

The Spirit Teaching.

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall *teach you* all things” (John 14:26). How urgently we need a Divine Teacher! A natural and notional knowledge of Divine things may be obtained through men, but a spiritual and experimental knowledge of them can only be communicated by God Himself. I may devote myself to the study of the Scriptures in the same ways as I would to the study of some science or the mastering of a foreign language. By diligent application, persevering effort, and consulting works of reference (commentators, etc.), I may steadily acquire a comprehensive and accurate acquaintance with the letter of God’s Word, and become an able expositor thereof. But I cannot obtain a heart-affecting, a heart-purifying, and a heart-molding knowledge thereof. None but the Spirit of truth can write God’s Law on my heart, stamp God’s image upon my soul, and *sanctify* me by the Truth.

“You may listen to the preacher,
God’s own truth be clearly shown;
But you need a greater Teacher,
From the everlasting throne:
Application is the work of God alone.”

Conscience informs me that I am a sinner; the preacher may convince me that without Christ I am eternally lost; but neither the one nor the other is sufficient to move me to receive Him as my Lord and Saviour. One man may lead a horse to the water, but no ten men can make him drink when he is unwilling to do so. The Lord Jesus Himself was “anointed to preach the Gospel” (Luke 4:18), and did so with a zeal for God’s glory and a compassion for souls such as none other ever had; yet He had to say to His hearers, “Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life” (John 5:40). What a proof is that, that something more is required above and beyond the outward presentation of the truth. There must be *the inward application* of it to the heart with Divine power, if the will is to be moved. And *that* is what the teaching of the Spirit consists of: it is an effectual communication of the Word which works powerfully *within* the soul.

Why is it that so many professing Christians change their view so easily and quickly? What is the reason there are so many thousands of unstable souls who are “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14)? Why is it that this year they sit under a man who preaches the Truth and claim to believe and enjoy his messages; while next year they attend the ministry of a man of error and heartily embrace his opinions? It must be because they were *never taught of the Spirit*. “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it” (Eccl. 3:14). What the Spirit writes on the heart remains: “The anointing which ye have received of Him *abideth in you*” (1 John 2:27), and neither man nor devil can efface it.

Why is it that so many professing Christians are unfruitful? Month after month, year after year, they attend upon the means of grace, and yet remain unchanged. Their store of religious information is greatly increased, their intellectual knowledge of the truth is much advanced, but their lives are not transformed. There is no denying of self, taking up

their cross, and following a despised Christ along the narrow way of personal holiness. There is no humble self-abasement, no mourning over indwelling sin, no mortification of the same. There is no deepening love for Christ, evidenced by a running in the way of His commandments. Such people are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7), i.e. *that* “knowledge” which is vital, experimental, affecting, and transforming. They are not *taught of the Spirit*.

Why is it in times of temptation and death that so many despair? Because their house is not built upon *the rock*. Hence, as the Lord Jesus declared, “the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it *fell*” (Matt. 7:27). It could not endure the testing: when trouble and trial, temptation and tribulation came, its insecure foundation was exposed. And note the particular character Christ there depicted: “Every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, (His precepts in the much-despised “Sermon on the Mount”) and *doeth them not*, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand” (v. 26). Men may go on in worldly courses, evil practices, sinful habits, trusting in a head-knowledge of Christ to save them; but when they reach “the swelling of Jordan” (Jer. 12:5) they will prove the insufficiency of it.

Ah, dear reader, a saving knowledge is not a knowledge of Divine things, but is a Divinely-imparted knowledge. It not only has God for its Object, but God for its Author. There must be not only a knowledge of spiritual things, but a *spiritual* knowledge of the same. The light which we have of them must be answerable to the things themselves: we must see them by their own light. As the things themselves are spiritual, they must be imparted and opened to us by the Holy Spirit. Where there is a knowledge of the Truth which has been wrought in the heart by the Spirit, there is an experimental knowledge of the same, a sensible consciousness, a persuasive and comforting perception of their reality, an assurance which nothing can shake. The Truth then possesses a sweetness, a preciousness, which no inducement can cause the soul to part with it.

Now as to *what* it is which the Spirit teaches us, we have intimated, more or less, in previous articles. First, He reveals to the soul “the exceeding sinfulness of sin” (Rom. 7:13), so that it is filled with horror and anguish at its baseness, its excuselessness, its turpitude. It is one thing to read of the excruciating pain which the gout or gall stones will produce, but it is quite another thing for me to experience the wellnigh unbearable suffering of the same. In like manner, it is one thing to hear others talking of the Spirit convicting of sin, but it is quite another for Him to teach me that I am a rebel against God, and give me a taste of His wrath burning in my conscience. The difference is as great as looking at a painted fire, and being thrust into a real one.

Second, the Spirit reveals to the soul the utter futility of all efforts to save itself. The first effect of conviction in an awakened conscience is to attempt the rectification of all that now appears wrong in the conduct. A diligent effort is put forth to make amends for past offences, painful penances are readily submitted to, and the outward duties of religion are given earnest attendance. But by the teaching of the Spirit the heart is drawn off from resting in works of righteousness which we have done (Titus 3:5), and this, by His giving increasing light, so that the convicted soul now perceives he is a mass of corruption within, that his very prayers are polluted by selfish motives, and that unless *God* will save him, his case is beyond all hope.

Third, the Spirit reveals to the soul the suitability and sufficiency of Christ to meet its desperate needs. It is an important branch of the Spirit’s teaching to open the Gospel to

those whom He has quickened, enlightened, and convicted; and to open their understanding and affections to take in the precious contents of the Gospel. “He shall glorify Me” said the Saviour, “for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you” (John 16:14). This is His prime function: to magnify Christ in the esteem of “His own.” The Spirit teaches the believer many things, but His supreme subject is *Christ*: to emphasise His claims, to exalt His Person, to reveal His perfections, to make Him superlatively attractive. Many things in Nature are very beautiful, but when the sun shines upon them, we appreciate their splendour all the more. Thus it is when we are enabled to view Christ in the light of the Spirit’s teaching.

The Spirit *continues to teach* the regenerate throughout the remainder of their lives. He gives them a fuller and deeper realization of their own native depravity, convincing them that in the flesh there dwelleth no good thing, and gradually weaning them from all expectation of improving the same. He reveals to them “the beauty of holiness,” and causes them to pant after and strive for an increasing measure of the same. He teaches them the supreme importance of *inward piety*.—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews.

92. *Divine Chastisement*: 12:11.

One reason, perhaps, why so little is written today upon Divine Chastisement, and why it so rarely forms the theme of the pulpit, is because it suits not the false temper and sentiments of this superficial age. The great majority of the preachers are men-pleasers, and carefully do they trim their sails to the breezes of popular opinion. They are paid to speak “smooth things” and not those which will disturb, to soothe consciences rather than search them. That which is unpalatable, mournful, solemn, dread-inspiring, is sedulously avoided, and attractive, cheerful, and comforting subjects are substituted in their stead. Hence, not only is it now rare for the preacher to dwell upon the eternal punishment of the wicked and bid the unsaved flee from the wrath to come, but Christians hear very little about the Father’s rod, and the groans it occasions, or the fruits it afterwards produces. Fifty years ago a faithful servant of God wrote:

“One of the platitudes of the present day is, that religion is not a gloomy, but a cheerful thing. Although it is easy to see what was meant by him who first opposed this assertion, either to morbid and self-assumed gloom, or to the ignorant representation of the world; yet as it is generally understood, nothing can be less true. Blessed are they that mourn. Woe unto you that laugh. Narrow is the way. If any man will serve Me, let him take up his cross, and follow Me. He that seeketh his life shall lose it. Although the Christian anoints his head and washes his face, he is always fasting; the will has been broken by God, by wounding or bereaving us in our most tender point; the flesh is being constantly crucified. We are not born to be happy either in this world or in our present condition, but the reverse—to be unhappy; nay, to try constantly to be dead to self and the world, that the spirit may possess God, and rejoice in Him.

“As there is a false and morbid asceticism, so there is also a false and pernicious tendency to cover a worldly and shallow method of life under the phrase of ‘religion being joyous, and no enemy to cheerfulness.’ To take a very simple and obvious instance. What is meant by a ‘cheerful, pleasant Sunday?’ No doubt men have erred on the side of strictness and legalism; but is a ‘cheerful Sunday’ one in which there is much communion with God in prayer and meditation on God’s Word, much anticipation of the joys of Heaven in praise and fellowship with the brethren? Alas! too many understand by a cheerful Sunday a day in which the spiritual element is reduced to a minimum” (Adolph Saphir).

Alas, that conditions have become so much worse since then. The attractions of the world, and everything which is pleasing to the flesh, have been brought into thousands of “churches” (?) under the plea of being “necessary if the young people are to be held.” Even in those places where the bars have not thus been let down, were the grosser forms of worldliness are not yet tolerated, the preaching is generally of such a character that few are likely to be made uneasy by it. He who dwells on the exceeding sinfulness of sin, who insists that God will not tolerate unjudged sin even in His own people, but will surely visit it with heavy stripes, is a “kill joy,” a “troubler of Israel,” a “Job’s comforter”; and if he persists in enforcing the precepts, admonitions, warnings, and judgments of Holy Writ, is likely to soon find all doors closed against him. But better this, than be a compromiser; better be deprived of all preaching engagements, than miss the Master’s “Well done” in the Day to come.

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless

afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11). In this verse the Apostle concludes his discussion of that theme which is now so unwelcome to the majority of professing Christians. Therein he brings to a close all that he had said concerning those disciplinary afflictions which an all-wise God brings upon His people in this life, His gracious design in the same, and the duty incumbent upon them to receive these in a right spirit. He sums up his argument by balancing the good over against the evil, the future over against the present, the judgment of faith over against the feelings of the flesh.

Our present text is added to what has been said in the previous verses for the purpose of anticipating and removing an objection. After all the comforting and encouraging statements made, namely, that chastisements proceed not from enemies but from our Father, that they are sent not in anger but in love, that they are designed not to crush but "for our profit"; carnal sense and natural reason interposes an objection: "But we find no joy under our afflictions, instead much sorrow. We do not *feel* that they are for our profit; we cannot *see* how they can be so; therefore we are much inclined to doubt what you have said." The Apostle grants the force of the objection: that for the present, chastening *does* "seem to be grievous and not joyous." But he brings in a double limitation or qualification: in reference to outward sense, it only "seems" so; in reference to time, this is only for "the present." Having made this concession, the Apostle turns to the objector and says, "Nevertheless." He reminds him that, first, there is an "afterward" beyond the present moment, to be borne in mind; second, he presses on him the need of being "exercised thereby"; third, he assures him that if he is so exercised "peaceable fruit" will be the happy issue. There are four things told us in the text about chastisement as it is viewed by human reason.

1. *All that carnal reason can perceive in our chastenings is BUT SEEMING.* All that flesh and blood can discover about the nature and quality of Divine afflictions is but their outward and superficial appearance. The eye of reason is utterly incapable of discovering the virtue and value of sanctified trials. How often we are deceived by mere "seeming!" This is true in the natural sphere: appearances are proverbially deceptive. There are many optical illusions. Have you not noticed some nights when the sun is sinking in the west, that he is much bigger than at his zenith? Yet he is not so in reality: he only "seems" to be so. Have you stood on the deck of a ship in mid-ocean and, while gazing at the horizon, suddenly been startled by the sight of land?—the outline of the coast, with the rising hills in the background, were clearly defined. Yet after all, it was but "seeming"; it was nothing but clouds. In like manner, you have read of a mirage seen by travellers in the desert: away over the sands, they see in the distance green trees and a shining pool of water; but this is only an optical delusion, effected in some way by the atmosphere.

Now if this be so in connection with natural things, the "seeming" *not* being the actual, the apparent *not* being the reality, how much more is it true in connection with the things of God! Afflictions are *not* what they "seem" to be. They appear to work for our ill, and not for our good; so that we are inclined to say, "An enemy hath done this." They seem to be for our injury, rather than our "profit," and we murmur and are cast down. So often *fear* distorts our vision; so often *unbelief* brings scales over our eyes, and we exaggerate the dimensions of trials in the dark and dim light. So often we are selfish, fond of our fleshly ease; and therefore spiritual discernment falls to a low ebb. No, chastenings for the present do not *seem* to be joyous, but "grievous"; but that is because we view

them through our natural senses and in the light of carnal reason.

2. *Carnal reason judges afflictions in the light of the PRESENT.* The tendency with all of us is to estimate things in the light of the *now*. The ungodly are ever ready to sacrifice their future interests for present gratification. One of their favourite mottos is, “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush”: it may be to the slothful, but the enterprising and diligent would rather be put to a little trouble and secure the two. Man is a very short-sighted creature, and even the Christian is often dominated by the same sentiments that regulate the wicked. The light of the *now* is generally the worst in which to form a true estimate of things. We are too close to them to obtain a right perspective, and see things in their proper proportions. To view an oil painting to the best advantage, we need to step back a few feet from it. The same principle applies to our lives. Proof of this is found as we now look back upon that which is past. Today the Christian discovers a meaning, a needs-be, a preciousness, in many a past experience, and even disappointment, which he could not discern at the time.

The case of Jacob is much to the point, and should guard us against following his foolish example. After Joseph had been removed from his doting father, and when he thought he had lost Simeon too, viewing things in the light of “the present,” he petulently said, “All these things are against me” (Gen. 42:36). Such is often the mournful plaint which issues from our short-sighted unbelief. But later, Jacob discovered his mistake, and found that all those things had been working together for good to himself and his loved ones. Alas, we are so impatient and impetuous, so occupied with the present, that we fail to look forward and by faith anticipate the happy sequel. Then, too, the effects which afflictions have upon the old man, *disqualify* us to estimate them aright. If my heart is palpitating, if my mind is agitated, and my soul be cast down, then I am in no fit state to judge the quality and blessedness of Divine afflictions. No, chastenings *for the present do not* “seem to be joyous, but grievous”;—that is because we take such a short-sighted view of them and fail to look forward with the eyes of faith and hope.

3. *To carnal reason afflictions never seem “joyous.”* This logically follows from what has been before us under the first two points. Because carnal reason sees *only* the “seeming” of things, and because it estimates them *only* in the light of “the present,” afflictions are not joyous. Nor does God intend that, in themselves, they should be. If afflictions *did* “seem” to be joyous, would they be chastisements at all? It would be of little use for an earthly parent to whip his child in such a way as to produce only smiles. Such would be merely a make-belief; no smart, no benefit. Solomon said, “It is the blueness of the wound which maketh the heart better”; so if Divine chastisements are not painful to the flesh and extort a groan and cry, what good end would they serve? If God sent us trials such as we wished, they would not be chastenings at all. No, afflictions do not “seem” to be joyous.

They are not joyous in *the form* they assume. When the Lord smites, He does so in a tender place, that we may feel the smart of it. They are not joyous in *the force* of them. Oftentimes we are inclined to say, If the trial had not been quite so severe, or the disappointment had not been so great, I could have endured it. God puts just so much bitter herbs into our cup as to make the draught unpleasant. They are not joyous in *the time* of them. We always think they come at the wrong season. If it were left to our choosing, they would never come; but if we *must* have them, we would choose the time when they are the least grievous; and thus miss their blessing. Nor are they joyous in *the instruments*

used: "If it were an enemy, then I could have borne it," said David. That is what we all think. O if my trial were not just *that*! Poverty I could endure, but not reproach and slander. To have lost my own health would have been a hard blow, but I could have borne it; but the removal of that dear child, the light of my eyes, how can I ever rejoice again? Have you not heard brethren speak thus?

4. *To carnal reason afflictions ever seem to be "grievous."* Probably the most grievous part to the Christian is that he cannot *see* how such a loss or trial can possibly benefit him. If he could thus see, he *would* rejoice. Even here we must walk by faith and not by sight. But this is easier said than done; yea, it can only be done by God's enabling. Usually, the Christian altogether fails to see why such a trouble is sent upon *him*; it seems to work harm and not good. Why this financial loss, when he was giving more to the Lord's work? Why this breakdown in health, when he was being most used in His service? Why this removal of a Sabbath School teacher, just when he was most needed? Why was my husband called away, when the children most required him? Yes, such afflictions are indeed grievous to the flesh.

But let it be pointed out that these reasonings are *only* "seeming." The Christian, by grace, eventually triumphs. Faith looks up at the cloud (though it is often very late in doing so) and says, The chastisement was not as severe as it might have been, certainly it was not as severe as I deserved, and truly it was nothing in comparison to what the Saviour suffered for me. O let faith expel carnal reason, and say, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." But note carefully that this is only "*while* we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Cor. 4:18). For much in the above four points the writer acknowledges his indebtedness to a sermon by C.H. Spurgeon on the same verse.

"Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11). This is what the Apostle sets over against the estimate of carnal reason and the feelings of our natural senses. Medicine may not be a pleasant thing to take, but if it be blest by God, the renewed health it gives is good compensation. The pruned vine at the end of the winter presents a sorry appearance to the eye, but its heavily-laden branches in the autumn vindicates the gardener's efforts. Did not the "afterward" prove to Jacob that his doleful reasonings were quite unwarranted? Job squirmed under the rod, as well he might, but was not his end more prosperous than his beginning? Thank God for this "Nevertheless afterward."

Yet this "afterward" is also a very searching word: it is one which should pierce and test each of us. Have we not all passed through sorrow? Can any of us look back on the past without recalling seasons of deep and heavy affliction? Has no sword pierced our souls? no painful sacrifice been demanded of us? But, my reader, do these experiences belong to the *past* in every sense? Have they gone, disappeared, without leaving any *effects* behind them? No, that is impossible: we are either the better or the worse because of them. Then ask yourself, *What* fruits have they produced? Have your past experiences hardened, soured, frozen you? Or have they softened, sweetened, mellowed you? Has pride been subdued, self-pleasing been mortified, patience developed? How have afflictions, chastisements, left us? *What* does the "afterward" reveal?

Not all men are the gainers by afflictions; nor are Christians so always. Many seek to flee from trials and troubles, instead of being "exercised" thereby. Others are callous and

do not yield: as Hebrews 12:5 intimates, they “despised” the chastenings of the Lord. There are some who imagine that, when visited with affliction, it is a display of courage if they refuse to be affected. They count it weakness to mourn over losses and weep over sorrows. But such an attitude is altogether un-Christian. Christ wept, and again and again we are told that He “groaned.” Such an attitude is also foolish to the last degree, for it is calculated to counteract the very design of afflictions, and only calls for severer ones to break our proud spirits. It is no mark of weakness to acknowledge that we *feel* the strokes of an *Almighty* arm.

It is the truest wisdom to humble ourselves beneath “the mighty hand of God.” If we are among His people, He will mercifully compel us to acknowledge that His chastenings are not to be despised and made light of. He will—and O how easily He *can* do it—continue or increase our afflictions until he *tames* our wild spirits, and brings us like obedient children into subjection to Himself. What a warning is found in Isaiah 9:9, 11: “And all the people shall know, even Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen down, *but we will* build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, *but we will* change them into cedars. *Therefore* the LORD shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together.” This means that, because the people had hardened themselves under the chastening hand of God, instead of being “exercised” thereby, that He sent sorer afflictions upon them.

The ones benefitted by the Father’s chastenings are they who are “*exercised* thereby.” The Greek word for “exercised” was borrowed from the gymnastic games. It had reference to the athlete stripping himself of his outer clothing. Thus, this word in our text is almost parallel with the “laying aside of every weight” in verse 1. If afflictions cause us to be stripped of pride, sloth, selfishness, a revengeful spirit, then “fruit” *will be* produced. It is only as we *improve* our chastenings, that we are gainers. The natural effect of affliction on an unsanctified soul is either to irritate or depress, which produces rebellion or sinking into despair. This is the result of hardness of heart and unbelief. Even with regard to the Christian it is true that, only as he views them as proceeding from his Father in order to bring him into subjection, and as he is “exercised thereby,” he is truly profited.

1. The *conscience* needs to be “exercised.” There must be a turning unto the Sender of our trials, and a seeking from Him of the meaning and message of them. “There was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David *inquired* of the LORD” (2 Sam. 21:1)! So should we when the providences of God frown upon us. There must be an honest self-examination, a diligent scrutiny of our ways, to discover what it is God is displeased with. Careful investigation will often show that much of our supposed godly zeal in service is but the result of habit, or the imitating of some eminent saint, instead of proceeding from the heart, and being rendered “unto the Lord.”

2. *Prayer* has to be “exercised” or engaged in. It is true that painful afflictions have a tendency to stifle the voice of supplication, that one who is smarting under the rod feels little inclination to approach the Throne of Grace, but this carnal disposition must be steadily resisted, and the help of the Holy Spirit definitely sought. The heavier our load, the more depressed our heart, the sorer our anguish, the greater our need to pray. God requires to be sought unto, for grace to submit to His dealings, for help to improve the same, for Him to sanctify unto our good all that perplexes and distresses us.

3. The grace of *meekness* must be “exercised,” for “a meek and quiet spirit” is of

“great price” in the sight of Him with whom we have to do (1 Peter 3:4). Meekness is the opposite of self-will and hardness of heart. It is a pliability of soul, which is ready to be fashioned after the Divine image. It is a holy submission, willing to be molded as the Heavenly Potter determines. There can be no “peaceable fruit of righteousness” until our wills are broken, and we have no mind of our own. How much we need to heed that word of Christ’s, “Take My yoke upon you, and *learn of me*; for I am meek” (Matt. 11:29).

4. *Patience* must be “exercised.” “Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him” (Psa. 37:7): “wait” for *His* time of deliverance, for if we attempt to deliver ourselves, we are very likely to plunge into deeper trials. Fruit is not ripened in a day; nor do the benefits of chastisements appear immediately along the path of duty.

5. *Faith* must be “exercised.” *God’s* hand must be seen in every trial and affliction if it is to be borne with meekness and patience. While we look no further than the malice of Satan, or the jealousy, enmity, injustice of men, the heart will be fretful and rebellious. But if we receive the cup from the Father’s hand, our passions will be calmed and the inward tumult stilled. Only by the exercise of faith will the soul be brought into a disposition to quietly submit, and digest the lessons we are intended to learn.

6. *Hope* must be “exercised.” As faith looks upward and sees *God’s* hand in the trial, hope is to look forward and anticipate the *gains* thereof. Hope is a confident expectation of future good. It is the opposite of despair. Hope lays hold of the promised “Afterward,” and thus it sustains and cheers in the present. Hope assures the cast-down soul, “I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance” (Psa. 42:5). “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, *after* that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Peter 5:10).

7. *Love* must be “exercised.” It is the Father’s *love* which chastens us (v. 5); then ought not we to love Him in return for His care and patient training of us? Instead of doubting His wisdom or questioning His goodness, there should be an affectionate gratitude flowing out to the One who is seeking nought but our welfare. “We can never find any benefit in chastenings, unless we are *exercised* by them, that is, unless all our graces are stirred up by them to a holy, constant exercise” (John Owen)—how different that, from the fatalistic inertia of many hyper-Calvinists!

What we have sought to bring out above is the fact that spiritual “fruit” *is not* the natural or spontaneous effect of affliction. Nay, have we not observed that few of those who suffer severe financial reverses, heavy domestic bereavements, or personal bodily pain, are, spiritually, the gainers thereby. Yea, do we need to look any further than ourselves to perceive how little we have learned by and profited from past trials? And the cause is plain: we were *not duly exercised* thereby. May this word abide with each of us for the future.

What is meant by “the peaceable fruit of righteousness”? If we took this expression by itself, it would signify *the effects* of righteousness, the fruit which righteousness itself brings forth. But in our text it is chastenings or afflictions which are specifically mentioned as producing this fruit. It is the Spirit tranquilizing and purifying the heart. “Righteousness” in our text is parallel with “His holiness” in verse 10. It may be summed up in the mortification of sin and the vivification of vital godliness. It is called the “*peaceable* fruit” because it issues in the taming of our wild spirits, the quieting our restless hearts, the more firmly anchoring of our souls. But this only comes when we truly realise that it is the Father’s *love* which has afflicted us. May the Spirit of God grant us all “exercised”

hearts, so that we shall daily search ourselves, examine our ways, and be stripped of all that is displeasing to Him.—A.W.P.

The Life of David.

44. *His Exemplary Prayer.*

The latter part of 2 Samuel 7 contains the prayer made by David in the tabernacle, following the gracious revelation which he had received from the Lord through Nathan (vv. 5-16). This prayer is among the “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom. 15:4). It contains valuable instruction which we do well to take to heart. It makes known that which is a valuable preliminary-aid unto stimulating the spirit of prayer. It shows us the attitude of soul which most becomes the creature when desirous of drawing nigh unto the great Creator. It reveals some of the elements which are found in those supplications that gain the ear of God and which “availeth much.” If the Christian of today paid more attention unto the prayers of *Scripture*, both of the Old and New Testaments alike, and sought to pattern his invocations after theirs, there is little doubt they would be more acceptable and effectual.

We pointed out in our last article that David’s *sitting* before the Lord denoted his earnest attention unto the message he had received from Him, his careful pondering of it, his devout surveying of the riches of Divine grace which were then spread before his mind’s eye. This preceded his prayer, and supplies a valuable hint for us to heed. Meditation upon the discoveries which God has made to us of His goodness, of His bounty, of the glorious things contained in His covenant, is a wondrous stimulant to the spirit of devotion and a suitable preparative for an approach unto the Mercy-seat. To review God’s past dealings with us, and to mix faith with His promises for the future, kindle the fires of gratitude and love. As we attend upon what God has spoken to us, when our consciences are pricked or our affections stirred, then is the best time to retire to our closets and pour out our hearts before Him.

Generally it is but an idle excuse—if not something worse—when the Christian complains that his heart is cold and the spirit of prayer is quite inactive within him. Where this be the case, it must be shamefacedly confessed to God, accompanied by the request that He may be pleased to heal our malady and bring us back again into communion with Himself. But better still, the *cause* of the complaint should be corrected: nine times out of ten it is because the Word has been neglected—if read at all, mechanically, without holy reflection and personal appropriation. The soul is likely to be in a sickly state if it be not regularly fed and nourished by the Bread of Life. There is nothing like *meditating* upon God’s promises for warming the heart: “While I was *musings* the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue” (Psa. 39:3).

We commented in our last article upon the deep humility manifested by David on this occasion. This too is recorded for our learning. If we are to becomingly approach the Most High, there must be the taking of a lowly place before Him. This is the chief design of prayer, the prime reason why God has appointed this holy ordinance: for the *humbling* of the soul—to take our proper place in the dust, to kneel before the Lord as beggars, dependent upon His bounty; to stretch forth empty hands, that He may fill them. Alas that so often man, in his pride and perverseness, turns the footstool of mercy into the bench of presumption, and instead of supplicating becomes guilty of dictating unto the Almighty. Ah, my readers, take careful note that, He who prayed, “Not as I will, but as Thou wilt,” was *on His face* before the Father (Matt. 26:39).

We cannot forbear from inserting a word of warning at this point concerning many of the so-called “prayer meetings” of this degenerate day. In our “Sound the Alarm” articles

(some time ago), we urged our readers to separate themselves from those “churches” where Christ is dishonoured by false doctrine, by fleshly attractions, by worldly devices for raising money, by refusing to maintain a Scriptural discipline. Some of God’s people are more or less “outside the (apostate) camp,” yet feel free to attend undenominational “prayer meetings.” Alas, they little realise the spiritual dangers (diseases) to which they expose themselves, and the likelihood of their becoming infected by the evil example set before them. The “prayers” (?) they will hear, are, for the most part, highly insulting to the Lord—how can it be otherwise, when they issue from those who sit under erroneous teaching and are mixed up with the Laodicean abominations of the day.

Now in seeking to ponder David’s pattern prayer—having duly noted above what preceded it, let us seek to profit from various features found in it. First, observe that *all is ascribed to free grace*. “And what can David say more unto Thee? for Thou, Lord GOD, knowest Thy servant. For Thy word’s sake, and according to Thine own heart, hast Thou done all these great things, to make Thy servant know them” (2 Sam. 7:20, 21). David’s heart was deeply moved by a sense of God’s sovereign benignity: that such blessings should be bestowed upon him and his posterity was more than he could understand. He was lost in wonderment: words utterly failed him, as his “what can David say more unto Thee?” evidences. And is it not thus, at times, with every true believer? As he contemplates the abounding of God’s mercies, the richness of His gifts, the supernal future promised him, is he not moved to exclaim, “What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits toward me?” (Psa. 116:12).

Realizing his own nothingness and unworthiness (v. 18), viewing the future glories assured him (v. 19), knowing there was nothing in himself which merited any such blessings, David traces them to their true cause: “For Thy word’s sake, and according to Thine own heart, hast Thou done all these great things” (v. 21). It is the *personal* “Word” which he had in mind, Him of whom it is declared, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). It was an acknowledgment “for *Christ’s* sake” Thou hast so honoured me! “And according to Thine own heart” signifies, according to His gracious counsels, out of His own mere good pleasure. Yes, those, and those alone, are the springs of all God’s dealings with us: He blesses His people for the sake of His beloved Son, “according to the riches of His grace”; and “according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself” (Eph. 1:7, 9).

Second, *the greatness of God is apprehended and extolled*. “Wherefore Thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like Thee, neither is there any God beside Thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears” (2 Sam. 7:22). It is blessed to observe that David’s sense of God’s goodness in nowise abated his awesome veneration of the Divine majesty. There is ever a danger at this point: we may be so occupied with God’s love as to forget His holiness, so appreciative of His tenderness as to ignore His omnipotency. It is most needful that we should hold the balance here, as everywhere else; hence did the Saviour instruct us to say “Our Father, who art in Heaven”—the latter words reminding us of the exalted dignity of the One who has deigned to adopt us into His family. Apprehensions of God’s amazing grace toward us must not crowd out the realization of His infinite exaltation above us.

God’s greatness should be duly acknowledged by us when we seek an audience with the Majesty on High: it is but ascribing to Him the glory which is His due. Prayer is reduced to a very low level if it is to be confined unto the presenting of requests. The soul

needs to be so absorbed with the Divine perfections that the worshipper will exclaim, "Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Exo. 15:11). God's supreme excellency is to be reverently and freely owned by us. It was by Solomon, "LORD God of Israel, there is no God like Thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath" (1 Kings 8:23). It was by Jehoshaphat, "O LORD God of our fathers, art not Thou God in heaven? and rulest not Thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in Thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand Thee?" (2 Chron. 20:6). It was by Jeremiah, "Forasmuch as there is none like unto Thee, O LORD; Thou art great, and Thy name is great in might. Who would not fear Thee, O King of nations?" (10:6, 7). What examples are these for us to take to heart. The more we heartily acknowledge God's greatness, the more likely is He to answer our requests.

Third, *the special goodness of God to His people is owned*. "And what one nation in the earth is like Thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself, and to make Him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible" (2 Sam. 7:23). As none of the "gods" of the heathen could be compared to Jehovah, so none among the peoples of the earth have been so highly favoured and so richly blest as His privileged "Nation" (Matt. 21:43, 1 Peter 2:9). O what praise is due unto God for His distinguishing mercy and discriminating grace unto His elect. "We are bound to give thanks *alway* to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation" (2 Thess. 2:13). The special blessings of God call for special acknowledgment: the "redemption" which we have in and by Christ Jesus demands our loudest hosannas. There is far too little praise in our prayers today: its absence denotes a low state of spirituality—occupation with self, instead of with the Lord. It is written "whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me" (Psa. 50:23).

Fourth, *the Covenant of Grace is celebrated*. "For Thou hast confirmed to Thyself Thy people Israel to be a people unto Thee for ever: and Thou, LORD, art become their God" (2 Sam. 7:24). In light of the whole context, it is evident that the *spiritual* "Israel" is here in view, contemplated as being taken into covenant relationship with the triune Jehovah. For, whenever a people is said to be *God's* people, and He avows Himself as their God, it is the covenant relationship which is in view. Thus it was in the promise to Abraham: "And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17:7). Thus it is under the new covenant, "I will be to them *a God*, and they shall be to *Me a people*" (Heb. 8:10). It greatly encourages and emboldens the praying soul to bear this in mind.

Fifth, *a believing pleading of the promises*. "And now, O LORD God, the word that Thou hast spoken concerning Thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and *do as Thou hast said*" (2 Sam. 7:25). This is very blessed, and most important for us to emulate. In these words the faith of David was expressed in two ways: in *believing* God's word, in *pleading* its accomplishment. That should be the very heart of our petitionary prayers: laying hold of the Divine promise, and pleading for its fulfillment. God is not only a Speaker, but a Doer as well: "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, *and shall He not do it?* or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Num. 23:19). Ah, but it is one thing to mentally assent to such a declaration, but it is quite another for the heart to be really influenced

thereby, and for the praying soul to appropriate that fact.

True faith looks to a *promising* God, and expects Him to be a *performing* God too: “Faithful is He that calleth you, who *also will do it*” (1 Thess. 5:24). The business of faith in prayer is to appropriate God’s Word to our own case and beg for it to be made good unto us. Jacob did this: “*And Thou saidst*, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea” (Gen. 32:12). David is another notable example: “Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope” (Psa. 119:49)—“hope” in Scripture signifies far more than a vague and uncertain longing: it denotes a confident expectation. That confident expectation was his because his faith rested upon the sure promise of Jehovah, and that promise he here reverently reminded God of. Glance through this 119th Psalm, dear reader, and observe how frequently David requested God to act “according to Thy word”—verses 25, 28, 41, 58, etc.

“Do as Thou hast said.” Faith has no other foundation to rest upon but the Word of God. One of God’s chief ends in giving us His Word was that His people might appropriate the same unto themselves (John 20:31, 1 John 5:13). Nothing honours Him more than for us to count upon His making it good to us (Rom. 4:20). Now whatever may be our case, there is something in the Word exactly suited thereto, and it is our privilege to lay hold of the same *and plead it* before God. Are we groaning under sin’s defilement? then plead Isaiah 1:18. Are we bowed down with a sense of our backslidings? then plead Jeremiah 3:22. Do we feel so weak as to have no strength for the performance of duty? then plead Isaiah 40:29-31. Are we perplexed as to our path and in urgent need of Divine guidance? then plead Proverbs 3:6 or James 1:5. Are you sorely harassed with temptation? then plead 1 Corinthians 10:13. Are you destitute and fearful of starving to death? then plead Philippians 4:19. Reverently urge the promise and plead “Do as Thou has said.”

Sixth, *the supreme desire: that God might be glorified*. “And let Thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of Thy servant David be established before Thee. For Thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to Thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath Thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto Thee” (2 Sam. 7:26, 27). This must be the supreme desire and the chief in all our praying: “Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). The prayer which Christ has given for our pattern begins with “Hallowed be Thy name,” and ends with “Thine is the glory.” The Lord Jesus ever practiced what He preached: “Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? . . . Father, *glorify Thy name*” (John 12:27, 28); so too at the beginning of His High Priestly prayer, “Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee” (John 17:1). O that more of His Spirit may possess us: that the honour of God may be our great concern, His glory our constant aim.

Seventh, *a final pleading for God to make good His Word*. “And now, O Lord GOD, Thou art that God, and Thy words be true, and Thou hast promised this goodness unto Thy servant: therefore now let it please Thee to bless the house of Thy servant, that it may continue for ever before Thee: for Thou, O Lord GOD, hast spoken it: and with Thy blessing let the house of Thy servant be blessed for ever” (2 Sam. 7:28, 29). David built his hopes upon the fidelity of God: “I entreated Thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me *according to Thy word*” (Psa. 119:58)—I desire no more, I expect no less. We may be bold to ask for all God has engaged to give. As good old Matthew Henry

said, “it is by turning God’s promises into petitions that they are turned into performances.” How necessary it is then that we should diligently acquaint ourselves with the Scriptures, so that we ask not “amiss” (James 4:3). How necessary that the Word dwell in us richly, that we may act in faith, nothing doubting.

Our space is exhausted. Ponder carefully, dear reader, these seven features or elements in David’s God-honouring prayer, and seek the help of the Holy Spirit to pattern your supplications after his.—A.W.P.

Self-Crucifixion.

“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24). In the context, the Apostle is showing very clearly the difference between the carnal and the spiritual, by their “works” or “fruits,” and the importance of not only professing “to live in the Spirit,” but also, and chiefly, that we take care to “walk in the Spirit”; for just as a tree is known by its fruits, so a truly regenerate person is known, not by what he professes, but by his daily walk and conversation. Let, us then, consider—

I. The class of persons here mentioned—“*they that are Christ’s*.” Clearly this descriptive statement does not include all men. It is not the entire human race, but a portion thereof. Who and what are they? The expression is intended to embrace the entire family of God—at least, such as are at any given time manifestively so. These are all Christ’s, and that for four different reasons.

First, because they were all given to Christ by His Father. This was in eternity, before the worlds were framed. Hence Jesus says, “Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me”; and again, “Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him”; and again, “Behold I and the children that God hath given Me.” Then, as God the Father gave them to Him, they must be His; hence He calls them “My sheep.” “They that are Christ’s.”

Second, because He Himself has purchased them. They are not only His by eternal and sovereign donation; He has also bought them, redeemed them, paid the full price for them. What we purchase we are apt to consider our own property, especially if we pay a high price for it; and if any person tries to take from us anything so purchased, we style such a person a thief or a robber, and we take great pains to secure our property against the attacks of men of that description. Jesus is almighty to protect His flock, and, therefore, can confidently say, for the comfort of them all, “No one is able to pluck them out of My hands.” He has redeemed them unto God by His blood, “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev. 5:9)—redeemed them “not with corruptible things, as silver and gold,” but with His own precious blood, “as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). “They that are Christ’s.”

Third, because the Holy Spirit has brought each of them unto Him. The Apostle is speaking not of those “that are Christ’s” according to God’s decree, who have not yet been quickened from the death of sin, but of those who have been thus quickened, for there comes a day in the earthly life of every one of these for bringing them unto Christ, according to that word of His own: “All that the Father giveth Me, shall come to Me”; and again, “Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto Me.” A point of time arises when they hear the Word of God with power, and “with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven” (1 Peter 1:12). They are thus made to see their sinnership, to cry for mercy, to perceive the beauty that is in Christ and His salvation, and its exact suitability to their case. This brings them unto Christ, being led in spirit by the Holy Spirit, that they may find in Him “wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.” “They that are Christ’s.”

Fourth, because they have each given themselves unto Him. Thus they are Christ’s by a fourfold right, and “bound up in the bundle of life” with Him by a fourfold cord. His people are all “made willing in the day of His power.” They gladly surrender themselves unto Him, they cheerfully take Him for their Lord and Master, wish to have the honour of being His disciples, and desire to prove their love to Him by obeying Him in His ordi-

nances, and in all the precepts of His Word. Their language, therefore is

“Chosen in Christ ere time began,
I’d choose Thee in return”

“They that are Christ’s.” Let us consider—

II. The statement here made concerning them: “*have crucified the flesh, etc.*” Here are three separate points for our meditation. Let us inquire—

First, what are we to understand by the term “flesh”? This does not mean the body, as a pure object of God’s creation, which is “fearfully and wonderfully made,” beautifully contrived, admirably adapted to all its surroundings, and which possesses pure appetites and desires, with which it was endowed by its wise and benevolent Creator, but rather what in Scripture is styled “the carnal man.” This is “the old man,” which is “corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,” and is, therefore, to be “put off” by the believer in Christ. It is mental as well as bodily, for we read of a “carnal mind” which is “enmity against God.” “Therefore,” says the Apostle, when writing to the Corinthians, “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.” Both body and mind, though originally good, have, through the Fall, and also through the habit of sin, become corrupt in nature, and depraved in taste, appetite, desire.

Second, what are we to understand by “Crucifying the flesh”? This language does not signify the punishment of the poor body after the manner of the heathen, which is imitated by Papists and Ritualists. It does not mean flagellation, needless exposure to inclement weather, dwelling in a cave or cell, injuring the health by long fasts and vigils, refusing to “nourish and cherish” the body as nature requires. This is not after the commandment of God in the sacred Scriptures, but “after the commandments and doctrines of men, which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh” (Col. 2:22-23). No such barbarous acts as these are intended, yet the Word says the flesh is “crucified.”

Crucifixion evidently signifies *execution*, death—a shameful death, and painful death, a lingering death, an accursed death, a judicial death. And this pre-supposes *judgment and condemnation*. In every believer, then, “the body of sin” has been judged, condemned, and executed—at least the execution is in process, and will ultimately be completed. Thus “the body of sin” is said to be “destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:6). Of this crucifixion of the carnal nature there are two different, yet connected views or aspects. The flesh crucified—

(a) *By virtue of the believer’s mystical union with Christ*. This aspect of the subject is more fully gone into in Romans 6; also in Galations 2:20, where the Apostle says, “I am (i.e., have been) crucified with Christ.” When Jesus, as the Head and Husband, the Surety and Representative of His Church was crucified, it was for *her* sins; therefore she is said to be crucified with and in Him.

(b) *By constant soul-discipline and self-denial*. The Redeemer says that no man can possibly be His disciple who does not “deny himself, and take up his cross daily.” All that is carnal in him is to be continually denied, by the new birth he has been sanctified, and made to possess a holy nature. This is totally contrary to the “old man” of sin. Hence the inward conflict. But, for our encouragement, we are told, “Sin shall not have dominion over you.”

The Apostle does not say “the flesh” is *dead*. No; but it is “crucified,” and therefore dying—fastened, as it were, to the cross, so that it can no longer *rule* in the heart and life

as it once did, though it often, alas! exerts considerable influence. But if not dead in the believer, it is doomed and already dying, and the believer is to reckon himself dead to it (Rom. 6:11). The verb here is not in the perfect tense (Greek) as in Galations 2:20. That was done *once for all* and by Christ for all them “that are Christ’s,” and the effects remain forever. Here the aorist is employed, and the meaning is that the believer has the flesh still, but in a state of crucifixion, as saith the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 9:27—“I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.” In other places this self-crucifixion is called *mortifying* the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:12-14; Col. 3:4). That which is mortified is dead. The Christian life is one of continued mortification as regards the old and corrupt nature; and the more we die to sin, the more we live to God.

Third, *what are we to understand by the “affections and lusts”*? Not that we are to mortify and be dead to every natural feeling. Far from it. The pure natural affections, desires, feelings, inclinations, appetites, and sympathies were bestowed by a benevolent Creator on purpose to be properly and moderately gratified. But “the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer” (1 Tim. 4:1, 3-5). How strikingly does this language foretell and reprove the monkery and undue asceticism of apostates!

The word “affections” is more exactly rendered “passions” in the margin, for it signifies, not pure natural affections, but rather raging, boisterous, vile, sudden passions. Originally the word signifies “sufferings,” and truly those who are under the influence of ungoverned, wicked passions, are sufferers. What sufferings do these indulgences produce, not only in the person himself, but in all connected socially with him! And by the indulgence of these furious passions, the seeds are sown of an eternal harvest of pain. The same word is, in Romans 7:5, translated “motions”—“when we were in the flesh (i.e., in an unregenerate condition) the *motions* of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death”; and a cognate word is rendered “affections” in the bad sense, in Romans 1:26—“God gave them up unto vile affections.” By the other term “lusts,” we understand *desires* that are wicked, base, carnal. The Greek signifies what the mind is *set upon*—that which is quietly indulged in the mind—all those inclinations, propensities, and inward feelings that are depraved and corrupt.

Now “they that are Christ’s” have all these evil passions and desires like other people, but with this great difference: they have them in a state of crucifixion, mortification, abeyance. They are not delivered entirely from them yet, though they shall be.

“When death, which puts an end to life,
Shall put an end to sin.”

But even now they are not so under the dominion of the carnal nature as they once were. Sin does not *reign* in their heart and life as it once did, though frequently, through infirmity, and sometimes through lack of watchfulness, it exercises sufficient influence to cause much anxiety, doubt, and sorrow of heart. But the time is hastening on when they shall be “delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” Is this your hope? Is sin *a burden* to you? Then you may look forward with the feelings of the poet, when he sang—

“O glorious hour! O blest Abode!
I shall be near and like my God!
Nor flesh nor sense shall e’er control
The sacred pleasures of my soul.”
A.E. Realff, 1887.

The Divine Covenants.

3. The Noahic (Completed).

“While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Gen. 8:22). These promises were made by God upwards of four thousands of years ago, and the unfailing fulfillment of them annually, all through the centuries, affords a striking demonstration of His faithfulness. Moreover, in their fulfillment we have exemplified a fact which is generally lost sight of by the world today, namely, that behind Nature’s “laws” is Nature’s *Lord*. Scepticism would now shut God out of His own creation. A casual observance of Nature’s “laws” reveals the fact that they are not uniform in their operation, and therefore if we had not the Scriptures, we would be without any assurance that the seasons might not radically change and the whole earth again be inundated. Nature’s “laws” did not prevent the deluge in Noah’s days, how then should they hinder a recurrence of it in ours? How blessed for the child of God to listen to this guarantee of his Father!

See here also the aboundings of God’s mercy in proceeding with us by way of a *covenant*, binding Himself with a solemn oath that He would never again destroy the earth by water. He might well have exempted the world from this calamity, and yet never have *told* men that He would thus act. Had He not granted such assurance, the remembrance of the deluge would have been like a sword of terror suspended over their heads. But in His great goodness, the Lord sets the mind of His creatures at rest upon this score, by promising not to repeat the flood. Thus does He deal with His people: “That by two immutable things (His revealed purpose of grace, and His covenant oath), in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a *strong consolation*, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb. 6:18).

“‘I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake’ (Gen. 8:21), was the word of God to Noah, when accepting the first offering presented to Him on the purified earth. It is, no doubt, to be understood relatively; not as indicating a *total* repeal of the evil, but only a mitigation of it; yet such a mitigation as would render the earth a much less afflicted and more fertile region than it had been before. This again indicated that, in the estimation of Heaven, the earth had now assumed a new position; that by the action of God’s judgment upon it, it had become hallowed in His sight, and was in a condition to receive tokens of the Divine favour, which had formerly been withheld from it” (P. Fairbairn). We pointed out the mystical significance of Genesis 8:21 in last month’s article.

“And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish My covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish My covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant (literally, “My bow I have set in the cloud, and it shall be for a covenant-sign”) between Me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh” (Gen. 9:8-15).

The above words contain the fulfillment of the promise which the Lord had given to Noah in Genesis 6:18, and amplify what He had said in Genesis 8:21, 22. That in them which we shall now concentrate upon is the “token” or “sign” of the covenant. There is no doubt whatever in our own mind it was now that the rainbow appeared for the first time in the lower heavens, for the purpose of allaying man’s fears against the calamity of another universal flood, and to provide them with a visible pledge in Nature for the performance of her existing order and constitution: for had this Divine marvel appeared before unto the antediluvians, it had possessed no special and distinctive meaning and message after the flood. The fact that the rainbow was an entirely new phenomenon, something which was quite unknown to Noah previously, supplies a striking demonstration of *the silent harmony* of Scripture, for it is clear from Genesis 2:6 that no rain had fallen before the flood!

The first rain was sent in Divine judgment; but now God turns it into a blessing. The sunshine of Heaven falls upon the rain on earth, and lo, the beautiful rainbow! How blessedly suited, then, was the rainbow to serve as the sign of the covenant which God had made with Noah! “There is an exact correspondence between the natural phenomenon it presents, and the moral use to which it is applied. The promise in the covenant was not that there should be no future visitations of judgment upon the earth, but that they should not proceed to the extent of again destroying the world. In the moral, as in the natural sphere, there might still be congregating vapours and descending torrents; indeed, the terms of the covenant imply that there should be such, and that by means of them God would not fail to testify His displeasure against sin, and keep in awe the workers of iniquity. But there should be no second deluge to diffuse universal ruin; mercy should always so far rejoice against judgment.

“Such in the field of nature is the assurance given by the rainbow, which is formed by the lustre of the sun’s rays shining on the dark cloud as it recedes; so that it may be termed, as into the somewhat poetical description of Lange, ‘the sun’s triumph over the floods; the glitter of his beams imprinted on the rain-cloud as a mark of subjection’! How appropriate an emblem of that grace which should always show itself ready to return after wrath! Grace still sparing and preserving, even when storms of judgment have been bursting forth upon the guilty! And as the rainbow throws its radiant arch over the expanse between Heaven and earth, uniting the two together again as with a wreath of beauty, after they have been engaged in an elemental war, what a fitting image does it present to the thoughtful eye of the essential harmony that still subsists between the higher and the lower spheres! Such undoubtedly is its symbolic import, as the sign peculiarly connected with the covenant of Noah; it holds out, by means of its very form and nature, an assurance of God’s mercy, as engaged to keep perpetually in check the floods of deserved wrath, and continue to the world the manifestation of His grace and goodness” (P. Fairbairn).

But God’s bow in the clouds was not only an assurance unto men at large that no more would the world be destroyed by a flood, it was also the seal of confirmation of the covenant which God had made with the elect seed, the children of faith. Blessed is it to know that, not only our eyes, but *His* too, are upon the bow, and thus this gives us fellowship with Himself in that which tells of the storm being over, of peace displacing turmoil, of the dark gloom now being irradiated by the shining of the sun. It was the rain which broke up the light into its separate rays, now reflected in the bow: the blue or

heavenly ray, the yellow or golden ray, the crimson ray of atonement. Thus it is in the Everlasting Covenant that God is fully revealed as light and as love, as righteous yet merciful, merciful yet righteous. The Covenant of Grace is beautifully expressed in the rainbow.

First, it is of *God's* ordering: "I have set My bow in the clouds." So the Covenant of Grace is of God's ordering: "I have made a covenant with My Chosen" (Psa. 89:3). Though it be our duty to "take hold of" the covenant (Isa. 56:4), and to come under engagements through the grace thereof, yet *we* have no part in appointing or ordering it. The Covenant of Grace could no more have been made by man, than he can form a bow in the clouds. Second, the bow was set in the clouds upon God's smelling a sweet savour in Noah's sacrifice: so that Covenant of Grace is founded upon and sealed with the blood of the Lamb—a reminder thereof being set before us every time we sit down to partake of the Lord's Supper. Third, the rainbow is a Divine security that the waters should return no more to destroy the earth; so the Covenant of Grace [Everlasting Covenant] guarantees against the deluge of God's wrath, so that it shall never return again to destroy any soul that by faith flees to Christ: Isaiah 54:9.

Fourth, it is the sun which gives being to the rainbow: remove it from the firmament and there could not be its glorious reflection in the clouds. So Christ, the Sun of righteousness, gives being to our Covenant of Grace: He is its very life and substance: "I will preserve Thee, and give *Thee* for a covenant of the people" (Isa. 49:8). Fifth, although the arch of the bow is high above us, reaching to the heaven, yet the ends of it stoop down and reach to the earth. Just so it is with the Covenant of Grace: although the great Covenant-Head be in Heaven, yet, through the Gospel, He stoops down to men upon earth—"The Word is nigh thee" (Rom. 10:8). Sixth, God's bow in the clouds is very extensive, reaching from one end of Heaven to the other; so His Covenant of Grace is wide in its reach, stretching back to eternity past and reaching forward to eternity future, embracing some out of every nation and kindred, and tribe and tongue.

Seventh, as the rainbow is a security against an universal deluge, so it is also a prognostic of refreshing showers of rain to the thirsty earth; so the bow of the Covenant which encircles the Throne of God, Revelation 4:3, not only secures against vindictive wrath, but gives assurance of the rain—the Spirit's influences. Eighth, the visible appearance of the rainbow is but of a short continuance, for usually it appears only for a few minutes, and then vanishes. So the sensible and lively views which the believer gets of the Covenant of Grace are usually of brief duration. Ninth, although the rainbow disappears, and that for a long while together, yet we do not conclude therefrom that God's covenant is broken or that a flood will come and destroy the earth. So too the saint may not now be favoured with a sensible sight of the Covenant of Grace, yet the remembrance of former views thereof will keep the soul from fears of wrath. For these nine points we are indebted to a sermon by Eben. Erskine, preached about 1730.

The following paragraph is quoted from our work "Gleanings in Genesis," written nearly twenty years ago. "There are many parallels between the rainbow and God's grace. As the rainbow is the joint-product of storm and sunshine, so grace is the unmerited favour of God appearing on the dark background of the creature's sin. As the rainbow is the effect of the sun shining on the drops of rain in a cloud, so Divine grace is manifested by God's love shining through the blood shed by our blessed Redeemer. As the rainbow is the telling out of the varied hues of the white light, so the '*manifold* grace

of God' (1 Peter 4:10) is the ultimate expression of God's heart. As nature knows nothing more exquisitely beautiful than the rainbow, so Heaven itself knows nothing that surpasses in loveliness the wondrous grace of God. As the rainbow is the union of Heaven and earth—spanning the sky and reaching down to the ground—so grace in the one Mediator has brought together God and man. As the rainbow is a public sign of God hung out in the heavens that all may see it, so 'the grace of God that bringeth salvation *hath appeared to all men*' (Titus 2:11). Finally, as the rainbow has been displayed throughout all the past forty centuries, so *in the ages to come* God will show forth 'the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2:7)."

The later references in Scripture to the "rainbow" are inexpressibly blessed. Thus, in the visions of the glory of God which Ezekiel was favoured with at the beginning of his ministry, we find part of the imagery thus described, "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about" (Ezek. 1:28). It is to be duly noted that this verse comes in at the close of one of the most awe-inspiring representations of heavenly things to be found in Scripture. It is a vision of the ineffable holiness of God, hence the presence of the cherubim. There is then the fervid appearance of metallic brightness and flashes of liquid flame, which shone forth from all parts of the vision. The wheels of vast proportion are added to the cherubim: wheels full of eyes, speaking of the terrible energy which was going to characterise the Divine providences. Above all was the Throne of God, on which He Himself sat in human form.

It is well known that at the time of this vision the people of Israel were in a most distressed condition. Those amongst whom Ezekiel prophesied were in captivity, and the ruin of their country was nigh at hand. How blessed, then, was the introduction here of the sign of the rainbow into this vision! It intimated that the purpose and promises of Divine grace were sure. Though God's judgment would fall heavily upon the guilty nation, yet because of the elect remnant therein, it would not be utterly cast off, and after the storm had passed, times of restoration and peace would follow. It was the Divine assurance, for faith to rest upon and enjoy, that what Jehovah had pledged *in the covenant* would be made good.

"And there was a rainbow round about the Throne, in sight like unto an emerald" (Rev. 4:3). The canopy of God's Throne is a rainbow. We understand this vision in Revelation 4 to have immediate reference unto the glorious exercise of Divine grace under the New Testament economy. There is a manifest allusion in it to Genesis 9: it signifies that God deals with His people according to *His covenant engagements*. Its emerald or green colour denotes that, because

of the faithfulness of Him who sits upon the Throne of Grace, His covenant is ever the same, ever fresh, without any shadow of turning. "Its surrounding the throne denoted that the holiness, and justice of God, and all His dispensations as the Sovereign of all worlds, had respect to His covenant of peace and engagements of love, which He had ratified to His believing people, and harmonized with them" (T. Scott).

Thus the Noahic Covenant served to bring out in a new light, and establish on a firmer basis, the unfailing faithfulness of Jehovah and the immutability of His purpose. An assurance to that effect was specially needed just after the flood, for it was over that basic truth the judgment of the deluge had seemed to cast a shadow. But the promises made to Noah, solemnly given in covenant form, and sealed by the token of the rainbow, effectually re-established confidence, and stands out still, after all these many centuries,

as one of the grand events in God's dealings with men; assuring us that, however the sins of the world may provoke the justice of God, the purpose of His grace unto His chosen people stands unalterably sure.—A.W.P.

Sanctified Affliction and Pride Contrasted.

“In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the LORD: and He spake unto him, and He gave him a sign. But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem” (2 Chron. 32:24, 25). In these two verses we see the same individual under widely different circumstances—sickness and health, adversity and prosperity. And looking into this part of the Divine Word, as in a mirror, we may surely see ourselves. “Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which He hath made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after Him” (Eccl. 7:13, 14).

A full account of the circumstances in Hezekiah’s experience, to which our text refers, will be found in 2 Kings 20, and a fuller still in Isaiah 38 and 39. It is thought that at that time he was about thirty-nine or forty years of age, and that the sickness and deliverance took place at the very time when Sennacherib, by Rabshakeh, was blaspheming Jehovah, and threatening the destruction of Jerusalem (compare Isa. 38:6 with 37:35). Thus the afflicted king had trouble upon trouble, which God so often mysteriously permits—so much so that it has become a common adage that “misfortunes never come singly.” To hear the blatant blasphemies of Rabshakeh—to be reviled by him in the sight and hearing of the populace, and to read his insolent and threatening letter—surely these were troubles indeed. But to be presently confined to his bed with a mortal disease, and to be afflicted with a most painful carbuncle, or inflamed ulcer—this was “sorrow upon sorrow.”

Yet it is refreshing to discover the fact that these accumulated sorrows do not work repining, rebellion, or despair in the heart of the afflicted monarch, but lead to self-examination, tenderness of heart, and earnest supplication. Having the testimony, through grace, of “a conscience void of offence both toward God and toward men,” i.e., as regards outward sin, he is comforted by the assurance that his afflictions have not been brought upon him by his own misconduct, but have come in the order of God’s inscrutable providence, therefore he feels that he can “commit his way unto the Lord.” Yet he “weeps sore”—not from a sense of unpardoned sin, for he acknowledges that God has cast all his sins behind His back, but because he yearns for life, as is natural. This might be from a longing hope, like that of Simeon, to see the Shiloah, or at least to be progenitor of Messiah (Isa. 38:11), for as yet he appears to be childless (39:7). Or his desire might be simply not to be “cut off” in the prime of his life, and before he had finished his projected reforms in the kingdom. So it would seem David felt when he wrote Psalm 39—“O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.”

God hears his prayer and see his tears. The Prophet Isaiah, who had but just announced the mortal nature of the disease, is commissioned to return, and declare that his life shall be lengthened fifteen years, and that, on the third day, he should be able to go to the temple (2 Kings 20:5). He is instructed to apply a very simple remedy, but God’s blessing accompanies it. Thus the plaister of figs proves more efficacious, under the Divine direction and blessing, than all the appliances of the most clever physicians could possibly be, without that direction and blessing. Nor is this all. A remarkable sign, in answer to his request, is granted. This would tend greatly to raise his spirits and confirm his faith, and so conduce to his more rapid recovery. That the bringing back of the shadow on the sun-dial was a miracle is very plain; but how it was wrought is not so plain. Upon

recovery, he is inspired to write a beautiful Psalm, which probably was set to music, and sung in the temple as a thanksgiving ode or “Te-Deum.”

But alas! how soon a change comes over him! “Lord, what is man?” Truly, “the best of men are but men at the best.” How vastly different do we find even good and gracious men under different circumstances! King Hezekiah was in a far better and safer state of mind when taunted by the cruel words of Sennacherib, the city being besieged and threatened by his troops, and when tossed upon a bed of pain, afflicted with an incurable disease, than when visited and congratulated by the heathen emissaries of the king of Babylon. They came, we are told, “To inquire of the wonder that was done in the land” (2 Chron. 32:31). Their bringing “letters and a present” was perhaps to persuade Hezekiah to form an alliance with their king against the Assyrians. The name *Merodach* signifies “a warlike god,” similar to the Roman “Mars”; and *Baladan* means “Bel is his lord.” We read that “Hezekiah was glad at them,” and showed them all his treasures. The reason is given in our text—“his heart was lifted up”; and the cause is stated in verse 31—“God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.” This discipline was necessary; the Lord saw that. He was, no doubt, pleased in his sickness not to be conscience-accused, because of any outward delinquency; and he had “walked in truth, and with a perfect heart,” i.e., in the sense of *sincerity*. But it was necessary he should “know *all* that was in his heart”—worldly mindedness, love of earthly treasures, pride, and forgetfulness of God. What believer has not these corruptions, and a thousand others, to lament? And so it pleased God to withdraw from Hezekiah for a time His supporting grace, as in the case of Peter—not that he might fall into sin, although, as a necessary consequence, he did so; but to teach him a valuable and life-long lesson.

Oh, how deceitful is the heart, even in a child of grace, who has been Divinely renewed by the Spirit! Here was a man but just recovered from a most dangerous sickness, having been by that disease sorely tried and exercised in soul, and by it, through grace, brought very near to God, now “lifted up” with carnal pride. Can this indeed be the same man that has been miraculously and speedily healed, who has received a grant of fifteen years of added life from the mouth of the Almighty, confirmed by another miracle? Can this be he who penned by Divine inspiration that noble Psalm, and who has so recently been singing His thanksgivings in the temple? What beautiful, spiritual utterances are discoverable in this “writing”? Is this the man who said, “We will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD”? (Isa. 38:20). It seems quite incredible; and yet, believers, does it not exactly tally with our own experience? Such heavenly raptures on the Sabbath; such carnality of heart all the week; one hour praying, and trusting, and loving; and the next rebelling against God, and doubting His promises. Alas! “The heart *is* deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). How often are we obliged to say, with Paul, “When I would do good, evil is present with me”! (Rom. 7:21). This feeling caused Erskine to pen these strange lines—

“To good and evil equal bent,
I’m both a devil and a saint.”

Hezekiah is flattered and “puffed up” in mind by the visit and the present and congratulations of the ambassadors, who had “come from a far country, even from Babylon” (2 Kings 20:14); and, in the pride of his heart, showed them all his “precious things.” The man who was so strong in spirit when weak in body, now that his body is strong again, is

deplorably weak in spirit. He proudly and vainly talks to these idolaters about his earthly possessions, but says not one word about his soul-experiences under sickness, the wonderful mercy of God which he had experienced in answer to prayer, and the miracle that had been wrought to establish his faith. Oh, what a grand opportunity would this have been to magnify and praise the true God in the hearing of idolaters! There was no other god who could answer prayer, and work in this marvelous manner. Here is a splendid opportunity utterly lost—an opportunity which, judging by his recent experience and language, we should have thought Hezekiah just the man to embrace. What folly may a gracious person be guilty of—aye, terrible sin—if God leaves him a prey to the corruptions of his own heart.

Dear fellow-believers, what need have we to “watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation; for the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”! (Matt. 26:41). Verily, “he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool”; and, as one has well observed, “he that trusts in his grace is no better.” Our trust must not be in ourselves, nor even in grace already received, but solely in the Lord of all grace. “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” Lord, help us continually to cry, “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe” (Psa. 119:117).

But now observe, because of this lifting up of Hezekiah’s heart, “therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem” (2 Chron. 32:25). Not eternal wrath. Oh, no; but temporal punishment. He must be chastened for this sin (Isa. 39:3-7). Oh, what a cutting revelation was this! And yet how remarkably it was suited to the nature of his sin! Had Hezekiah, in the vanity of his heart, showed the Babylonian ambassadors the whole of the precious things that were in his house? The days should come when all the treasures of the kings of Judah should be carried to Babylon—yea, even the seed royal. Yet, although poor Hezekiah offended through the pride of his natural heart, we see he was not destitute of Divine grace. Oh, what a mercy that the new nature is indestructible! It is nothing less than “eternal life”; and when the Holy Spirit is pleased to renew a soul, that soul becomes a “partaker of the Divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Like David, when the Prophet Nathan said, “Thou art the man,” Hezekiah is melted directly by the solemn words of the Heaven-sent Isaiah; and like Peter, he is at once humbled in spirit. Mark his submissive language, “Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken,” (2 Kings 20:19). He magnifies the mercy and longsuffering of God towards himself, and acquiesces in the threatened judgment as “good.”

“Good when He gives—supremely good—

No less when He denies.”

So holy Job: “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,” etc. So the Shunammite, “It is well.” So Eli, “It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good.” Here, then, is the triumph, after all, of faith over sense; of the spirit over the flesh.

But oh, Christless sinner, if God thus judges His own believing and worshipping people, do you think He will spare the wicked? If He thus terribly shows His displeasure on account of one sin in a child of grace, can you suppose that He will wink at all your unpardoned iniquities? Believe me, *He cannot—He will not*. He bears long with you; but, by and by, He will certainly whet His “glittering sword,” and then it will be awful work indeed! When He arises “to shake terribly the earth,” how will you stand? Hear what He says to you: “Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the LORD have spoken it, *and will do it*” (Ezek. 22:14). “For the time is

come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4:17-18). Ah! where indeed? If God is thus displeased on account of one sin in the heart of a "vessel of mercy," what must be His feelings towards the "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" The subject is awful to contemplate, beyond words to describe or even fancy to paint. "The LORD *trieth* the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence His soul *hateth*. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup" (Psa. 11:5, 6). Oh, that you might "flee from the wrath to come!"

"Ye sinners, seek His grace
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of His cross,
And find salvation there."

I know it is not in your power, by the exercise of your own will, to do this, but may it please God to speak with power to your soul through these utterances of His Word. We know not but He may have purposes of grace even unto some of you, and if so, you who are present "not a people" manifestively, shall become "the people of God," through His sovereign and efficacious call, which you shall obey; and then you will blessedly find that Jesus "became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Heb. 5:9).—(A.E. Realff, 1887).

The Doctrine of Sanctification.

5. Its Solution (Completed).

At the beginning of last month's article it was pointed out that in connection with the grand truth of sanctification there is both a mystery and a problem: the former relating to the unregenerate, the latter causing concern to the regenerate. That which is hidden from the knowledge of the natural man is why his best works are unacceptable to God. Tell him that *all* his actions—no matter how carefully and conscientiously, diligently and devoutly, executed—are rejected by God, and that is something entirely above the reach of his understanding. He knows not that his breaking of the law in Adam has brought in a breach between himself and God, so that while that breach remains, the favour cannot flow out of him, nor his prayers or offerings pass in to God. The Lord will no more receive anything at the hands of the natural man, than He would have respect unto the offering of Cain (Gen. 4). And had He left all men in their natural estate, this would have held true of the whole race until the end of time.

Inasmuch as all men were given a holy nature—created into the image and likeness of God—in their representative and root, to be transmitted to them by him, *before* the law was given to Adam, it follows that the law requires a holy nature from each of us, and pronounces a curse whenever it finds the opposite. Though we are actually born into this world in a state of corruption and filth (Ezek. 16:3-6, etc.), yet the law will not abate its just demands upon us. In consequence of the sin which indwells us—which is so much a part and parcel of ourselves that every thing we do is defiled thereby—we are thoroughly unable to render unto the law that obedience which it requires; for while we are alienated from the life of God, it is impossible that any outward acts of compliance with the law's statutes can proceed from those principles which it alone can approve of, namely, disinterested love and faith unfeigned. Consequently, the state of the natural man, considered in himself, is entirely beyond hope.

The provision made by the manifold wisdom and sovereign grace of God to meet the desperate needs of His people was stipulated for in terms of the Everlasting Covenant. There it was agreed upon by the Eternal Three that the Mediator should be the Son of man, yet, that His humanity should be not only entirely free from every taint of original sin, but should be purer than that of Adam's even when his Creator pronounced him "very good." This was accomplished by the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit in the virgin-birth, and by the Son of God taking into personal union with Himself "that holy thing" which was to be born of Mary. Inasmuch as Christ, the God-man Mediator, entered this world not as a private Person, but as a public, as the Representative and Head of God's elect, in the reckoning of the law they were born holy in their Surety and Sponsor, and so fully measure up to its requirements. Christ and His mystical body have never been viewed apart by the law.

But this, unspeakably blessed though it be, was not all. A perfect legal standing only met half of the need of God's elect: in addition, their *state* must be made to accord with their standing. This also has been provided for by the measureless love of the God of all grace. He so ordered that, just as the guilt of Adam was imputed to all for whom he acted, so the righteousness of Christ should be imputed to all for whom He transacted: and, that just as spiritual death—with all its corrupting effects—should be transmitted by Adam to all his posterity, so the spiritual life of Christ—with all its gracious influences—should be communicated to all His seed. As they received a sinful and impure nature from their

natural head, so the sanctified receive a sinless and pure nature from their spiritual Head. Consequently, as they have borne the image of the earthly, so shall they bear the image of the heavenly.

Some of our readers may, perhaps, conclude that all difficulty in connection with this aspect of our subject has now been disposed of; but a little reflection on the part of the believer should soon remind him that the most perplexing point of all has yet to be cleared up. Though it be true that every essential requirement of the law has been met for the sanctified by their glorious Head, so that the law righteously views them as holy in Him; and though it be true that at regeneration they receive from Christ, by the Spirit, a new and holy nature, like unto His; yet the old nature remains, and remains unchanged, unimproved. Yea, to them it seems that the carnal nature in them is steadily growing worse and worse, and more active and defiling every day they live. They are painfully conscious of the fact that sin not only remains in them, but that it pollutes their desires, thoughts, imaginations, and acts; and to prevent its uprisings they are quite powerless.

This presents to an honest heart and a sensitive conscience a problem which is most acute, for how can those who abhor themselves be pleasing unto the thrice holy One? How can those conscious of their filthiness and vileness possibly be fit to draw nigh unto Him who is ineffably and infinitely pure? The answer which some have returned to this agonized enquiry—based upon an erroneous deduction from the words of Paul “it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me”: Romans 7:20—will by no means satisfy them. To say it is not the regenerate person, but only the flesh in him, which sins, is to invent a distinction which repudiates the Christian’s responsibility, and which affords no relief to a quickened conscience. Scripture is far too plain on this point to justify a mistake: Old and New Testaments alike insist it is *the person* who sins—”against Thee . . . have *I* sinned (Psa. 51). Paul himself concludes Romans 7 by saying, “O wretched man that *I* am!”

Where other matters are concerned, men have more sense than to fall back upon such a distinction as some modern theologians are so fond of insisting upon: it never occurs to them to argue thus in connection with temporal things. Imagine one before a judge, who was charged with theft, acknowledging his offence, but disowning all responsibility and culpability on the ground that it was his “evil nature” and *not himself* which did the stealing! Surely the judge would be in a quandary to decide whether prison or the mad-house was the right place to send him. This reminds us of an incident wherein a “Bishop” was guilty of blasphemy in the House of Lords (where all “Bishops” have seats). Being rebuked by his man-servant, he replied, “It was the ‘lord’ and not the ‘bishop’ who cursed.” His servant responded, “When the Devil gets the ‘lord’ where will the ‘bishop’ be!” Beware, my reader, of seeking to clear *yourself* by throwing the blame upon your “nature.”

Somewhere else, then, than in any supposed distinction between the sanctified person and his old nature, must the solution to our problem be sought. When one who has been walking with God is tripped up by some temptation and falls into sin, or when indwelling corruption surges up and (for the time being) obtains the mastery over him, he is painfully aware of the fact; and that which exercises him the most is not only that he has sinned against the One who is nearer and dearer to him than all else, but that his communion with Him is broken, and that he is no longer morally fit to come into His sacred presence. Whilst his knowledge of the Gospel may be sufficient to allay any haunting fears of the penal consequences of his sins, yet this does not remove the defilement from

his conscience. This is one important respect in which the unregenerate and regenerate differ radically: when the former sins it is the *guilt* (and punishment) which most occupies his thoughts; but when the latter, it is the *defiling* effect which most exercises his heart.

There are two things in sin inseparably connected and yet clearly distinguishable, namely, its criminality and its pollution. The pollution of sin is that property of it whereby it is directly opposed unto the holiness of God, and which God expresseth His holiness to be contrary unto. Therefore it is said, He is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab. 1:13)—it is a vile and loathsome sight to Him who is the Light. Hence doth He use that pathetic entreaty, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate” (Jer. 44:4). It is with respect unto His own holiness that God sets forth sin by the names of everything which is offensive, objectionable, repulsive, abominable. Consequently, when the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, He imparts such a sight and sense of the filth of sin, that the subjects of the same blush, are ashamed, are filled with confusion of face, are abased in their own esteem, and abashed before God.

As we are taught the guilt of sin by our own *fear*, which is the inseparable adjunct of it, so we are taught the filth of sin by our own *shame*, which unavoidably attends it. Under the typical economy God not only appointed sacrifices to make atonement for the guilt of sin, but also gave various ordinances for purification or ceremonial cleansing from the pollution thereof. In various ways, during Old Testament times, God instructed His people concerning the spiritual defilement of sin: the distinction between clean and unclean animals, the different natural distempers which befoul the body, the isolating of the leper, the accidental touching of the dead which rendered people religiously unclean by the law, are cases in point. All of them prefigured internal and spiritual pollution, and hence the whole work of sanctification is expressed by “a fountain opened . . . for sin and for uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1)—that is, for the purging away of them.

So inseparable is moral pollution from sin, and a sense of shame from a consciousness of the pollution, that whenever a soul is truly convicted of sin, there is always a painful sense of this filthiness, accompanied by personal shame. Only as this is clearly apprehended, are we able to understand the true nature of sanctification. The spiritual comeliness of the soul consists in its conformity to God. Grace gives beauty: hence it is said of Christ that He is “Fairer (more beautiful) than the children of men,” and that, because “grace” was “poured” into His lips (Psa. 45:2). Man’s original beauty consisted in his being made in the image of God, which constituted the whole harmony and symmetry of his nature, all his faculties and actions having respect unto God. Therefore, that which is contrary to the image of God—depravity, contrary to grace—sin, hath in it a deformity which mars the soul, destroys its comeliness, disrupts its order, and brings deformity, ugliness, vileness.

Whatever is contrary to holiness or the image of God on the soul, is base, unworthy, filthy. Sin dishonours and degrades the soul, filling it with shame. The closer we are permitted to walk with God and the more we see ourselves in His light, the more conscious are we of the deformity of sin and of our baseness. When our eyes were first opened to see our spiritual nakedness, how hideous did we appear unto ourselves, and what a sense of our pollution we had! That was but the reflex of God’s view, for He abhors, loathes, and esteems as an abominable thing whatever is contrary to His holiness. Those who are made “partakers of the Divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4), do, according to their

measure, but see themselves with *God's* eyes, as wretched, naked, shameful, loathsome, hideous and abominable creatures; and therefore do they, with Job, "abhor" themselves.

The last four paragraphs are, in part, a condensation from John Owen; and from them we may clearly perceive that, it is they who are truly sanctified and holy, who are the most deeply sensible of the root of corruption which still remains within them, and which is ever springing up and producing that which defiles them; and therefore do they greatly bewail their pollutions, as that which is most dishonouring to God and most disturbing to their own peace; and earnestly do they endeavour after the mortification of it. A remarkable corroboration is found in the fact that the most godly and holy have been the very ones who most strongly affirmed their sinfulness and most loudly bewailed the same. It was one whom God Himself declared to be a "perfect (sincere) and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil" (Job 1:8) who declared "Behold, I am vile" (40:4). It was one "greatly beloved" of God (Dan. 10:19), who acknowledged "my comeliness was turned in me to corruption" (10:8). It was he who was caught up to the third heaven and then returned again to earth who mourned, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24).

From the quotations just made from the personal confessions of some of the most eminent of God's saints, it is perfectly plain to any simple soul that a "pure heart" cannot signify one from which all sin has been removed, nor can their language possibly be made to square with the utopian theory that the carnal nature is eradicated from any believer in this life. Indeed it cannot; and none but they who are completely blinded by Satan would ever affirm such a gross absurdity and palpable lie. But this requires us now to define and describe *what* a "pure heart" consists of, according to the spiritual meaning thereof. And in our efforts to supply this, we shall have to try and guard against two evils: providing a pillow for empty professors to comfortably rest upon; and stating things in such a way that hope would be killed in the regenerate.

First, a "pure heart" is one which has experienced "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). That takes place at the new birth, and is maintained by the Spirit throughout the Christian's life. All that this involves we cannot now state at any length. But, negatively, it includes the purifying of the believer's understanding, so that it is no longer fatally blinded by Satan, but is supernaturally illumined by the Spirit: in consequence, the vanity of worldly things and the excellency of spiritual things is now perceived. The mind is, in great measure, freed from the pollution of error, and this, by the shining in of the light of God's truth. It includes, negatively, the cleansing of the affections, so that sin is no longer loved but loathed, and God is no longer shrunk from and avoided, but sought after and desired.

From the positive side, there is communicated to the soul at regeneration a nature or principle which contains within itself pure desires, pure intentions, and pure roots of actions. The fear of God is implanted, and the love of God is shed abroad in the heart. In consequence thereof, the soul is made to pant after God, yearn for conformity to His will, and seeks to please Him in all things. And hence it is that the greatest grief of the Christian arises from the hindering of his spiritual longings and the thwarting of his spiritual aspirations. A pure heart is one that loathes impurity, and whose heaviest burden is the realization that such an ocean of foul waters still indwells him, constantly casting up their mire and dirt, polluting all he does. A "pure heart," therefore, is one which *makes conscience* of foolish thoughts, vile imaginations, and evil desires. It is one which grieves

over pride and discontent, mourns over unbelief, and enmity, weeps in secret over unholiness.

Second, a “pure heart” is one which has been “sprinkled from an evil conscience” (Heb. 10:22). An “evil conscience” is one which accuses of guilt and oppresses because of unpardoned sin. Its possessor dreads the prospect of the day of judgment, and seeks to banish all thoughts of it from his mind. But a conscience to which the Spirit has graciously applied the atoning blood of Christ obtains peace of mind, and has confidence to draw nigh unto God: in consequence, superstition, terror and torment is removed, and an aversion to God is displaced by a joy in God. Hence, also, third, we read “purifying their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9). As unbelief is a principle which defiles, so faith is a principle which purges, and that, because *of the object which it lays hold of*. Faith looks away from self to Christ, and is enabled to realize that His blood “cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

Every Christian, then, has a “pure” heart in the particulars given above. But every Christian does not have a “clean” heart (Psa. 51:10). That which pollutes the heart of a Christian is *unjudged sin*. Whenever sin is *allowed* by us, communion with God is broken, and pollution can only be removed, and communion restored, by a genuine repentance—a condemning of ourselves, a mourning over the sin, and unsparing confession of the same, accompanied by a fervent desire and sincere resolution not to be overtaken by it again. The willing allowance and indulgence of any known sin, cannot consist with a clean heart. Rightly, then, did John Owen say *of repentance*: “It is as necessary unto the continuance of spiritual life, as faith itself.” After the repentance and confession, there must be a fresh (and constant) recourse unto that Fountain which has been “opened for sin and for uncleanness,” a fresh application by faith, of the cleansing blood of Christ: pleading its merits and efficacy before God.

In this article (in two sections) we have sought to answer the questions at the close of the May article. We have met every demand of the law in the Person of our Surety. We are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, because all the value of Christ’s cleansing blood is reckoned to our account. We are capacitated to draw nigh unto God now, because the Holy Spirit has communicated to us the very nature of Christ Himself. By faith we may regard ourselves as holy in Christ. By regeneration we have received a “pure heart”: proof of which is, we hate all impurity, although there is still that in us which delights in nothing else. We are to maintain communion with God by cleansing our own hearts (Psa. 73:13), and that, through constant mortification, and the daily and unsparing judgment of all known sin in and from us.—A.W.P.

Grievances.

Amongst the various characters that are ever moving up and down in this busy world, we sometimes encounter that peculiar and by no means pleasant one which we may call *a man with a grievance*. Even amongst your own relations and friends you may find him; for he is usually not very far to seek. Most of us know some querulous, discontented individual who is the worst used person in the world, who is always being injured, and whose general conversation is a tissue of complaints against everybody—but himself.

Most of the complaints are purely imaginary, the mere suspicions of a soured mind, the workings of a proud unhumiliated heart, the heavings of a restless, fretful spirit. But it sometimes happens that this not very amiable person has a *real* ground of complaint—that some injury, not perhaps a great, but a substantial wrong, has been done him. Now he is a man with a grievance, a real, well-grounded grievance. And now he is happy. He is like a married woman who, after a long series of disappointments, at last gives birth to a living child. She has now something to nurse, to look at, to press to her bosom, to show to her husband and friends. So our discontented friend has now a living grievance to nurse, to press to his bosom, to feed, and to show about. An imaginary wrong is like a still-born child: it cannot be nursed or shown about. Nobody will take it up; and though the mother pine over it, it must be put out of sight, buried and forgotten. But the living child may prove to the mother a worse sorrow than all her previous disappointments. Better have no child, than an untoward one; better be ever barren, than bare a son to his mother's grief and bitterness (Prov. 17:25).

I have put an extreme case to show the point more clearly and vividly; but many minor instances will recur to the minds of most. Assume, then, that our friend has a real substantial grievance, and assume that, with all his wretched temper and disposition, he does possess the life of God in his soul. Now, what shall he do with his grievance? He cannot bury it, for it is alive; and he has not sufficient grace to at once crucify it. He is determined, therefore, to nurse it, but if he nurse it, it must be at the expense of the life of God in his soul, for a more untoward brat mother never bore, one who, when strong enough, will not scruple to rob her of everything she possesses, and of her own life too, unless it be miraculously preserved.

Christian reader, have you never had a grievance—a real, substantial grievance? Were you never wronged by some professor in pocket or reputation? Were you never wounded in the house of your friends? Has no Christian brother ever treated you unjustly or unkindly? Has your minister, or the deacons, or some in the church, or the church itself, done what you believed to be a real, substantial wrong? and they will neither admit it, confess it, nor repair it. Well, now you have a grievance: a fair, legitimate, honest grievance. You are not naturally of such a temper and disposition as has been described, and yet you have solid ground of complaint. Now what do you do with your grievance? Do you nurse it? Do you brood over it? Do you press it close to your bosom to keep it warm? Do you listen to its cries and complaints, and do you continually feed it that it may not die away, but thrive and grow, and get stronger and stronger? Be honest with yourself, and see how matters really stand between the Lord and your soul. Do you not find that this overgrown child which you so carefully nurse, which is scarcely ever out of your arms and never out of your mind, which you show about so much to all your friends and visitors, *is secretly draining away the life of your soul*. Where is your patience, your forbearance, your broken contrite heart, your submission to the will of God, your love to

the brethren, your meekness and quietness, your forgiving spirit, your godly fear of displeasing the Lord by hating your brother, your obedience to Gospel precepts?

You have been wronged, grievously wronged, cruelly and unjustly treated. Well, all the more reason why you should *show your Christian spirit* by forgiving those who have wronged you. Will you never forgive? Will you go down to the grave in your unforgiving spirit? Will you nurse your grievance till, like a spoiled child, it becomes your master, and ends in robbing you of all you possess worth having? Do you not see how lean you are getting, wasting away like a youth in consumption? Do not you find how barren your soul is, what little access you have to God in prayer, what little enjoyment of His presence and smiles of His face?

Do you not feel how dark your mind is, and how long it is since you had a visit from Jesus? But why all this darkness, barrenness, and death? Is there not a cause? Do not these increase the more you brood over your wrongs? And should not this lead you to fear lest you be holding an enemy to God to your bosom? In nursing your grievance, could you see the real state of the case, you would find that you are nursing *enmity, pride and self-righteousness*; that you are walking contrary to the spirit and the precepts of the Gospel; that you are acting against the mind and example of Christ, who forgave his murderers; and yet you who call yourself a Christian, cannot forgive your brother! “Yes, but he has treated me so unkindly, so cruelly, so unjustly.” All the more reason why you should forgive him. “But he has acted so inconsistently.” Well, reprove him for it; but let not *his* sin be an occasion for *you* to sin too. I dare say you think you have more grace than he, for you are sure *you* would not have treated him as he has treated you. Then show the superiority of your grace by freely forgiving him, if you believe him to be a brother. But whether you have sufficient grace for this or not, take this friendly piece of advice, if you can—*do not nurse your grievance*; for depend upon it, you can only do so, to the eventual grief of your own soul, to the inflicting upon yourself of a deeper wrong than that from which you are suffering, and an injury worse than any that your worst enemy could inflict upon you.—From “The Gospel Standard,” 1864.