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STUDIES

IN THE

SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

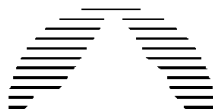
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Arthur W. Pink was born in Nottingham, England, in 1886, and born again by God's Spirit in 1908. He studied briefly at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago before his pastoral work in Colorado, California, Kentucky, and South Carolina, USA, and in Sydney, Australia. In 1934, he returned to his native England, taking his final residence on the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, in 1940, where he remained until his death in 1952.

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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EVANGELISM

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

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

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

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

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

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

Once a man makes the conversion of sinners his prime design and all-consuming end, he is exceedingly apt to adopt a wrong course. Instead of striving to preach the truth in its purity, he will tone it down so as to make it more palatable to the unregenerate. Impelled by a single force, moving in one fixed direction, his object is to make conversion easy, and therefore, favourite passages (like Joh 3:16) are dwelt upon incessantly, while others are ignored or pared away. It inevitably reacts upon his own theology, and various verses in the Word are shunned, if not repudiated. What place will he give in his thoughts to such declarations as "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" (Jer 13:23), "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (Joh 6:44), "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (Joh 15:16)? He will be sorely tempted to modify the truth of God's sovereign election, of Christ's particular redemption, of the imperative necessity for the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit.

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

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

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

55. 2 Thessalonians 3:5, Part 3

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

There is not a little said about the grace and duty of “patient waiting” in the Scriptures. Though it is to be feared, there is comparatively little thereof in the lives of most Christians, which is not only to the displeasing and dishonouring of God, but greatly to their own spiritual loss. Few of them have any clear Scriptural conception of what it actually consists of, for there has been scarcely any really definite and practical teaching thereon; and consequently, the thoughts of few rise any higher than those of the natural man’s. It is with the desire to provide some real help at this point that we deem it well to devote further space unto a consideration of this subject, for it is one of considerable importance and value. When commenting upon Colossians 1:11, we threw out some general hints thereon in the May 1947 article, and at the beginning of the next, expressed the hope of supplementing the same when we reached our present verse. We shall therefore now endeavour to set before the reader something of what God’s Word teaches on this most necessary fruit of divine grace—conscious that no one more needs to take the same to heart than does the present writer.

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

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

Second, a *suffering* patience, which meekly bears affliction and rebels not against whatever God has appointed for us. Where that grace is thus exercised, the soul faints not in the time of adversity nor turns

back in the day of battle. When the dispensations of divine providence are most trying unto flesh and blood, and we are tempted to revile the same, then are we enabled to say "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). Piety does not exempt any from trouble and sorrow, but it does enable to make manifest the sufficiency of divine grace in all conditions and circumstances. As God is honoured by the exercise of our love and zeal in performing His precepts, so He is greatly glorified by our quietness and submission when He calls upon us to experience suffering. Our fidelity unto Him must be tested by enduring evil, as well as in doing good, and the exercise of patience is as much needed for an unrepining and unflagging bearing of the one, as it is for the joyous and unremitting performance of the other. Yet in order thereto, we need to "consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Heb 12:3).

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

We read of the "shortening" of evil times (Mat 24:22), but not of their lengthening! God never keeps His people waiting for good any longer than He has purposed or promised. But though He keeps *His* time exactly and works just at the moment He has ordained and made known, yet we are apt to antedate the divine promise and set a time before His. As one of the Puritans quaintly expressed it, "We are both short-sighted and short-breathed." That which is but a moment in the calendar of heaven seems an age to us, and therefore have we need of patience in referring all to God's pleasure. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab 2:3). There appears to be a verbal contradiction there: "Though it tarry" and "it will not tarry," yet the meaning is simple: though what be promised tarry beyond our time, it shall not beyond the hour God has prefixed. There is no remedy or relief for us but in patiently waiting: calmly but confidently expecting the divine performance.

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

It is extremely sinful *not* to wait patiently, for it evinces an unwillingness to tarry God's leisure, and is therefore a spirit of insubordination. Fretful impatience is a taking issue with God's authority and a calling into question His goodness. Solemn indeed are the sins of this nature recorded in the Word. "And when the people saw that Moses *delayed* to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (Exo 32:1). And Aaron yielded to their evil demand. When the servant of God bade Saul tarry seven days at Gilgal until he should come and offer sacrifices and show the king what he should do (1Sa 10:8), because the prophet appeared

not when he expected, Saul impatiently and impiously took matters into his own hand, and in consequence, lost his kingdom (1Sa 13:8-14). Fearful indeed was also the wickedness of that king who said, "What should I wait for the LORD any longer?" (2 Ki 6:33)—he grew weary of tarrying for the Lord and opposed his own will against Him.

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

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

It is impossible but that the affections and passions will be stirring in a season of trial and affliction, but patience takes off their excess and fierceness, calming the storm within. It subdues the violence of emotion which rends the soul and distracts reason, enabling its possessor to "ruleth his [own] spirit" (Pro 16:32), instead of roaring "as a wild bull in a net" (Isa 51:20). It checks angry murmurings and brings us to an acquiescing silence before God: "I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it" (Psa 39:9). Since impatience proceeds from self-love and is a species of self-will, patience works the soul to a self-denying frame or temper. When providences cross our designs or impede our expectations, we are provoked and restless; but when the trying of faith works patience, the heart is more weaned from the creature and brought to rest in God. Thus it produces a spirit of quietness and submission, causing us to realize that it is of my Father it is thus and thus with me, and that when He deems best, He will deliver me from this trouble or supply that which will be most for His glory and my highest welfare, saying, "It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good." (1Sa 3:18).

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

It also needs to be added that while our sense of weakness and inability should ever drive us to our knees for divine enablement, yet prayer is not to be substituted for diligence in other directions. It is our responsibility to avoid everything which hinders the exercise of patience, and to make due use of those

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

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

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

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

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

35. Jericho, Part 5

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

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

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

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

Third, the silence required of “the people” on this occasion supplied another important line in the typical picture furnished by this incident—though one which certainly will not appeal to many in present-day Christendom. Israel’s capture of Jericho unmistakably pre-figured the victories achieved, under God, by the Gospel. The priests blowing with the trumpets of rams’ horns pictured the servants of God preaching His Word. The forbidding of “the people” to open their mouths signified that the rank and file of Christians are to have no part in the oral proclamation of the truth—they are neither qualified for nor called to the min-

istration of the Word. Nowhere in the Epistles is there a single exhortation for the saints as such to engage in *public* evangelism, nor even to do "personal work" and seek to be "soul winners." Rather are they required to "witness for Christ" by their *daily conduct* in business and in the home. They are to "show forth" God's praises, rather than tell them forth. They are to let their light shine. The testimony of the life is far more effectual than glib utterances of the lips. Actions speak louder than words.

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

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

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

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

"And seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually, and blew with the trumpets: and the armed men went before them; but the rereward came after the ark of the LORD, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets" (Jos 6:13). The Hebrew word for "trumpet" (*shophar*) has its first occurrence in Exodus 19:16, 19, where its loud blast was used to awe the nation at Sinai: highly significant is the fact that it is mentioned just fourteen times here in Joshua 6: 7 x 2,

or the number of perfect witness. The word for “rams’ horns” (*yobel*) is the one used throughout Leviticus 25, where twenty times it is rendered “jubilee,” so that as an alternative to “trumpets of rams’ horns,” it would be equally permissible to say “trumpets of jubilee.” In the year of jubilee, all slaves were released and given their freedom, and all alienated estates were restored to their original owners. In view of the oft-repeated “ye shall return every man unto his possession” (Lev 25:10-11, 13, 27-28) and “the land of your possession (Lev 25:24), we perceive the significance and appropriateness of the sounding of “trumpets of jubilee” as Israel now began to possess their inheritance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ENJOYING GOD'S BEST

Part 7

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

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

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

What has just been stated is clearly established by "he that covereth his sins shall not prosper" (Pro 28:13). It is always an inexcusable and grievous thing for a saint to commit any sin, yet it is far worse to refuse to acknowledge the same: that is to "add sin to sin" (Isa 30:1); yea, it evinces a spirit of defiance. So far from such an one prospering, he closes the door against God's favours (Jer 5:25). As the hiding of a disease prevents any cure, so to stifle convictions, seek to banish them from the mind, and then try and persuade ourselves that all is well, only makes bad matters worse. None but the penitent confessor can be pardoned (Psa 32:5; 1Jo 1:9). In the great majority of cases, the chief reason why believers miss God's best is because they fail to keep short accounts with Him. They do not make conscience of what the world regards as innocent blemishes and which empty professors excuse as "trifling faults." And the result is that the conscience becomes comatose, laxity is encouraged, the Holy Spirit is grieved, Satan gains increasing power over him, and his unrepented sins hide God's face from him (Isa 59:2).

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

If that were *not* the meaning of Psalm 103:10, we should make the Scriptures contradict themselves—an evil against which we need ever to be upon our guard. Psalm 89:30-32 shows that God *does* deal with His disobedient children according to their sins—in a disciplinary way, in this life—expressly declaring that "Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes" (Psa 89:32).

And yet there is a very real and blessed sense in which the principle of the former passage applies here too. For, first, God is not severe and rigorous in marking every offence: if our love be warm and the general course of our conduct pleases Him, He passes by our non-wilful sins. And, second, God does not chasten immediately when we offend Him, but graciously grants us space for repentance, that the rod may be withheld. Third, He does not chasten us fully, according to our deserts, but tempers His righteousness with mercy. Even when plying the rod upon us "his compassions fail not," and therefore, "we are not consumed" (Lam 3:22). God dealt so with His people under the *old* economy: Ezra 9:13; Psalm 130:3!

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

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

"Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die" (2Sa 12:14). And though he "besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth," it was in vain; the sin of the father was visited upon the son, to show that God was "no respecter of persons"—even where a monarch, and one beloved by Himself, was involved. And "the sword" never did depart from his house, for one after another of his sons met with a violent end. Such transgressions of Israel's king received no ordinary chastisements from God, to show that He would not countenance such actions, but vindicate His honour by manifesting His abhorrence of them. Thus, the governmental consequences of David's sins not being remitted upon his repentant confession is to be accounted for on the ground of his public character. Another example or illustration of the same principle is found in the case of Moses and Aaron, who because of their unbelief at Meribah, being Israel's leaders, were debarred from entering Canaan (Num 20:12, 24).

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

Satan's attack was not upon the patriarch, but was aimed at the Lord Himself, being tantamount to saying, Thou art incapable of winning the confidence and love of man by what Thou art in Thyself: deal roughly and adversely with him, and Thou wilt find that so far from him delighting in Thee and remaining loyal to Thee, he "will curse thee to thy face" (Job 1:11, 2:5). Thus the excellency of the divine character

was thereby impugned and His honour challenged. The Lord condescended to accept Satan's challenge; and in the sequel, demonstrate the emptiness of it by delivering His servant Job into His enemy's hand and permitting him to afflict him severely in his estate, his family, and in his own person. The central theme and purpose of the book of Job is not only missed, but utterly perverted, if we regard its contents as a description of God's chastening of Job for his sins (or "self-righteousness"), rather than a vindicating of His own honour and giving the lie to Satan's accusation by the making of Job's love and faith evident. So far from his cursing God, Job said, "Blessed be the name of the LORD," and after Satan had done his worst, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 1:21, 13:15).

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

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

12. Others may ask, What about the severe and protracted sufferings of the apostle Paul (2Co 11:23-27). They were neither extraordinary, like Job's, nor vicarious like Christ's! True, and that leads us to make this important observation: let none conclude from these articles that *all* suffering is to be regarded as *re-tributive*. That would be just as real a mistake as the one made by those who go to another extreme and suppose that all the suffering of saints is remedial, designed for purification and the development of their graces—which has provided a welcome sop for many an uneasy conscience! The subject of suffering is a much wider one than what has been dealt with in these articles, wherein but a single phase—the retributive—has been dealt with. It would take us too far afield to enter upon a systematic discussion of the whole problem of human sufferings, yet it is necessary for us to point out several important distinctions. Some suffering is to be attributed to the sovereignty of God (Joh 9:2-3), yet we believe such cases are few in number.

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

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

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

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

Finally, we again urge upon young Christians to form the habit of keeping short accounts with God, to promptly confess every known sin unto Him, even though it be the same sin over and over again. There is no verse in all the Bible which this writer has made more use of and pleaded so frequently as 1 John 1:9. Failure at this point is a certain forerunner of trouble. Only too often Christians, particularly in seasons of temporal prosperity, will not take the time and trouble to search their hearts and lives for those things which displease the Holy One. Hence, it is that God so often has occasion to take His refractory children apart from the world, laying them upon beds of sickness, or bringing them into situations where they *will* "consider [their] ways" (Hag 1:5). If they then refuse to do so, they shall "suffer loss" (1Co 3:15) eternally. It is greatly to be feared that not a few who will, by grace, enter the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ shall, through their own follies, fail to have an *abundant* entrance thereinto (2Pe 1:11). O that neither writer nor reader may be among those saints who will be "*ashamed* before him at his coming" (1Jo 2:28). We shall not, if we put everything right between our souls and Him in the present!

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

19. *The Holy Bible, Part 11*

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

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

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

The doctrine of divine *grace* is equally unique. It is a truth peculiar to divine revelation, a concept to which the unaided powers of man’s mind could never have risen. Proof of this is seen in the fact that where the Bible has not gone, grace is quite unknown. But the slightest trace of it is to be found in any of the religions of heathendom; and when missionaries undertake to translate the Scriptures into the natives’ tongues, they can find no word which in any wise corresponds to the Bible word “grace.” Grace is something to which none has any rightful claim, something which is due unto none; being mere charity, a sovereign favour, a free gift. Divine grace is the favour of God bestowing inconceivable blessings upon those who have no merits and from whom no compensation is demanded. Nay more: grace is exercised unto those who are full of positive demerits. How completely grace sets aside all thought of desert or worth in its subject appears from that declaration “being justified freely by his grace” (Rom 3:24); that word “freely” signifies “without a cause,” and is so rendered in John 15:25—justified gratuitously, for nothing!

Grace is a divine provision for those who are so corrupt that they cannot better their evil natures, so averse to God they will not turn unto Him, so blind they perceive not His excellency, so deaf they hear Him not speaking unto them, so dead spiritually that He must open their graves and bring them forth on to resurrection ground if ever they are to be saved. Grace implies that its object’s condition is desperate to the last degree: that God might justly leave him to perish; yea, that it is a wonder of wonders He has not already

cast him into hell. That grace is told out in the Gospel, which is not a message of good advice, but of good news. It is a proclamation of mercy, sent not to the good, but to the bad. It offers a free, perfect, and everlasting salvation "without money and without price" (Isa 55:1) and that to the chief of sinners. To the convicted conscience, salvation by grace alone seems too good to be true. Grace is God acting irrespective of the sinner's character and deserts, not as a Demander, but as a Giver—and that to the ill-deserving and hell-deserving, who have done nothing to procure His favour, but everything to provoke His wrath.

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

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

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

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

All through Scripture, there is seen a systematic advance in the communication of truth. In Genesis, the basic doctrine repeatedly exemplified is that of election; in Exodus, redemption by blood and power; in Leviticus, the chosen and redeemed are brought nigh to God as worshippers. Then the complementary side of things is set before us: in Numbers, our passage through this wilderness-world; in Deuteronomy, the enforcing of responsibility. While in Joshua, we behold the people of God entering into and enjoying their heritage. What unmistakable progress is there! The same feature marks the New Testament. In the Gospels, Christ accomplishing the work of salvation; in Acts, the proclamation thereof; in the Epistles, salvation

experienced by the members of His mystical Body; in Revelation, the saved in glory around the Lamb. Such progress demonstrates both the unity of Scripture and continuity of its inspiration. Behind all the varied penmen is one Author working according to a definite plan.

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

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

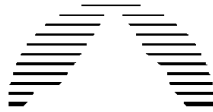
In these precepts, morality and duty are advanced to their highest pitch. "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Mat 7:12). Many of them are entirely against the bent of nature, such as: "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad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

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

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

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

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



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