanting within it the imperishable seed of holiness. There is no medium between a carnal and a spiritual state—the one is what we were by nature, the other is what we become by grace, by the instantaneous and invincible operation of the Almighty Spirit.

This initial work of quickening is entirely *unperceived* by us, for it lies outside the realm and the range of human consciousness. Those who are *dead* possess no perception, and though the work of bringing them on to resurrection ground is indeed a great and powerful one, in the very nature of the case its subjects can know nothing whatever about it until *after* it has been accomplished. When Adam was created, he was conscious of nothing but that he now existed and was free to act. The divine operation which was the cause of his existence was over and finished before he began to be conscious of anything. This initial operation of the Spirit, by which the elect become new creatures, can only be known by its effects and consequences. “The wind bloweth where it listeth,” that is first. Then, “*thou hearest the sound thereof*” (Joh 3:8). It is now made known, in a variety of ways, to the conscience and understanding.

Under this work of quickening *we* are entirely *passive*, by which is meant that there is no co-operation whatever between the will of the sinner and the act of the Holy Spirit. As we have said, this initial work of the Spirit is effected by free and sovereign *grace*, consisting of the infusion of a principle of spiritual life into the soul, by which all its faculties are supernaturally renovated. This being the case, the sinner must be entirely passive, like clay in the hands of a potter, for until divine grace is exerted upon him he is utterly incapable of any spiritual acts, being *dead* in trespasses and sins. Lazarus cooperated not in his resurrection. He knew not that the Saviour had come to his sepulchre to deliver him from death. Such is the case with each of God’s elect when the Spirit commences to deal with them. They must first be quickened into newness of life before they can have the slightest desire or motion of the will toward spiritual things. Hence, for them to contribute the smallest iota unto their quickening is utterly impossible.

The life which the Spirit imparts when He quickens is *uniform* in all its favoured subjects. "As seed virtually contains in it all that afterwards proceeds from it, the blade, stalk, ear, and full corn in the ear, so the first principle of grace implanted in the heart seminally contains all the grace which afterwards appears in all the fruits, effects, acts, and exercises of it" (John Gill, 1697-1771). Each quickened person experiences the same radical change, by which the image of God is stamped upon the soul, "that which is born of the Spirit *is spirit*" (Joh 3:6), never anything less and never anything more. Each quickened person is made a new creature in Christ and possesses all the constituent parts of "the new man." Later, some may be more lively and vigorous at their birth, as God gives stronger faith unto one than to another, yet there is no difference in their original—all partake of the same life.

While there is great variety in our perception and understanding of the work of the Spirit within us, there is no difference in the initial work itself. While there is much difference in the carrying on of this work unto perfection in the *growth* of the "new creature"—some making speedy progress, others thriving slowly and bringing forth little fruit—yet the new creation itself is the same in all. Each alike enters the kingdom of God, becomes a vital member of Christ's mystical body, is given a place in the living family of God. Later, one may appear more beautiful than another, by having the image of his heavenly Father more evidently imprinted upon him, yet not more truly so. There are degrees in sanctification, but none in vivification. There has never been but one kind of spiritual quickening in this world, being in its essential nature specifically the same in all.

Let it be pointed out in conclusion that the Spirit's quickening is only *the beginning* of God's work of grace in the soul. This does not wholly renew the heart at once. No indeed, the inner man needs to be "renewed day by day" (2Co 4:16). But from that small beginning, the work continues—God watering it "every moment" (Isa 27:3)—and goes on to perfection. That is, till the heart is made perfectly clean and holy, which is not accomplished till death. God continues to work in His elect, "both to will and to do of his own good pleasure," they being as completely dependent upon the Spirit's influence for every right exercise of the will after, as for the first. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phi 1:6).

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### *78. The Faith of the Judges (11:32)*

In some respects the verse we have now arrived at is the most difficult one in our chapter. It commences the last division of the same. Therein the apostle changes his method of treatment and instead of particularizing individual examples of faith, he groups together a number of men and summarizes the actings of their faith. The selection made, out of many others who could have been given, is most startling. Those whose names we

might have expected had been registered on this honour roll are omitted, while other we have never thought of are given a place. The order in which they are recorded seems strange, for it is not that of the chronological. This has puzzled some. One eminent commentator stating, "The apostle does not observe strict order, reciting them in haste," which is not to be allowed for a moment, for it ignores the superintending guidance of the Holy Spirit. Again, the prodigies performed by these men cannot be presented for *our* emulation. Why, then, are they referred to?

The principle of guidance in the selection of some of the men here mentioned is obviously that of *sovereign grace*—no otherwise can we account for the passing over of such illustrious characters as Caleb and Deborah, Hannah and Asaph, and the inclusion of Jephthath and Samson—in the latter the free favour of God was more conspicuously displayed. The order in which they are mentioned is not that of time, but *of dignity*, for Barak lived before Gideon, Jephthath before Samson, and Samuel before David. God reckons those most excellent who bring forth the best fruits of faith—the more we excel in faith, the more God will honour us. Where faith shines the brightest the least are accounted the greatest and the last become first. Then how *we* should labour daily for an increase of faith.

Five of the six men named in our text were judges who ruled over Israel, though they came from very humble callings. From this we may learn that faith is a spiritual grace suited not only unto the temple, but also to the judicial bench and throne. That it is needed not only by those who occupy positions in the private walks of life, but also by those who fill public office. Governors equally with the governed require to have a true faith in the living God. Instead of disqualifying them for the discharge of their important duties, it would be of inestimable value to them—enabling them to face difficulties and danger with calmness, inspiring with courage, endowing with wisdom, and preserving from many temptations which confront those in high places. He who is blest with a spiritual faith will have lowly thoughts of himself, as had Barak, Gideon, and David.

Remarkable achievements are credited to the men whose names are now before us. As we read the historical account of them in the book of Judges we may well marvel at them, but it is only as we view them in the light of what is said here in Hebrews 11 that we shall understand them aright. Other men besides these have vanquished lions, put armies to flight, and subdued kingdoms, yet *their* deeds proceeded from a very different principle. The mighty works of men chronicled in the Old Testament are given for a far higher purpose than the indulging of our love of the sensational. The exploits of Gideon and Barak, Samson and David, are only recorded in Holy Writ as they were wrought *by faith*. Thus the Holy Spirit honours *His own* work.

One prominent feature which distinguishes many of the extraordinary performances of men of God set down in Scripture, from the prodigies done by men of the world, is that the Holy Spirit moved the sacred historians to faithfully register the infirmities under which faith so often wrought and the weakness which preceded it. The faith of these men was very far from being perfect, either in degree, stability, or unmixed purity. Like ours so often is, their faith was mingled with fear, oppressed by unbelief, hard beset by carnal reasonings. We have only to read through the sixth chapter of Judges to see that the faith of

the first one named in our text was painfully slow in exercise, though by grace, it was afterward mighty in execution. They were men of like passions with us and from that fact we may take comfort—not in sheltering behind the same, but by refusing to despair when our faith is at a low ebb.

One thing which is common to all the individuals mentioned in our text is that the history of each of them was cast in a day of great spiritual declension. The time in which they lived is described at length in the book of Judges. Following the deaths of Moses and Joshua, Israel grievously departed from the Lord—cast off His law, worshipped the idols of the heathen, and “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Jdg 21:25). Darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people. Yet even in those days God left not Himself without witness. Inexpressibly blessed is it to behold the faith of individuals shining in the midst of a failed testimony. That here and there was a lamp maintained, illuminating the surrounding darkness. Nor is the number here specified without significance, for to the six individuals mentioned are linked the “prophets” (who also ministered in seasons of apostasy), making *seven* in all—telling of the completeness of the provision made by the grace of God.

Thus we may see how that Hebrews 11, which describes at length the life of faith, would have been incomplete had no notice been taken of those times when Israel so grievously departed from God. It was during seasons of great spiritual darkness and gloom that faith wrought many of its mightiest works and achieved some of its most notable victories. For faith is not dependent on favourable outward conditions. It is sustained and energized by One who is infinitely superior to all circumstances. What is mentioned in our text, and the verses which immediately follow, are recorded *for our encouragement*. We too are living in a day when Christendom is in a sad state, when there is widespread departure from God and His Word, when vital and practical holiness is at a low ebb. But the arm of the Lord is not waxed short and they who lean upon it shall be sustained and enabled to do exploits in His name.

“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets” (Heb 11:32). The apostle had already given abundant proof that “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1) and had shown that “by it the elders obtained a good report” (Heb 11:2), yet he had by no means said all which might be given on the subject. Numerous and notable examples of the power and fruits of faith had been advanced, and many others might still be cited, but it would not be convenient to enumerate each instance of faith recorded in the Old Testament. To have done so would extend the epistle beyond due limits. So we now have a bare mention of the names of others, followed by a description in general terms of the effects of their faith.

The characters which we are now to contemplate, like the apostles of Christ, and in smaller measure the Reformers at the close of the “Dark ages,” were extraordinary men, specially raised up by God in times of crisis, for the good of His Church and the benefit of the commonwealth. This needs to be carefully borne in mind or otherwise we shall view them in a false perspective. Their calling was extraordinary and so were their performances. They were endowed with uncommon powers and supernaturally energized

for their particular tasks. That which distinguished them from men like Caesar, Charlemagne, and Napoleon was that they were *men of faith*. It is not that the apostle by any means commends *all* that they did or that he excuses their manifold imperfections, which cannot be vindicated. He makes mention here only of their faith.

*Gideon* was raised up by God at a time when Israel's fortunes were sunk to a low ebb. Three judges had preceded him, delivering the people of God from the hand of their enemies, but a fourth time they had apostatized and now they were groaning under the servitude of the Midianites. So great was the number of those who had invaded their territory that they "left no sustenance for Israel" and "Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites" (Jdg 6:4, 6). But that was not the worst. The worship of Baal prevailed to such an extent among the favoured covenant people of God that to oppose it was considered a criminal act, deserving of death (Jdg 6:28-30). Nevertheless, God had promised "the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone" (Deu 32:36), and now, once again, He was about to make good this word.

To be delivered from the dire situation which now faced Israel called for a "mighty man of valor," and such was Gideon, as we learn from the language in which the angel of the Lord first addressed him (Jdg 6:12). But something more than natural courage and daring were required in the one whom the Lord would employ—he must be a *humble* man of God that the glory might rebound unto Him alone. In order to that, the instrument had first to be prepared for the tasks to be performed—the servant fitted for the service he must do. "God must first do His work with Gideon, before Gideon could do his work for God. To accomplish this, God makes the wine-press of Joash to be to Gideon what he makes the backside of the desert to be to Moses" (E. W. Bullinger, 1837-1913). The servant of God must first be made to feel his weakness, before he is taught that all-sufficient strength is available for him in the Lord. Thus it was with Gideon. Thus it is still.

It is blessed to observe the Lord's dealings with Gideon. He now said, "The LORD is with thee" (Jdg 6:12). This was to exercise his heart, which is ever the prime requisite. Aroused, Gideon inquired, "Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of?" etc. (Jdg 6:13). Second, "The LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" (Jdg 6:14). It is at this point so many interpreters go astray in their understanding of this incident. The *saints* "might" is in realized helplessness, "For when I am weak, then am I strong" (2Co 12:10). That word of Jehovah's was designed to bring Gideon to the consciousness of *his own* utter inability to deliver Israel from the yoke of the Midianites.

The instrument must be experimentally fitted ere the Lord will employ it in His service and the first part of this fitting process is to empty it of self-sufficiency that it may then be thoroughly dependent upon Himself. Gideon's "might" consisted in conscious weakness and as soon as that was realized, he would be forced to believe the Lord's declaration, "Thou shalt save Israel." That was the word addressed to his heart and was the foundation on which his faith was to rest. Gideon now asked, "Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save



Israel? behold, my family is *poor* in Manasseh, and *I am the least* in my father's house" (Jdg 6:15). The divine arrow had hit its mark, as Gideon's humble confession attests.

The Lord has only one response unto acknowledged helplessness, "*Surely I will be with thee*, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man" (Jdg 6:16). How blessed! When faith truly realizes this, it exclaims, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phi 4:13). From that assuring word of the Almighty's, Gideon knew that he had "found grace" in His sight and asked for a sign, "Not because he doubted, but because he believed. Not to prove the truth of JEHOVAH'S word, but because he would prove the truth of JEHOVAH'S grace in the acceptance of his offerings which he proposed to go and fetch, verses 17-18" (E. W. Bullinger).

Next, Gideon prepared and presented his offering (Jdg 6:19) and was bidden to place the same upon a rock (Jdg 6:20). This was followed by a miracle, fire issuing from the rock and consuming the offering, by which he "obtained witness" that he had found grace in JEHOVAH'S sight—the supernatural fire denoting his acceptance with God, filling him with awe and terror. Immediately the Lord quietened his heart with, "*Peace* be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die" (Jdg 6:23). Thus did he receive JEHOVAH'S blessing. That Gideon's faith laid hold of that benediction is very evident from the next verse, "Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it JEHOVAH-shalom"—"The Lord send *peace*."

The heart of Gideon being now fitted and established, God gave him his first commission, "Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it: And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down" (Jdg 6:25-26). Such definiteness of language at once evidenced to Gideon that he had to do with One who knew everything—the bullocks his father had and their very ages. Like his father Abraham, Gideon believed God and obeyed His command, for we read that, "Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night" (Jdg 6:27). At this distant date, his action may seem to us trivial, but the sequel shows that Gideon acted at the imminent peril of his life, "Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it" (Jdg 6:30).

The immediate sequel supplied a much more severe testing of Gideon, "Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel" (Jdg 6:33). Enraged at the overthrow of the altar of Baal, the Midianites gathered their forces together and with their allies came up against Israel for battle. It is to be expected that Satan will wax furious when his territory is invaded and the Lord is magnified in the place where he has reigned supreme. That is why it so often follows that when a Christian has done his duty, it *seems* as though he has only made bad matters worse by increasing his troubles. Then it is that he is sorely tempted to regret he has been so "radical" in his conduct and to effect a compromise. Such a

temptation is to be steadfastly resisted. More, the increasing troubles which faithfulness brings upon him are to be regarded as a golden opportunity for further exercises and acts of *faith*. Thus Gideon acted and so should we.

We cannot now enter into a detailed comment upon the response made by Gideon to the open menace of the Midianites, and all that is recorded of him in Judges 6-8, but we commend those chapters unto the careful pondering of the reader. Let him carefully note, first, that "the spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon" (Jdg 6:34), which supplies the key to all that follows—safeguarding the glory of God (preventing us from ascribing the honor to Gideon) and furnishing the vital word of instruction for our own hearts. We cannot overcome Satan nor refuse his temptation in our own strength. We cannot increase faith, or even maintain it in exercise by any resolution of mind or act of our own will. We cannot achieve victories to the praise of our God by our own faithfulness. It is only as we are strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit in the inner man that we are furnished for the battle against the forces of evil and that strength is to be definitely, diligently, and trustfully sought.

The infirmities of Gideon appear in that he imagined he must head a large army if the Midianites were to be vanquished. It was little by little that his heart was instructed and the lesson was learned that God is not dependent upon *numbers*. His repeated request for confirmatory signs (Jdg 6:36-40) also shows us that it is not all at once the saint learns to walk by faith and not by sight. But the Lord is long-suffering to usward and bears with our infirmities when the heart is truly upright before Him. He granted Gideon the signs requested, though that is no guarantee He will do so for us, and He corrected his notion that a large force was needed. Only a small fragment was employed—"by the three hundred men that lapped will I save you" (Jdg 7:7). Then, when Gideon *believed* the Lord and *obeyed* His orders this word was given, "Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand" (Jdg 7:9), which was completely verified in the sequel. Thus did the Lord use and work mightily by one who was poor and little in his own eyes (Jdg 6:15), and who "did as the LORD had said unto him" (Jdg 6:27).

*Barak*. Time (or space) fails us to enter into a full consideration of his history and exploits, so we must condense. Barak was raised up by God near the close of the twenty years, when Jabin the king of Canaan "mightily oppressed the children of Israel" (Jdg 4:3). Deborah was acting as judge at that time—proof of the terribly low state into which the covenant people had fallen (cf. Isa 3:12), though she was not a "judge" in the proper sense of the term (see Jdg 4:4 and carefully compare Jdg 2:18), but a "prophetess," and therefore a mouthpiece of God. It was through her that the Lord spake to Barak, saying "Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand" (Jdg 4:6-7)—*that* was to be the ground of Barak's faith, *that* was the sure promise which described the thing to be "hoped for." The infirmity of Barak is seen in Judges 4:8, but the obedience of his faith appears in Judges 4:10. A further word was given to him, "Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee?" (Jdg 4:14). He "heard," "believed," and obeyed, and a great victory was secured. It was *by*

*faith* in God's promise that Barak went forth against the enormous army of Sisera and vanquished the same.

*Samson.* Many mighty deeds are recorded of him in the book of Judges, such as his rending to pieces a lion, as though it had been a kid; his slaying of a thousand Philistines, single-handed, with the jawbone of an ass; his carrying of the gates of Gaza and their posts on his shoulders up a steep hill; his bursting asunder the strongest cords when bound by his enemies; his overturning the pillars on which stood the great temple of Dagon. How, then, did Samson perform these prodigies? *By faith.* In the Old Testament it is said, "The Spirit of the LORD came upon him," (Jdg 14:6). but that does not mean he was involuntarily impelled by a divine power, like a hurricane carries things through the air blindly and unwittingly. No, the Spirit deals with men not as stocks and stones, but as moral agents—enlightening their minds, controlling their hearts, inclining their wills, and supplying physical strength for whatever task God allots.

"Faith cometh by hearing," and in Samson's case he "heard" through his parents the promise which God had made concerning him, "He shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Jdg 13:5). The strength of his mother's faith comes out beautifully in Judges 13:23, where, quietening the fear of her husband, she said, "If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these." Brought up in the strong faith of his parents, Samson *believed* what he "heard" from God through them, grew up in the confidence of the same and conducted himself accordingly. His last act was his greatest and best, furnishing the strongest evidence of his faith in God and being of most profit to His church. After being so sorely chastened for his sins, and considering the situation he was then in, it called for no ordinary confidence in the Lord to do what is recorded in Judges 16:28-30.

*Jephthah.* By calling, Gideon was a farmer, Barak a soldier, Samson a religious Nazarite, while David was the youngest of his family and despised by his brethren. Samuel was first used by God while still a child. Thus we may see how God delights to use lowly and weak instruments. But more striking still is the case now before us. Jephthah was one of dishonorable birth, a bastard, (Jdg 11:1-2), which the law excluded from the congregation of the Lord (Deu 23:2). Yet God, in an especial and extraordinary manner conferred His Spirit upon Jephthah, and advanced him to the highest dignity and function amongst His people and prospered him exceedingly. From this we may learn that no outward condition, be it ever so base, can serve as a hindrance to God's grace. That he was a man who feared the Lord is clear from Judges 11:9-10. His message to the king of Ammon (Jdg 11:14-27) shows that he *believed* what was recorded in the Scripture of truth. He ascribed Israel's victories to the Lord (Jdg 11:21, 23) and called on Him to judge between Israel and Ammon (Jdg 11:27), and Jehovah rewarded his faith by delivering the Ammonites into his hand. His fidelity and perseverance in the faith is seen in the keeping of his vow of banning his daughter to continual virginity.

*David.* There is little need for us to attempt here an enumeration of the many works and fruits of his faith, nor to point out how often unbelief wrought within and through him. We agree with John Brown (1784-1858) that it is likely the Holy Spirit has particular reference

in our text unto David's victorious combat with Goliath, when, quite a youth, and totally inexperienced in the arts and guiles of warfare, armed only with a sling and a few pebbles, he engaged in open fight the mighty giant of the Philistines, who was a veteran in the field and heavily armed for the duel. How are we to explain David's temerity and success? In this way—he had received a revelation from God (as 1Sa 17:46-47 plainly intimates), he rested on the same with implicit confidence, and acted accordingly. By faith he ventured. By faith he overcame.

*Samuel.* “The event to which we are disposed to think it most probable, from its miraculous character, that the apostle refers, is that recorded in 1 Samuel 12:16-18, ‘Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king. So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.’ A revelation was made to Samuel that the divine power was to be put forth in connection with certain words which he spoke. He believed that revelation. He spoke the words, and the event followed” (John Brown).

*The Prophets.* They too exemplified the power of faith, both in what they did and in what they suffered. By faith they were enabled to achieve and endure what otherwise they could not have achieved or endured. They delivered nothing but what they received, hence the frequency of their announcement, “Thus saith the LORD.” They concealed nothing they had received, though it was a “burden to them” (See Mal 1:1, etc.) and though they knew full well their message would be most unpalatable, they faithfully delivered the Word of God. They were undaunted by the people's opposition, setting their face as a flint (Eze 3:8-9). They humbly submitted to God's requirements: Isaiah 20:3; Jeremiah 27:2; Ezekiel 4:11-12. They wrought mighty works, especially Elijah and Elisha. All these things manifested the efficacy and might of a real faith in the living God. “Lord, increase our faith.”

## THE LIFE OF DAVID

### 30. *His Sojourn at Hebron*

The news of Saul's death had been received by the exiled David in characteristic fashion. He first flamed out in fierce anger against the lying Amalekite, who had hurried with the tidings, hoping to curry favor with him by pretending that he had killed Saul on the field of battle. A short shrift and a bloody end were his. And then the wrath gave place to mourning. Forgetting the mad hatred and relentless persecution of his late enemy, thinking only of the friendship of his earlier days and his official status as the anointed of the Lord, our hero cast over the mangled corpses of Saul and Jonathan the mantle of his noble elegy in which he sings the praise of the one and celebrates the love of the other. Not

until those offices of justice and affection had been performed did he think of himself and the change which had been affected in his own fortunes.

It seems clear that David had never regarded Saul as standing between himself and the kingdom. The first reaction from his death was not, as it would have been with a less devout and less generous heart, a flush of gladness at the thought of the empty throne, but instead, a sharp pang of grief from the sense of an empty heart. And even when he began to contemplate his immediate future and changed fortunes, he carried himself with commendable self-restraint. At the time David was still a fugitive in the midst of the ruins of Ziklag, but instead of rushing ahead, "making the most of his opportunity," and seizing the empty throne, he sought directions from the Lord. Ah, we not only need to turn unto God in times of deep distress, but equally so when His outward providences appear to be working decidedly in our favour.

David would do nothing in this important crisis of his life—when all which had for so long appeared a distant hope now seemed to be rapidly becoming a present fact—until his Shepherd should lead him. Impatient and impetuous as he was by nature, schooled to swift decisions, followed by still swifter actions, knowing that a blow struck speedily while all was chaos and despair in the kingdom might at once set him on the throne, nevertheless, he held the flesh, carnal policy, and the impatience of his followers in check to hear what God would say. To a man of David's experience it must have appeared that now was the opportune moment to subdue the remaining adherents of the fallen Saul, rally around himself his loyal friends, grasp the crown and the scepter, vanquish the gloating Philistines, and secure unto himself the kingdom of Israel. Instead, he refused to take a single step until JEHOVAH had signified *His will* in the matter.

The manner in which David conducted himself on this occasion presents an example which we do well to take to heart and punctually emulate. The important principle of action which was here exemplified has been well expressed by another, "If we would possess temporal things with a blessing, we must not eagerly seize upon them, nor be determined by favorable events or carnal counsel, but we must observe the rules of God's Word and pray for His direction; using those means, and those only, which He has appointed or allowed, and avoid all evil or 'appearance of evil,' in our pursuit of them—and then whatever else we fail in, we shall be directed in the way to the kingdom of heaven" (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and *he shall direct thy paths*" (Pro 3:5-6).

To "acknowledge" the Lord in all our ways means that instead of acting in self-sufficiency and self-will, we seek wisdom from above in every undertaking of our earthly affairs, beg God to grant us light from His Word on our path, and seek His honor and glory in all that we attempt. Thus it was now with David, "And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" (2Sa 2:1). This is very blessed and should be linked with all that was before us in 1 Samuel 30:6-31. What is here recorded of David supplies further proof of his having been restored from backsliding. Previously he had *left* the cities of Judah "inquiring" of his own heart (1Sa 27:1), but now he would only think of *returning* thither as God might conduct him.

Alas, that most of us have to pass through many painful and humiliating experiences ere we learn this lesson.

“David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” (2Sa 2:1). Though the Lord had promised him the kingdom, though he had already been anointed by Samuel unto the same, and though Saul was now dead, David was not hasty to take matters into his own hands but desired to submit himself unto God’s directions and act only according to His revealed will. This evidenced the fact that he really trusted in Him who had promised him the kingdom, to give it to him in His own due time and manner, and thus he would possess it with a clear conscience and at the same time avoid all those appearances of evil with which he might know the remaining adherents of Saul would be ready to charge him. So fully did he fulfill the word of his early Psalm, “His strength will I wait upon thee” (Psa 59:9). We never lose anything, my reader, by believing and patiently waiting upon God, but we are always made to suffer when we take things into our own hands and rush blindly ahead.

“Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?” (2Sa 2:1). David was prepared to go where the Lord bade him. His particular inquiry about “the cities of *Judah*” was because that was his own tribe and the one to which most of his friends belonged. “And the LORD said unto him, Go up,” that is, from Ziklag into the territory of Judah, though He did not specify any particular city. This is usually the Lord’s method—to first give us a *general* intimation of His will for us and later more specific details little by little. He does not make known to us the whole path at once, but keeps us dependent upon Himself for light and strength, step by step. This is for our good, for our training, though it be a trying of our patience. Patience is a grace of great price in the sight of God, and it is only developed by discipline. May grace be diligently sought and divinely bestowed so that we shall heed that exhortation, “Let patience have her perfect work” (Jam 1:4).

“And the LORD said unto him, Go up.” (2Sa 2:1). The absence of anything more definite was a *testing* of David. Had the flesh been dominant in him at this time, he would have eagerly jumped to the conclusion that he was fully justified in leaving Ziklag immediately and taking prompt measures to obtain the kingdom. Blessed is it to see how he responded to the test. Instead of rushing ahead, he continued to wait on the Lord for more explicit instructions, and asked, “*Whither* shall I go up? (2Sa 2:1)—to which part of Judah, Jerusalem or where? He had paid dearly in the past for taking journeys which the Lord had not ordered and for residing in places which He had not named for him, and now he desired to move only as God should appoint. Reader, have you yet reached this point in your spiritual experience? Have you truly surrendered unto the lordship of Christ, so that you have turned over to Him the entire government and disposing of your life? If not, you know not how much peace, joy, and blessing you are missing.

“And he said, Unto Hebron” (2Sa 2:1). This is recorded for our encouragement. The Lord is never wearied by our asking! Nay, the more childlike we are, the better for us. The more we cast *all* our care upon Him (1Pe 5:7), the more we seek counsel of Him, the more He is honored and pleased. Has He not told us, “In *every thing* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phi 4:6)? That means just what it says and we are greatly the losers, and God is dishonored just in proportion to our

disregard of that privilege and duty. The old hymn is true when it says, "O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pains we bear, All because we do not carry, Everything to God in prayer." The readiness of JEHOVAH to respond unto David's inquiry is a sure intimation of His willingness to hear us, for He is, "The *same* yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Heb 13:8).

"And he said, Unto *Hebron*" (2Sa 2:1). There is a spiritual beauty in this word which can only be perceived as we compare Scripture with Scripture. In the Old Testament, "Hebron" stands, typically, for *communion*. This may be seen from the first mention of the word, "Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there *an altar* unto the LORD" (Gen 13:18). Again, "So he [Jacob] sent him [Joseph, on an errand of mercy to his brethren] out of the vale of Hebron" (Gen 37:14)—figure of the Father sending the Son on a mission of grace unto His elect. "And they gave Hebron unto Caleb" (Jdg 1:20). The place of fellowship became the portion of the man who followed the Lord "fully" (Num 14:24). How fitting, then, that the restored David should be sent back to "Hebron"—it is ever back unto *communion* the Lord calls His wandering child. O how thankful we should be when the Holy Spirit restores us to communion with God, even though it be at the cost of disappointment and sorrow (Ziklag) to the flesh.

"So David went up thither" (2Sa 2:2). God had graciously granted him the needed word of guidance and he followed out the same. O that all his actions had been controlled by the same rule. How much trouble and grief he had then escaped. But they were not and this makes the more solemn the contrast presented in the next statement, "And his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife the Carmelite" (2Sa 2:2). Here was the one blot on the otherwise fair picture—the lusts of the flesh obtruded themselves. Yes, immediately after his having sought guidance from God!—what a warning for us. We are never safe a single moment unless upheld by the arm of Omnipotence. As we have seen in earlier articles, divine chastisement was the sequel to what we read of in 1 Samuel 25:44, so now we may be assured that his retention of "two wives" omened ill for the future. The closing verses of our lesson show plainly that he missed God's best.

"And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron" (2Sa 2:3). Those who had been David's companions in tribulation were not forgotten now that he was moving forward toward the kingdom. Blessed foreshadowment was this of, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2Ti 2:12).

"And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah" (2Sa 2:4). David had been *privately* anointed as Saul's successor (1Sa 16:12-13), now the principal princes in the tribe of Judah *publicly* owned him as their king. They did not take it upon themselves to make him king over all Israel, but left the other tribes to act for themselves. No doubt in this they acted according to the mind of David, who had no desire to force himself on the whole nation at once, preferring to obtain government over them by degrees, as Providence should open his way. "See how David rose gradually. He was first appointed king in reversion, then in possession of one tribe only, and at last over

all the tribes. Thus the kingdom of the Messiah, the Son of David, is set up by degrees—He is Lord of all by divine designation, but ‘We see not *yet* all things put under him,’ Hebrews 2:8” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

“And they told David, saying, That the men of Jabesh-gilead were they that buried Saul” (2Sa 2:4). Most probably the first act of David after his anointing by the princes of Judah was to inquire after the body of the late king, that it might be given a decent interment, and so upon his inquiry, he learned what is recorded in 1 Samuel 31:11-13.

“And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the LORD, that ye have showed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him” (2Sa 2:5). David expressed his appreciation of what the men of Jabesh had done in rescuing the bodies of Saul and his sons from the Philistines, and for the kindly care they had taken of them. He pronounced the blessing of the Lord upon them, which probably means that he asked Him to reward them. By thus honouring the memory of his predecessor, he gave evidence that he was not aiming at the crown from any principles of carnal ambition or from any enmity to Saul, but only because he was called of God to it.

“And now the LORD show kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing” (2Sa 2:6). David not only prayed God’s blessing upon those who honoured the remains of Saul, but he promised to remember them himself when opportunity afforded. Finally, he bade them fear not the Philistines, who might resent their action and seek revenge—especially as they no longer had a head over them, but *he*, as king of Judah, would take their part and assist them, “Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them” (2Sa 2:7). Thus did he continue to show his regard for the late king. By sending a deputation to Jabesh, David instituted a conciliatory measure toward the remaining adherents of Saul.

“But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul’s host, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim” (2Sa 2:8). This is a solemn “But,” traceable, we believe, to the “two wives” of verse 2! David was not to come to the throne of all Israel without further opposition. Abner was general of the army and no doubt desired to keep his position. He took Ishbosheth, apparently the only son of Saul now left, to Mahanaim, a city on the other side of the Jordan, in the territory of Gath (Jos 13:24-26)—partly to keep the men of Jabesh-gilead in awe and prevent their joining with David and partly that he might be at some distance both from the Philistines and from David, where he might mature his plans. “Ish-bosheth” signifies “a man of shame.” He was not considered fit to accompany his father to battle, yet was now deemed qualified to occupy the throne to the exclusion of David.

“And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel” (2Sa 2:9). The nation in general had rejected the “Judges” whom God had raised up for them, and had demanded a king—and now in the same rebellious spirit, they refused the prince which the Lord had selected for them. In type, it was Israel preferring Barabbas to Jesus Christ. Abner prevailed till he got



all the tribes of Israel, save Judah, to own Ishbosheth as their king. All this time David was quiet, offering no resistance, thus keeping his oath in 1 Samuel 24:21-22!

“The believer’s progress must be gradual. His faith and his graces must be proved and his pride subdued before he can properly endure any kind of prosperity. And for these purposes the Lord often employs the perverseness of his brethren without their knowledge or contrary to their intention. In the professing church, few honour those whom the Lord will honour. Before Jesus came, and in each succeeding generation, the very builders have rejected such as heaven intended for eminent situations, and His servants must be conformed to Him. Ambition, jealousy, envy, and other evil passions cause men to rebel against the Word of God, but they generally attempt to conceal their real motives under plausible pretenses. The believer’s wisdom, however, consists in waiting quietly and silently under injuries, and in leaving God to plead his cause, except it be evidently his duty to be active” (Thomas Scott).

## DISPENSATIONALISM

### *9. The Word of God (Concluded)*

“For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness...David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom 4:3, 6-8). In view of such a plain declaration, who dares to affirm that the patriarchs were strangers unto the salvation of which *we* are made partakers? Christians are “heirs” of Abraham (Gal 3:18, 29), which means they possess (by faith) the identical blessings which God covenanted unto the father of all them that believe.

We have the same Gospel which was preached unto Abraham (Gal 3:8), yea, which was preached unto Israel in the wilderness after they received the law at Sinai (Heb 4:2). The Old Testament saints were participants in the same covenant blessings which we are (2Sa 23:5 compared with Heb 13:20). The apostle makes the redeemed Israelites equal to us in the significance of the ordinances (or “sacraments”). “Since the Lord not only favored them with the same benefits, but illustrated His grace among them by the same symbols, 1 Corinthians 10:1-11” (John Calvin, 1509-1564). They desired the same “heavenly country” which we do and God “hath prepared for *them* a city” (Heb 11:16), as He has for us.

Abraham “rejoiced to see my day” declared Christ, “and he saw it, and was glad” (Joh 8:56). Dying Jacob said, “I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD” (Gen 49:18). *What* “salvation” could he expect when he felt himself about to expire, unless he had seen in death the commencement of a new life? Moses “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of *Christ* greater riches than the

treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense *of the reward*" (Heb 11:24-26). Job exclaimed, "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25-26). David avowed, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but *God* is the strength of my heart, and *my portion forever*" (Psa 73:25-26).

What is true here in the general pertains also unto particulars. Not only was God's dealings with His people in Old Testament times substantially the same as those with His people under the New Testament era, but in many, many details too. So instead of seeking to pit Scripture against Scripture (as the "Dispensationalists" are constantly doing), let us rather compare passage with passage, and note the blessed harmony which exists between the two Testaments. For example, do we read "He believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for *righteousness*" (Gen 15:6), then in Acts 13:39, we are also told, "By him all that *believe* are *justified*" (pronounced righteous). Did God say to His people of old, "Ye are strangers and sojourners" (Lev 25:23), so does He now address them, "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims" (1Pe 2:11). Are we told that "The LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of *his inheritance*" (Deu 32:9), Paul also prayed that we might know what is "the riches of the glory of *his inheritance in the saints*" (Eph 1:18).

In Deuteronomy 33:3, we are told, "All his saints are in *thy hand*," while in John 10:28, Christ says of His sheep, "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of *my hand*." "Yield yourselves unto the LORD" (2Ch 30:8). Compare with this, "Yield yourselves unto God" (Rom 6:13). "And my God *put into mine heart* to gather together the nobles" (Neh 7:5). Compare with this, "For it is God which *worketh in you* both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phi 2:13). "Thou gavest also thy good spirit *to instruct them*" (Neh 9:20). Compare with this, "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will *guide you into all truth*" (Joh 16:13). "I will *behold thy face* in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with *thy likeness*" (Psa 17:15). Compare with this, "We shall be *like him*; for we shall *see him* as he is" (1Jo 3:2). Read carefully Psalm 34:12-16 and compare 1 Peter 3:10-12.

"I will cry unto God most high; unto God that *performeth all things for me*" (Psa 57:2). Compare, "But our sufficiency is of God" (2Co 3:5). "Men shall be blessed *in him*" (Psa 72:17). Compare, "Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ*" (Eph 1:3). Read carefully Psalm 89:30-33 and compare Hebrews 12:8-11. "For there the LORD *commanded* the blessing, even *life for evermore*" (Psa 133:3). Compare, "The Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his *commandment is life everlasting*" (John 12:49-50). "Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places" (Psa 135:6). Compare "Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph 1:11). "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with *strength in my soul*" (Psa 138:3). Compare, "Strengthened with might by his Spirit *in the inner man*" (Eph 3:16).

Before pointing out some more of the numerous parallelisms between the Old and New Testaments, let us here anticipate an objection. While there be many close comparisons

between the earlier and the later Scriptures, yet there are more numerous points of dissimilarity—how are the latter to be explained? In meeting this objection, let us begin by noting that Christians are said to “*Walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham*” (Rom 4:12). How, we ask, could they do so if they had a *different* rule of faith to walk by? To this it may be answered, Abraham circumcised all the male members of his household (Gen 17:23). Ought we to do the same? If we answer, No, then the objector imagines he has scored a victory. That is his mistake, arising from failure to distinguish between *two distinct kinds of divine laws*. This brings us to a point of considerable importance and one upon which there is widespread ignorance today. We ask the reader to give his best attention to what follows.

The divine commands and precepts recorded in Scripture need to be classified under two heads—moral and positive—a distinction well-known among God’s people in days gone by when they were better instructed. Moral duties are those which pertain prior to any command to perform them, existing in the very nature of the case. Positive duties are binding only because of the divine command and would not be duties at all did not God enjoin them. Hence, there is a *double* responsibility resting on us to discharge the former, but only a single one to discharge the latter. For example, the worship of God is a *moral* duty, something which in the very nature of the case we owe unto God—as His creatures, as the recipients of His bounties. But to worship God in a certain place (the temple), after a prescribed order, at specified times, were *positive* duties which God required of the nation of Israel under the old covenant. Again—to believe in Christ and surrender to His Lordship is a *moral* duty devolving on all who hear the Gospel, whereas baptism is a *positive* duty required of His disciples.

“Positive laws are taken to be such as have no reason for them in themselves, nothing in the matter of them is taken from the things themselves commanded, but do depend merely and solely on the sovereign will and pleasure of God. Such were the laws and institutions of the sacrifices of old, and such are those which concern the sacraments and other things of the like nature under the New Testament. Moral laws are such as have the reasons of them taken from the nature of the things themselves, required in them. For they are good, from their respect to the nature of God Himself, *and* from that nature and order of all things which He hath placed in the creation. So that this sort of law is but declarative of the absolute goodness of what they require. The other is constitutive of it, as unto some certain ends. Laws positive, as they are occasionally given, so they are esteemed alterable at pleasure. Being fixed by mere will and prerogative, without respect to anything that should make them necessary, antecedently to their being enacted, they may by the same authority at any time be taken away and abolished. Such, I say, are they in their own nature and as to any firmitude that they have from their own subject matter. But with respect to God’s determination, positive divine laws may become eventually unalterable.

“And this difference is there between legal and evangelical institutions. The laws of both are positive only, equally proceeding from sovereign will and pleasure, and in their own natures equally alterable. But to the former, God had in His purpose fixed a determinative time and season wherein they should expire, or be altered by His authority. To the latter, He hath attached a perpetuity and unchangeableness during the state and condition of His church in this world. The other sort of laws are perpetual and unalterable

in themselves, so far as they are of that sort that is moral. For although a law of that kind may especially enjoin such circumstances as may be changed and varied, as did the whole Decalogue in the commonwealth of Israel, yet so far as it is moral, that is, as its commands or prohibitions are necessary emergencies, or expressions of the good or evil of the things it commands or forbids, it is invariable" (John Owen, 1616-1683).

"By positive laws of God we mean such institutions as depend only on the sovereign will and pleasure of God, and which He might not have enjoined and yet His nature has remained the same. Such was the command given to Adam not to eat the forbidden fruit, for we can easily conceive that some other test of obedience might have been given and which, if it had been given, would have been equally binding. And all the ceremonial precepts under the Mosaic dispensation were certainly of this description, for they have long since been actually abrogated by Christ, the Law-Giver of the Church" (Ashbel Green's Lectures on the Shorter Catechism, 1762-1848).

If the above be carefully pondered, the very real distinction between moral and positive duties ought not to be difficult to grasp. The former are manifestations of the *nature* of God, the latter are expressive of His *will*. The former proceed from God's goodness and righteousness, the latter issue from His absolute sovereignty. The former are designed for *our* good, the latter are for the enforcement of *His* authority. The former are necessarily unchanging, the latter may be rescinded when and as the Law-Giver pleases. These two diverse elements may combine in a single institution. That is seen in *the holy Sabbath*—it is a bounden moral duty that some part of our time be set apart and dedicated unto God as it is for our own good that we periodically rest from all work, but it is by a *positive* decree God makes known how much time and *which* day of the week shall be sanctified to His worship. The moral duty of the Sabbath is permanent and perpetual, but the particular day on which it falls may be changed by God as He pleases.

The natural pre-eminence of the man above the woman ensues from the order of creation, in that the man was first made and the woman for the man, as the apostle argues in 1 Timothy 2:12-13, and therefore it is the moral duty of the wife to be subject to her husband. In like manner, the original creation of only one man and one woman gave the natural or moral law of marriage—polygamy and fornication becoming the violation of the law of nature. A divine precept given for the due exercise of this principle *completes* the law of it, with the addition of a *formal* obligation. The moral nature with which we are now endowed inclines unto actions suitable thereto. The command of God concerning the regulation thereof transforms it into a formal law.

"The LORD *will perfect* that which concerneth me" (Psa 138:8). Compare, "He which hath begun a good work in you *will perform it*" (Phi 1:6). "*Draw me*, we will run after thee" (Song 1:4). Compare, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me *draw him*" (Joh 6:44). "Thou art all fair, my love; there is *no spot in thee*" (Song 4:7). Compare, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son *cleanseth us from all sin*" (1Jo 1:7). "How beautiful are *thy feet with shoes*, O prince's daughter!" (Song 7:1). Compare, "And your feet *shod with* the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph 6:15). "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa 64:6). Compare, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom 7:18). "That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her

consolations" (Isa 66:11). Compare, "Desire the sincere *milk* of the word" (1Pe 2:2). "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer 31:3). Compare, "Beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation" (2Th 2:13). "From me is thy fruit found" (Hos 14:8). Compare, "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (Joh 15:5). "The just shall live by his faith" (Hab 2:4). Compare, "We walk by faith" (2Co 5:7). "I will strengthen them *in the LORD*" (Zec 10:12). Compare, "Be strong *in the Lord*" (Eph 6:10).

Above we have given twenty-five examples of the minute harmony which exists between the Old and New Testaments. The moral teachings of the one are harmonious with the moral teachings of the other. The promises given to the patriarchs were made to them not as Jews, *but as believers* and therefore the spiritual contents of them belong unto believers today. The promises given to carnal Israel are the legitimate property of the spiritual Israel now. The moral laws and precepts given under the old economy are equally binding upon those who live under the new covenant. The positive (including the "ceremonial") laws which God gave throughout the Old Testament, and which were either *special* injunctions to particular individuals or *typical* institutions which were imposed "until the time of reformation," (Heb 9:10) are *not* binding on Christians today.

In Genesis 22:2, we hear God bidding Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac...and offer him there for a burnt offering," whereas in Genesis 22:12, we find Him saying, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him." With as much propriety might seducers of souls say that *these* two commandments "can only be reconciled by rightly dividing the word and placing them in separate dispensations," as to make the other arbitrary divisions of Scripture which they do. As well might they say that the book of Acts "does not belong to *us* because God does not require Christians to remain on an endangered ship and refuse to get into the lifeboats" See Act 27:31, as to argue that Matthew's Gospel "is not for us" because when the Lord is pleased to grant physical healing to one of His elect today, he is no longer required to go and show himself "to the priest" (Mat 8:4).

Our unwelcome task (for the present, at any rate) is completed. From what has been before us in these papers we now draw up the following bill of indictment against the "Dispensationalists." 1. Their starting-point is wrong. They begin at the Garden of Eden instead of going back to the everlasting covenant. 2. They rob God's children of many of their Father's precious promises. 3. They force into 2 Timothy 2:15 a meaning which its context in nowise warrants. 4. They are all at sea concerning the mystical Body of Christ, failing to see that the Church of God is commensurate with the entire election of grace. 5. They introduce the utmost confusion into the study of prophecy by ignoring the fundamental distinction between carnal or national Israel and the spiritual "Israel of God." 6. They ignore the grace of God in Old Testament times and teach the monstrous error that under the Mosaic economy sinners were saved by their own doings. 7. They repudiate the moral law of God as a rule of life for the Christian today. 8. They invidiously seek to pit Scripture against Scripture, instead of showing their perfect unity and lovely harmony. 9. They split up the one predestinated, adopted, redeemed, and regenerated family of God into various groups and cliques, many of them going so far as to insist that the father of the faithful will have no part in the inheritance of many of his children. 10. They are woefully

ignorant of the vast difference there is between the commands and precepts of God which are special and peculiar and those which are general and universal, between those which are evanescent and those which are perpetual, between ceremonial and moral duties. Thus they are perverters of God's truth, enemies of the faith, and their preachings and writings should be shunned by all who desire the *pure* milk of the Word.

N.B: God willing, these articles will be followed by a shorter series on "The Covenants."

## THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

### *Carson on Esther (Part Six)*

We may recognize the hand of Providence in overcoming the fears of Esther when solicited to approach the king in behalf of the Jews. By going uncalled into the inner court, she would subject herself to death by law. Judging from the manners of our own country, we may think that her risk was small. But in estimating her danger, we ought to take into account the caprice of despots in countries where polygamy prevails. This moment they devote to destruction the object on which they doted the moment before. Besides, Esther had reason to apprehend an alienation of affection or at least a coldness, as she had not been called into his presence for thirty days previously. Here, indeed, is another providential circumstance that ought to excite our wonder. Whatever was the reason why the king had so long neglected her, the thing was undoubtedly a part of the divine plan, that Esther's danger might be increased, her faith put to the severer trial, and His own power more fully manifested in obtaining for her a gracious reception. Let the children of God look at this and take a lesson. When He calls them to arduous duties, instead of smoothing the way and removing the appearance of difficulty or danger, He often, by His providence, throws obstacles in their way. A wife, in following Christ, instead of delighting her husband, may give him the greatest offence. Children may make their very parents their enemies by their obedience to their heavenly Father. Instead of inducing His disciples to discover His laws and ordinances by the prospects of greater acceptance with the world, He promises them nothing but ridicule and hatred. Instead of flattering every instance of obedience with additional honours and rewards from men, the discovery of the laws and institutions of Christ's kingdom may be followed by the loss of all things. God will not bribe His people to serve Him. He will not secure their allegiance by hiding them from danger. They must give their life, if He calls for it, or give up the hope of the heavenly inheritance. They must count the cost and be willing to incur it. They must take up the cross and follow Him. They are not to fear him who has power to kill the body, but rather Him who can punish both soul and body in hell forever. *Christ must be obeyed in the prospect of every danger.* He that loves his life shall lose life eternal. Yet, in general, it may be observed, that when Christians are made willing to face every danger for Christ's sake, the greatest real dangers that they may have dreaded are turned away from them.

When God has tried them sufficiently, *He removes the trial*. Esther's apparent danger was heightened by her long neglect. Yet, after all, her God procured her acceptance with the king.

It is absurd in any at this time to underrate the trial of Esther. She must herself, doubtless, have been a better judge of the extent of her danger than we can now possibly be and she estimated it so highly that at first she altogether refused to comply with the request even of Mordecai, to whom she had in all other things paid the deference due to a father. "All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days" (Est 4:11). Her life, then, was actually forfeited by the act and to spare her was the pardon of a criminal condemned to die. Besides, she must, in this approach to the king, appear in a new character, as a captive, as a Jewess, as one of these already given up to death in the grant to Haman. In such circumstances she might well be apprehensive that by her death he might make way for a successor. What trust is to be put in the affections of a capricious despot? What confidence is to be placed in the unfeeling man who could give up the beautiful Vashti? Might not some reasons of state operate to the destruction of Esther?

Her apprehensions of the magnitude of her danger was evident in the preparations with which she thought it necessary to approach him. All the Jews in Shushan fasted three days, night and day, before she ventured on the dangerous service. [The Jews still, superstitiously, observe this "fast," called the Fast of Purim. A.W.P.]. It is also evident in the words in which she expressed her determination, that having counted the cost, she was prepared to give her life as a sacrifice for her friends, "If I perish, I perish" (Est 4:16). She consented not to undertake this mission till she overcame the fear of death.

What a blessing is marriage according to the institution of God! Was she truly a wife who could not trust her life with her husband? Better to be the wife of a Christian peasant, than the queen of a Persian despot. In the midst of all her regal honours, what happiness could Esther enjoy in her situation? Yet with what preposterous artifice did she and her guardian court the dangerous height! The prospect of wretchedness will not deter the fallen human mind from seeking the glories of this world, even at the expense of the soul. Man is a strange compound of meanness and of pride.

Let us glance at the arguments by which Mordecai prevailed on the queen to undertake to intercede for the Jews. They are such as were calculated to produce the desired effect and were, no doubt, suggested by a gracious Providence. The faith manifested by Mordecai in the divine protection, approaches to that of Abraham himself. If, then, faith is the gift of God, there is no doubt that Providence directed the resolution of Esther. "Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Est 4:13-14). Notwithstanding the greatness of the

danger, Mordecai appears confident that his God would raise up deliverance from some quarter. He rightly interprets the intention of Providence in raising her to royalty for this very occasion. Here we have a beautiful example of the view of Providence entertained at that time by the people of God. Mordecai knew well the events that led to the exaltation of Esther. He knew that she was raised in the ordinary course of human affairs. He knew that her exaltation was owing to the divorce of Vashti and to her own surpassing beauty. An atheist would have no difficulty in accounting for it. Yet Mordecai believed also that *God* raised her and justly concluded from the present danger that His purpose in raising her was for the very purpose of interceding for the Jews. At all events, he concluded, that as she had it in her power to make an effort for their preservation with probable hopes of success, should she refuse to make trial of her influence, she might expect that God would signally punish her and save His people in some other way.

Let all Christians learn from this not to be backward in using their influence to protect the people of God and serve the interests of His kingdom. If they hide their face, God will provide other instruments and they shall not be without chastisement. If from apprehensions of danger they decline any service that the providence of God lays before them, the very thing that is dreaded may come upon them and others may be honoured to do the work in safety. "Thou therefore," says God to Jeremiah, "gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee" (Jer 1:17-19).

By the Gospel, the elect of God are to be saved from a greater destruction than that which threatened the Jews in the time of Esther. The Gospel is to be spread over the world by the means of the disciples of Christ. Let them therefore brave danger, and shame, and loss, in publishing the glad tidings of salvation. Why have eighteen centuries passed since the giving of the command to preach the Gospel to all nations, while many have not yet heard of the name of Jesus? The Lord's time indeed may not be come, but this does not excuse the indolence of His servants. The commandment is come, which is the only thing with which we are concerned. The Lord will, no doubt, raise up instruments to effect His purpose in the proper time, but this will not make up the loss or excuse the neglect of His slumbering servants.

By the institutions of Christ, His children are to be nourished and advanced in the knowledge of Him. But the nature of *His* kingdom is yet little understood and every one of His ordinances, having been changed in Babylon, still remain incrustated with superstition and human inventions. The children of God, then, are deprived of much of that wholesome nourishment which the pure ordinances of God are calculated to yield. Let allegiance to Jesus and the love of His people influence His disciples, who know His will, to zeal in making it known to others. Let no mistaken complaisance, with respect to the corruptions of divine institutions, prevent them from denouncing everything contrary to the Word of God. Let not the emolument of office, the reproach of the world, or deference to the prejudice of God's people, induce them to practice what is not taught in Scripture or to



decline adopting everything enjoined by the authority of Christ. Has He not Himself said, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Ye are my disciples if ye do whatsoever I command you."

Let not Christians who know the law and ordinances of Jesus fear to exert themselves in their defense. The corruptions of the ordinances of Christ are sanctioned by so many prejudices and strengthened by so many interests, that Christians in general are irritated when they are called to inquire. The wise virgins have laid themselves down to slumber and they are peevish with those who attempt to awake them. If they do arise for a moment, it is usually to plead for a little more sleep, and to remonstrate against the violence and cruelty of the untimely intruders. He who will revive all the ordinances of Christ and denounce everything human in religion, must be prepared for a kind of martyrdom even from Christians. This is much more painful than the enmity of the world, but even this he is not to fear. If believers, from the apprehension of becoming unpopular even with the churches of Christ, hide their knowledge or decline to employ their talents according to their opportunities, let them learn from the lesson of Mordecai to Esther, that God can do *His* work without them, and that in some way they may expect the divine displeasure. There cannot be a doubt that a Christian consults his good, upon the whole, by boldly and unreservedly doing the will of God. The more he shows himself dead to censure and to praise, the more he disregards gain and loss when they stand in the way of duty—the more he will have reason to rejoice in the end. Let his ambitions always be fired with the hope of ruling over ten cities. Esther, to save the people of God, flung herself at the feet of the despot, at the hazard of her life, but instead of being put to death, Esther met with a most gracious reception. A day will come at last, when obedience to the most disagreeable of Christ's commandments will appear great gain.

We may also perceive here the good effect of wholesome admonition on a stumbling servant of God. The fear of man had prevailed over the love of her brethren in the mind of Esther. But faithful admonition kept her from falling. How forcible are right words! From the suggestion of Mordecai, it appears that though the royal decree consigned the whole Jewish race to death, yet that she counted on safety in the palace as the wife of the king. But Mordecai undeceives her on this and took away her flattering hopes. By declining to do duty, she put herself from under the divine protection and engaged the displeasure of Providence to seek her out for destruction. Notwithstanding all her confidence in her situation, he denounces death to her and her father's house if she declined the dangerous service. It is always under some false confidence that the children of God decline to obey Him. To expose them is, by the divine blessing, the means of recovering the stumbling individual. Let not the servants of Jesus perceive one another going astray or halting on the Christian race without endeavoring to recover them. By the words of Mordecai, through the divine blessing, Esther was brought back from a state of abject timidity to the confidence and boldness of a martyr. "If I perish, I perish!" Such ought to be the resolution of all God's servants. They should count the cost and be willing to part with property, fame, popularity, friends, relatives, life, for the sake of the Lord Jesus. "If any man come to me," says Christ, "and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Luk 14:26-27). An

apostle says, "As Christ laid down his life for us, we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren."

An incidental remark or an illusive application of the words in which Esther expressed her devotedness, may not be useless. People in a certain state of mind are represented as saying, "If I perish, I will perish at the feet of Jesus!" Surely there can be no similarity between the situation of a person approaching a despot, contrary to law, at the hazard of life and that of one approaching the merciful Redeemer, by the command of God, with the assurance of pardon. There is no possibility of perishing at the feet of Jesus. Men perish through unbelief and in refusing to come to Him. "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (Joh 5:40). Whosoever comes to Jesus shall not be cast out.

From the conduct of Mordecai on this occasion, we may see that confidence in God *does not preclude the use of means*. Mordecai had immediate recourse to the influence of Esther, though, it is evident, he ultimately relied on the power and providence of God. It is obvious, from his observations that he expected preservation from God through the use of means, even had Esther declined the intercession. "If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place" (Est 4:14). Let us learn from this that as God has promised to protect us and provide for us, it is *through the means of His appointment*, vigilance, prudence, and industry, that we are to look for these blessings.

## THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

### 4. *Its Basis*

In our last article, we contemplated the *problem* which is presented in the justifying or pronouncing righteous one who is a flagrant violator of the law of God. Some may have been surprised at the introduction of such a term as "problem." As there are many in the ranks of the ungodly who feel that the world *owes* them a living, so there are not a few Pharisees in Christendom who suppose it is *due* them that at death their Creator should take them to heaven. But different far is it with one who has been enlightened and convicted by the Holy Spirit, so that he sees himself to be a filthy wretch, a vile rebel against God. Such a one will ask, seeing that the Word of God so plainly declares, "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination" (Rev 21:27), how is it possible that *I* can ever gain admission into the heavenly Jerusalem? How can it be that one so completely devoid of righteousness as I am, and so filled with unrighteousness, should ever be pronounced just by a holy God?

Various attempts have been made by unbelieving minds to solve this problem. Some have reasoned that if they now turn over a new leaf, thoroughly reform their lives and henceforth walk in obedience to God's law, they shall be approved before the divine Tribunal. This scheme, reduced to simple terms, is salvation by our own works. But such a scheme is utterly untenable and salvation by such means is absolutely impossible. The

works of a reformed sinner cannot be the meritorious or efficacious cause of his salvation, and that for the following reasons. First, no provision is made for his previous failures. Suppose that henceforth I never again transgress God's law, what is to atone for my past sins? Second, a fallen and sinful creature cannot produce that which is perfect, and nothing short of perfection is acceptable to God. Third, were it possible for us to be saved by our own works, then the sufferings and death of Christ were needless. Fourth, salvation by our own merits would entirely eclipse the glory of divine grace.

Others suppose this problem may be solved by an appeal to the bare *mercy* of God. But mercy is not an attribute that overshadows all the other divine perfections—justice, truth, and holiness are also operative in the salvation of God's elect. The law is not set aside, but honored and magnified. The truth of God in His solemn threats is not sullied, but faithfully carried out. The divine righteousness is not flouted, but vindicated. One of God's perfections is not exercised to the injury of any of the others, but all of them shine forth with equal clearness in the plan which divine wisdom devised. Mercy at the expense of justice over-ridden would not suit the divine government, and justice enforced to the exclusion of mercy would not befit the divine character. The problem which no finite intelligence could solve was how *both* might be exercised in the sinner's salvation.

A striking example of *mercy helpless* before the claims of the law occurs in Daniel 6. There we find that Darius, the king of Babylon, was induced by his nobles to sign a decree that any subject within his kingdom who should pray, or "ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days" (verse 7) save the king himself, should be cast into the den of lions. Daniel knowing this, nevertheless, continued to pray before God as hitherto. Whereupon the nobles acquainted Darius with his violation of the royal edict, which "according to the law of the Medes and Persians *altereth not*," (verse 8) and demanded his punishment. Now Daniel stood high in the king's favour and he greatly desired to show clemency unto him, so he "set his heart on Daniel *to deliver him*: and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him" (verse 14). But he found no way out of the difficulty—the law *must* be honored, so Daniel was cast into the lion's den.

An equally striking example of *law helpless* in the presence of mercy is found in John 8. There we read of a woman taken in the act of adultery. The scribes and Pharisees apprehended her and set her before Christ, charging her with the crime and reminding the Saviour that "Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned" (verse 5). She was unquestionably guilty and her accusers were determined that the penalty of the law should be inflicted upon her. The Lord turned to them and said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (verse 7), and they, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, leaving the adulteress alone with Christ. Turning to her, He asked, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" She replied, "No man, Lord," and He answered, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." (verses 10-11)

The two adverse principles are seen *operating in conjunction* in Luke 15. The "father" could not have the (prodigal) son at his table clad in the rags of the far country, but he could go out and meet him in those rags. He could fall on his neck and kiss him in those rags—it was blessedly characteristic of his *grace* so to do. But to seat him at his table in

garments suited to the swine-troughs would not be fitting. But the grace which brought the father out to the prodigal “reigned” through that *righteousness* which brought the prodigal in to the father’s house. It had not been “grace” had the father waited till the prodigal decked himself out in suitable garments of his own providing, nor would it have been “righteousness” to bring him to his table in his rags. Both grace *and* righteousness shone forth in their respective beauty when the father said, “Bring forth *the best robe*, and *put it on him*” (verse 22).

It is through Christ and His atonement that the justice and mercy of God, His righteousness and grace, meet in the justifying of a believing sinner. In Christ is found the solution to every problem which sin has raised. In the cross of Christ, *every* attribute of God shines forth in its meridian splendor. In the satisfaction which the Redeemer offered unto God, every claim of the law, whether preceptive or penal, has been fully met. God has been infinitely more honored by the obedience of the last Adam than He was dishonored by the disobedience of the first Adam. The justice of God was infinitely more magnified when its awful sword smote the beloved Son, than had every member of the human race burned forever and ever in the lake of fire. There is infinitely more efficacy in the blood of Christ to cleanse, than there is in sin to befoul. There is infinitely more merit in Christ’s one perfect righteousness than there is demerit in the combined unrighteousness of all the ungodly. Well may we exclaim, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal 6:14).

But while many are agreed that the atoning death of Christ is the meritorious cause of His peoples’ salvation, there are now few indeed who can give any clear Scriptural *explanation of the way and manner by which* the work of Christ secures the justification of all who believe. Hence the need for a clear and full statement thereon. Hazy ideas at this point are both dishonouring to God and unsettling to our peace. It is of first importance that the Christian should obtain a clear understanding of the *ground on which* God pardons his sins and grants him a title to the heavenly inheritance. Perhaps this may best be set forth under three words—substitution, identification, imputation. As their Surety and Sponsor, Christ entered the place occupied by His people under the law, so identifying Himself with them as to be their Head and Representative, and as such He assumed and discharged all their legal obligations. Their liabilities being transferred to Him, His merits being transferred to them.

The Lord Jesus has wrought out for His people a perfect righteousness by obeying the law in thought and word and deed, and this righteousness is imputed to them, reckoned to their account. The Lord Jesus has suffered the penalty of the law in their stead and through His atoning death they are cleansed from all guilt. As *creatures*, they were under obligations to obey Gods’ law; as *criminals* (transgressors), they were under the death-sentence of the law. Therefore, to fully meet our liabilities and discharge our debts it was necessary that our Substitute should both obey and die. The shedding of Christ’s blood blotted out our sins, but it did not, of itself, provide the “best robe” for us. To silence the accusations of the law against us so that there is now “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” is simply a *negative* blessing—something more was required, namely, a *positive* righteousness, the keeping of the law, so that we might be entitled to its blessing and reward.

In Old Testament times, the name under which the Messiah and Mediator was foretold is, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer 23:6). It was plainly predicted by Daniel that He should come here "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to *bring in everlasting righteousness*" (Dan 9:24). Isaiah announced, "Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" (Isa 45:24-25). And again, he represents each of the redeemed exclaiming, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isa 61:10).

In Romans 4:6-8 we read, "David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Here we are shown the *inseparability* of the two things—God imputing "righteousness" and God not imputing "sins." The two are never divided. Unto whom God imputes not sin, He imputes righteousness and unto whom He imputes righteousness, He imputes not sin. But the particular point which we are most anxious for the reader to grasp is, *whose* "righteousness" is it that God imputes or reckons to the account of the one who believes? The answer is, that righteousness which was wrought out by our Surety, that obedience to the law which was vicariously rendered by our Sponsor, even "the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (2Pe 1:1). This righteousness is not only "unto all" but also "*upon* all them that believe" (Rom 3:22). It is called "the righteousness *of God*" because it was the righteousness of the God-man Mediator, just as in Acts 20:28 His blood is call the *blood of God*.

The "righteousness of God" which is mentioned so frequently in the Roman epistle refers *not* to the essential righteousness of the divine character, for *that* cannot possibly be imputed or legally transferred to any creature. When we are told in Romans 10:3 that the Jews were "ignorant of God's righteousness," it most certainly does not mean they were in the dark concerning the divine rectitude or that they knew nothing about God's justice, but it signifies that they were unenlightened as to the righteousness which the God-man Mediator had vicariously wrought out for His people. This is abundantly clear from the remainder of that verse, "and going about to establish *their own righteousness*"—not their own rectitude or justice, but performing works by which they hoped to merit acceptance with God. So tightly did they cling to this delusion, they "submitted not themselves unto the righteousness of God," that is, they refused to turn from their self-righteousness and put their trust in the obedience and sufferings of the incarnate Son of God.

"I would explain what we mean by the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Sometimes the expression is taken by our divines in a larger sense, for the imputation of all that Christ did and suffered for our redemption whereby we are free from guilt, and stand righteous in the sight of God; and so implies the imputation both of Christ's satisfaction and obedience. But here I intend it in a stricter sense, for the imputation of that righteousness or moral goodness that consists in the obedience of Christ. And by that obedience being imputed to us is meant no other than this, that that righteousness of Christ is accepted for us and admitted instead of that perfect inherent righteousness that ought to

be in ourselves: Christ's perfect obedience shall be reckoned to our account, so that we shall have the benefit of it, as though we had performed it ourselves, and so we suppose, that a title to eternal life is given us as the reward of this righteousness" (Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758).

The one passage which casts the clearest light upon that aspect of justification which we are now considering is 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Here we have the counter imputations—of our sins to Christ, of His righteousness to us. As the teaching of this verse is of such vital moment, let us endeavor to consider its terms the more closely. *How* was Christ "made sin for us"? By *God imputing to Him* our disobedience or our transgressions of the law. In like manner, we are made "the righteousness of God in him" (in Christ, not in ourselves) *by God imputing to us* Christ's obedience, His fulfilling the precepts of the law for us.

As Christ "knew no sin" by inward defilement or personal commission, so we "knew" or had no righteousness of our own by inward conformity to the law or by personal obedience to it. As Christ was "made sin" by having our sins placed to His account or charged upon Him in a judicial way, and as it was not by any criminal conduct of His own that He was "made sin," so it is not by any pious activities of our own that we become "righteous." Christ was not "made sin" by the infusion of depravity, nor are we "made righteous" by the infusion of holiness. Though personally holy, our Sponsor did, by entering our law-place, render Himself officially liable to the wrath of God; and so though personally unholy, we are, by virtue of our legal identification with Christ, entitled to the favor of God. As the consequence of Christ's being "made sin for us" was that "the LORD laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:6), so the consequence of Christ's obedience being reckoned to our account is that God lays righteousness "*upon* all them that believe" (Rom 3:22). As our sins were the judicial ground of the sufferings of Christ, by which sufferings He satisfied justice, so Christ's righteousness is the judicial ground of our acceptance with God, by which our pardon is an act of justice.

Notice carefully that in 2 Corinthians 5:21, it is *God* who "made" or legally constituted Christ to be "sin for us," though as Hebrews 10:7 shows, the Son gladly acquiesced therein. "He was made sin by imputation: the sins of all His people were transferred unto Him, laid upon Him, and placed to His account and having them upon Him He was treated by the justice of God as if He had been not only a sinner, but a mass of sin: for to be made sin is a stronger expression than to be made a sinner" (John Gill, 1697-1771). "That we might be made the righteousness of God in him" signifies to be legally constituted righteous before God—justified. "It is a righteousness 'in Him,' in Christ and not in ourselves, and therefore must mean the righteousness of Christ—so called, because it is wrought by Christ, who is God over all, the true God and eternal life" (Ibid.).

The same counter-exchange which has been before us in 2 Corinthians 5:21 is found again in Galatians 3:13-14, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." As the Surety of His people, Christ was "made under the law" (Gal 4:4), stood in their law-place and stead,

and having all their sins imputed to Him and the law finding them all upon Him, condemned Him for them and so the justice of God delivered Him up to the accursed death of the cross. The purpose, as well as the consequence, of this was, "That the blessing of Abraham might come *on* the Gentiles." The "blessing of Abraham" (as Rom 4 shows) was justification by faith through the righteousness of Christ.

"Upon a Life I did not live,  
Upon a Death I did not die;  
Another's death, Another's life  
I'd rest my soul eternally."

## GOATS

It is our steadily deepening conviction that the "goats" of Matthew 25:32-33, 41-46 refer not to the openly wicked and profane, but to those who pose as the real children of God, that is, to *professing Christians*. We wrote to a Brother in Australia who is engaged in the rearing of goats, and is making a close study of their characteristics and ways. What he says confirms our opinion, for in many respects these animals adumbrate and illustrate the religious goats. We quote the leading points of interest from his letter, adding a few comments thereon.

"From the beginning they were chosen (by a woman!) as being the most suitable instruments *to deceive* a blind and fleshly child of God (Gen 27:9)"—the *first* reference to "goats" in Scripture! "They were taken 'from the flock'," intimating they typified those associated with the true people of God. "But why not a lamb! Ah, even one who was blind and could not 'see afar off' could not be deceived into believing Jacob was Esau if he had been covered with the skins and wool of a lamb!"

The next reference to "goats" is in Genesis 30:32, where we find Jacob proposing to Laban that he should receive the "brown" cattle and sheep (generally called "black sheep") and the "spotted and speckled among the goats" as his remuneration, upon which Brother Connerton asks, "Is not this the 'hire' chosen by shepherds who are *not right with God*?" Sad to say, it is—typifying those backslidden servants of God who are content to minister unto and receive their salary from a flock of "black sheep" and "speckled goats," or white-washed worldlings.

Next we read, "They took Joseph's coat, and killed *a kid of the goats*, and dipped the coat in the blood" (Gen 37:31). "This is parallel in principle with, I may almost say in detail, with Genesis 27:9." True, for the sons of Jacob did not propose to deceive their father—who was out of communion with God—by dipping Joseph's coat in the blood of a lamb! Ah, is not God just in permitting *us* to be deceived by the "goats" when we are out of touch with Himself?

“Most solemn is Exodus 36:14.” The tabernacle—type of Christ and His people in union with Him—was covered with the skins of “goats,” *over which* was a covering of rams’ skins (Exo 36:19). “Our true character, and *His also*, is concealed from the world by the ‘goats.’ How awe-inspiring to notice them taking cover under ‘the rams’ skins *dyed red*’.” There is nothing which so hides the true character of Christianity on earth as the worldly and fleshly lives of empty professors who claim to be under the blood of Christ.

“Ezekiel 34:18 (see previous verse) is a perfect picture of what goats do. Pastures become ‘goat sick’—where goats are left in green pastures, they afterward become barren (whereas sheep *improve* them!) and nothing—including the goat himself—will eat there. If you chain him, he will cry all day and trample it down, and sooner starve than eat it. They will mark all trees, especially fruit trees, climbing up and breaking off the branches. Scientists tell us that great deserts in the East owe their existence to the goat, which once fed on them, but not a blade of grass nor tree is now to be seen there.” How like thousands of “churches” today, where the Spirit has been “quenched” by a preponderance of “goats” (unregenerate) in the membership, and now all that is there is spiritual desolation.

“Goats are intolerant and uncharitable in their conduct towards other creatures, and are extremely selfish. I have seen a big basin of bran-mash given to some goats and the strongest stand over it, eat his or her fill and then put a front hoof in the remainder, or top it over in a most brutal manner; you may scold or flog, but it is of no avail. The next strongest one does the same.” So it is with the religious goats; *they* have no relish for the ministry of a true servant of God, and will do all in their power to prejudice *others* against him.

“Goats are fickle and fastidious. To get the best results from goats and obtain from them the most milk, they must be given *a great variety of food*, for they quickly tire of one thing and will refuse to eat it. Starve? Oh no! they will eat just sufficient for their own personal needs, but the little extra which goes to make milk for *you* is left, or rather, is pushed scornfully aside.” Thus it is with the religious goats. They must be entertained with a constantly changing program—it is the opposite with sheep. They never tire of the green pastures! So too the professor is greedy in devouring all he hears, but no fruit is yielded for God or good unto His people.

“Goats will not mix with sheep. There is no record extant of their ever becoming mixed. We have a mule, which is half donkey and half horse; a “jennie” which is half horse and half she-ass; and many other monsters, such as half cat and half rabbit; but half goat and half sheep? No—*that is impossible*.” How striking! God has drawn a line of demarcation between His people and the children of the devil, which no human device can obliterate. God’s “sheep” and Satan’s “goats” may associate together, but there cannot be any real fellowship between them, “What communion hath light with darkness”!

“The coat of the goat is both wool and hair. The wool is very valuable and is used to make expensive shawls for ‘noble’ ladies. His hair is the well-known ‘mohair.’ The poor sheep produces only the common wool. The skin of the sheep is just ‘basil,’ the poorest of leather, used almost exclusively to make aprons for wagon-drivers. But the goat’s, why his skin is the famous ‘chami’ leather and is considered par excellence. Where are the gloves



to compare with *kid* gloves?" How this illustrates *man's* respective estimates of real Christians and showy professors—the one is despised, the other highly esteemed.

"Goats do not like water and to wash one is dangerous. I have done it and even on a hot day they get cramp in the legs. A shower of rain is enough to drive them scampering for shelter, even from the most tempting meal." How startling is this fact. There is nothing which empty professors detest more than experimental holiness. Preach to them of the imperative need *for their* fleshly ways to be cleansed, and they are at once offended. It is the last thing they want to hear about. How different with the sheep, who love the water!

"Goats are mostly 'kept up' here, chained to blackberry bushes, because they are the only animal which will eat them down. The 'thorns,' symbol of the curse, disappear shortly after mister goat has been chained to them, and are never seen again until the goat is removed or dies, then they come up worse than ever. He eats the tops off level with the ground, *but* the roots are still there, and spread, so that when his activities cease, they come up ten times worse." So it is with most of modern evangelism. Thousands of the unsaved are inclined to make a profession, and are hailed as "converts" (delivered from the curse), but "the latter end is worse with them than the beginning" (2Pe 2:20). How often there is outward reformation (the thorn bush leveled with the ground), but no miracle of grace wrought *within*—the root of evil more active than ever.

"Goats are extremely devout, spending much time upon their knees. They always get down and go under a fence. If on a chain, no matter how long it is, they will get on their knees and strain hard to reach something beyond them." It is because of their religiousness that empty professors deceive so many—very often themselves included. It is not praying which proves I am a child of God, but the getting of real and miraculous answers to prayer which evidences I have the ear of my heavenly Father. How few can endure *that* test!

"They are fond of company, no matter what sort it is, for they *hate to be alone*." This is a sure mark of an empty professor—company, excitement, a ceaseless whirl of activity, rushing from one meeting to another, gadding about and visiting all who will gossip with them, fill up all their "spare hours." Their *consciences* will not allow them to engage in quiet reflection and meditation, still less do they cultivate getting alone with God and communing with Him.

"Nearly all creatures are afraid of *fire*—even lions and tigers may be driven off by a fire-stick. But not so with goats. I have seen them walk into the fire. I have seen the same goat jump into the fire several times and be burned. I believe that is why we are told in Matthew 25:41 that Christ will yet say to the goats, '*Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,*' not as in the case of the guest without a wedding garment '*cast him into*.'" How solemnly true is this of the religious goats. The most awful sermon of eternal punishment stirs them not, for they are quite sure that *they* will never experience it. So completely has Satan lulled them to sleep that they have no dread of the awful doom which is most surely awaiting them.

"Yet they are afraid of death! A sheep is very submissive in death. It does not kick or even attempt to run away. But the goat cries loudly for nothing, before he is hurt. In death, he kicks like an infernal machine and must have at least three legs tied if he is to be killed in the same manner as a sheep." The writer has long been impressed with the fact that the

majority of those who seem to be surest of their own salvation are the most *reluctant* to die, yea, they are terrified at the very thought of it. Few of them would acknowledge it and many cloak it under the claim that they are looking for the return of Christ.

“They have a most offensive smell, as bad as swine, especially the *billy* goat”—figure of an unregenerate preacher. Yes, no matter how loud their profession, how fine their words, how devout the demeanor of the religious goats, they are a stench in the nostrils of Him who requireth truth in the *inward* parts. And the more a real Christian is in communion with God, walking closely with Him, the more will the “goats,” the religious hypocrites of the day, disgust and nauseate him—far more so than open worldlings who make no profession at all. The above-mentioned characteristics of the natural goats ought to make it much easier for the child of God to now *identify* the religious “goats” with whom he comes into contact.

## ASSURANCE

There come times when all your past experience seems taken away from you. You can't remember, at least you can't appropriate, you can't realize it. It is as though we had never ate and drank of what Christ gives us. We have no joy with which to rejoice. This is also an experience through which all God's people have come. This is the wonderful thing in the prophets and Psalms. God does not put before us the image of His saints as they *ought* to be, but as they were—all their tears and failings and complaints and feelings of desertion and groanings.

I fear many things are said of assurance that never ought to have been said. It is very difficult to speak of assurance, so as not to distress the truly godly, and not to puff up those who think they are rich and have need of nothing. The Lord will satisfy the hungry. He will raise up those that are bowed down. He will feed them just because they are hungry. He will strengthen them, just because they are weak.

After Jacob had gained the victory over JEHOVAH and been called Israel, how did he go on all his life? Not as a hero triumphant, but he went halting. Many would like always to be singing “Hallelujah!” to have entered already the land of promise and glory, to put aside the weapons of their conflict. So was it not with the old saints. Don't you be discouraged when you are weak, when you cry out of the depths in your helplessness, when you experience that there is another law, within you, striving against the Spirit of life within. The Lord is revealing to you your weakness and nothingness. (Adolph Saphir, 1831-1891)

